



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



August 31, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

We're making the turn into September this week —and I'm happy to report that we have continued to remain on track across the University to responsibly [“Bring Back the Pack.”](#) Thank you all so much for doing your part to stay safe and healthy; until we're fully open, this is an ongoing process that requires us all to continue being mindful of and kind to each other. Our efforts to keep campus safe are only as effective as the willingness of our Lobo community to comply with the health and safety protocols we've put into place.

While the trending of new cases in New Mexico has been going in the right direction, we want to ensure our campus community remains alert and active in fighting the further spread of COVID-19. To keep our community informed, we have developed a [COVID-19 dashboard](#) to reflect the daily results of our screening efforts and the number of reported positive cases on campus. Additionally, we've also implemented several new health protocols, including a daily screening survey which arrives as a morning e-mail, and a [targeted interventional COVID-19 testing site available for students](#) who are symptomatic or have been potentially exposed.

The mental health and well-being of our community, especially during a time of crisis, strife and uncertainty, has been on my mind often over the past several months. September is National Suicide Prevention Month, a reminder that we can all do our part to support those struggling with suicidal thoughts or depression, survivors, and those who've lost loved ones to suicide. In addition to [Student Health and Counseling \(SHAC\)](#), we are fortunate to have the [Agora Crisis Center](#), one of our country's oldest volunteer-run crisis hotlines, as a resource for those in need of someone to talk to. Reaching out for help and knowing when something is too much to handle alone takes strength and courage, and we're here to help.

I'm very thankful for the continued commitment and courage of our faculty and staff, and the fearlessness and flexibility of our students. On behalf of the entire Lobo community, I appreciate all you do to ensure The University of New Mexico continues to embrace its commitment to the health, safety, growth and improvement of our community, and to proudly embody its reputation for research and scholarship as New Mexico's flagship university.

Quality Childcare Critical to Productivity

I know many in the UNM community juggle the dual responsibility of work and family, which is made even more difficult in this uncertain time. With Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) continuing to remain online through the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year, parents will have to continue to balance their own work with the educational support their children need for learning at home. I encourage all supervisors to continue to be flexible and understanding as you work to support our employees in this unprecedented time.

In particular, access to quality childcare remains one of the most critical needs of families and communities. For those facing challenges, or who want to lend a hand, some help is available. If you're a student, staff, or faculty member interested in supporting families in our community, you can [apply here to provide in-home childcare or educational oversight](#), while the State of New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department has issued [guidance on how to become a temporary family, friends, and neighbor provider](#). And if you're an undergraduate

student, graduate student, or resident working in the Health Sciences Center and facing financial hardship, you may be eligible for the [Health Sciences Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) to cover some of the costs of your childcare.

UNM Researchers Play Key Role in \$115M Quantum Systems Accelerator

As New Mexico's only Tier 1 public research (R1) university, The University of New Mexico is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in transformational, cutting-edge research. I am excited to announce that our [Center for Quantum Information and Control](#) has been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to play a key role in the new Quantum Systems Accelerator, [a five year, \\$115 million project that will create new technological solutions to harness quantum information science to benefit our state, the nation, and the world.](#)

The Quantum Systems Accelerator brings together a multidisciplinary team of more than 30 partners across academia, government laboratories, international research programs, and industry, which are pioneering many of today's quantum capabilities. Like UNM's Grand Challenges, these types of collaboratives seek to create and accelerate new knowledge—in this case bringing promising research and development from the lab to the marketplace. UNM continues to be a driver and partner and in focusing our scientific and scholarly efforts on initiatives that foster innovation and spark solutions to complex societal issues.

Voluntary Retirement Option Extended to Eligible Employees

As declining state revenues in the face of the pandemic require us to examine and consider our own mandatory budget reductions, [UNM is implementing a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Option \(VRIO\) program that may be attractive to faculty and staff who are eligible to retire.](#) As countless colleges and universities are doing around the nation, we are reaching out to our eligible faculty and staff to offer a one-time incentive payment for retiring on designated dates over the next few fiscal quarters. This should not be considered a request to our valued faculty and staff to retire; rather, employees opting to participate in the program should determine on their own whether this is the right opportunity for them. If interested, [please visit the VRIO website](#) for more information.

Racism Educational Series Concludes by Highlighting the March on Washington

For the past eleven weeks—with the first installment appearing on Juneteenth—the UNM Newsroom has been running a remarkable set of articles called [Racism: An Educational Series](#), spotlighting pieces by many of our faculty and alumni, and exploring, among many other topics, the history of the civil rights movement and the origins of Juneteenth, race-related protests in the United States, and anti-Blackness in the media. The series concluded last week by marking the occasion of the [57th anniversary of the March on Washington](#), the site of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s celebrated I Have a Dream speech. I'm very proud of the work that's being done to educate and raise awareness of some of the fundamental issues related to race and racism in New Mexico and the United States – including gaps and omissions in our cultural knowledge that we need to fill in now more than ever.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and let's go, Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President