



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



October 16, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

Today, as we celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day—and as we close in on the end of Hispanic Heritage Month this Wednesday—it's appropriate that we reflect on and take strength in our unique culture at The University of New Mexico, rooted deep in the more than three centuries of American Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo history and influences. Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

UNM is proud to be home to faculty, staff, and students from our state's 23 tribal nations, including 19 Pueblos, 3 Apache Tribes and the Navajo Nation in New Mexico—as well as many from tribes beyond the borders of our state. Each is distinct and different, with unique passions and personalities—passions we see reflected in our Native students. It is a point of pride that we work hard to recruit Native students to provide them with the support needed to ensure they arrive here as enthusiastic students and leave as graduates and Lobo alumni. This past spring, in fact, we conferred more than 400 degrees to American Indian students on our main campus alone, a significant increase over the previous academic year. I am very proud of that and proud of all our American Indian students.

The University of New Mexico is also proud to be a Hispanic Serving Institution, with over 40% of our student body identifying as Latinx, Latino, Chicano or Hispanic. These students come from communities not only across New Mexico and the Southwest, but from around the world. They bring their culture and language, their light and their laughter, to our campus and our community. They make us stronger, smarter, and more interesting—there's a reason we have a nationally-recognized Chicana & Chicano Studies program that's the envy of the nation; our faculty are smart and passionate about what they do, and our students bring to it their boundless energy, curiosity, and enthusiasm.

It is my privilege to lead such a diverse Lobo community of more than 25,000 students and 3,000 faculty and staff. We find strength and solace in our differences, and unity in our uniqueness. This is part of who we are as Lobos.

Fall 2020 Commencement Postponed

It is with genuine sadness, but likely little surprise, that we have made the difficult but necessary decision to [postpone in-person commencement ceremonies for our Fall 2020 graduates](#). This comes six months after similar concerns about the spread of COVID-19, along with federal, state, and local restrictions, required us to postpone our Spring 2020 in-person celebrations. I know this is very disappointing news to our students

who have worked so hard and looked forward to celebrating their achievements with family and friends. We're working on alternatives for celebrating the occasion until we can safely gather together in person. Commencement is a vital rite of passage, and we can't wait to see you walk across the stage for your diploma in person—but only when we're absolutely certain we can do so safely and in adherence to New Mexico's public health orders.

Stay Healthy. Stay Safe. And Keep Wearing That Mask.

Cases of COVID-19 are creeping upwards again across our state. The speed of the increase has been alarming, and even more concerning is the increase in the numbers of people who require hospitalization. While our numbers at The University of New Mexico have remained relatively flat, it is important to remember to maintain the habits that have kept us there. Please continue to respond to your morning screening e-mails, check our [COVID dashboard for the latest information](#), and if you don't absolutely need to be on campus, please remain at home.

However, if you need to come to campus, this is a gentle reminder to wear a mask at all times—yes, even outside when there are others around—and to maintain physical distancing of at least six feet. I continue to be encouraged by seeing students gathered in groups at the SUB or at the Duck Pond while still maintaining distancing. Your flexibility and adaptability are very much appreciated.

Rest assured we're keeping our eye on the data and are following both the science and the guidance of federal, state, and local authorities to keep our campus community safe and healthy. Like you, we're looking forward to the day when we can safely move toward fully reopening campus and returning to normal—which includes celebrating events like graduation in person. Until then, Lobos, stay informed, keep following the health and safety protocols, and keep supporting each other.

LoboTHON Raising Funds for UNM Children's Hospital

[LoboTHON, UNM's largest student-run philanthropy](#), annually raises funds and awareness for the UNM Children's Hospital. As you can imagine, our children's hospital, like every medical facility, is working hard to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. That makes fundraising even more critical, and LoboTHON is working harder than ever to provide financial support for our own hospital. While LoboTHON's marquee event is usually its dance, COVID restrictions have made this popular event impossible. Instead, to increase awareness, LoboTHON is sponsoring [a virtual talk by Alex Sheen, noted speaker and founder of because I said I would](#), on Friday, October 23, at 6:00 p.m. LoboTHON represents our students at their very best and most generous, and I'm proud to support them and UNM's Children's Hospital.

Gerald W. May Outstanding Staff Nominations Due October 17

Do you know of a member of our UNM staff who has made a significant contribution to The University of New Mexico and the Lobo community? Someone who inspires you with their leadership, vision, empathy, and enthusiasm? If so, I encourage you to [nominate them for the Gerald W. May Outstanding Staff Award](#). Since 1994, Staff Council has been recognizing outstanding staff members with this prestigious award, created and funded by former UNM President Gerald May in 1990, with additional funding from the Regents' Endowment Fund. Staff Council will review and screen the nominees and submit the final recommendations to me, where

I have the honor of choosing the three award winners. Nominations can come from faculty, staff and students. I'm looking forward to finding out who inspires you.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President