



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



October 19, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

As a state and a nation, we are reckoning with an alarming increase in COVID cases and hospitalizations. The challenges are relentless and, at times, seem overwhelming. But through it all, The University of New Mexico has proven its ability to lead the way in developing creative and effective approaches to fighting the coronavirus. And that is why I am extremely proud to highlight one of our most world-renowned programs at UNM, Project ECHO, which is the recipient of [a contract worth up to \\$237 million from the federally-funded CARES Act](#) to help fight outbreaks of COVID-19 in nursing homes across the nation.

It is vital that we address the needs of this vulnerable population. Nearly a quarter of our nation's 200,000 COVID-19 deaths have occurred among residents and workers in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. As Project ECHO director and founder Dr. Sanjeev Arora explained, "the risk of getting COVID-19 and dying from it, if you were living in a nursing home, was absolutely enormous."

Project ECHO, which uses cutting-edge video conferencing technology to connect health experts and specialists with health care providers in underserved areas around the world, will use this funding to expand a pilot program in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to educate nursing homes about COVID-19 infection control. As part of a virtual 16-week curriculum, participating nursing homes will receive information and guidance on a wide span of critical issues, from how to keep infected patients from spreading the disease to guidance on reusing personal protective equipment. This training will be available to any nursing home in the nation.

The University of New Mexico's Health Sciences Center plays a vital role in our underlying mission to provide quality and compassionate health care services not just to our community, but to the nation and the globe. Project ECHO, since its inception in 2003, has been a national leader in expanding high-quality health care services where they are needed the most, and I am so proud to see the program receive well-deserved recognition and funding.

My thanks and congratulations to our innovative and dedicated team at Project ECHO. Working together, Lobos are saving lives every day, in our own community and beyond.

New Event Request Site Launched

The social and organizational events that enrich the Lobo experience must, unfortunately, remain virtual, as current public health orders issued by the New Mexico Department of Health continue to limit our ability to hold large events on our campuses. As of Friday, October 16, the limit for events is five (5) attendees, meaning no large-scale events or mass gatherings should be planned at this time.

To track and review campus-related events before their occurrence, we have developed a [new event request process and information webpage](#)—beginning, at the moment, with requests for any gatherings occurring on our heavily-populated Albuquerque campus. All proposed events or gatherings for our Albuquerque sites or facilities must be submitted through this website for review and approval before the event is held to ensure that appropriate guidelines are followed, safety precautions are implemented accordingly, and event and safety staff can advise of any adjustments to events, as necessary.

I know this is hard on everyone, as so many of the opportunities to bring us together as Lobos have taken on a new dynamic, and we will continue to creatively find ways to connect and engage online. In time, this pandemic will subside, but in the meantime, I ask that you please follow the guidelines to [Bringing Back the Pack](#) and commit to the safety of our community.

Annual Willard Lecture Honors Writer and Activist Margaret Randall

[This year's Willard Lecture](#) celebrates the life and work of writer, scholar, artist, poet, and activist Margaret Randall, whose manuscript and photographic archives have been acquired by and are now housed in The University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections. While COVID-related restrictions make it impossible to host an in-person event in the Willard Room at Zimmerman Library as we usually do, this year's lecture—an exciting conversation between Randall and Nicaraguan poet and activist Giocando Belli called *Two Poets, Two Revolutionaries, Two Friends*—will be available for all to attend as a webinar on October 28, beginning at 4 p.m. The event is free, [but registration is required](#). I was proud to bestow an [honorary UNM doctorate of letters on Randall in 2019](#), and I'm very much looking forward to this dynamic discussion between two powerful and passionate women.

UNM Gives United Way Campaign Finds Our Favorite Salsa

And we have a winner! The 2nd Annual Salsa Showdown, our kick-off event for the UNM Gives United Way Campaign, happened on Tuesday, October 6, with over 200 grab & go bags of chips and salsa distributed to Lobos on campus, all tasked with choosing UNM's favorite salsa. There were nine salsas to sample, each prepared carefully and safely by UNM Food Catering. [This year's winning salsa recipe was Salsa #2](#), submitted by student Faron Stout, who receives the grand prize of one free year of UNM parking. The runner up was Salsa #7, submitted by Rosa Isela Cervantes, director of El Centro de la Raza. I want to thank everyone involved with UNM Gives for making this safe and socially distanced event both fun and successful. It was a great way to promote and support an excellent cause.

Associate VP for Institutional Support Services Announces Retirement

UNM Associate Vice President for Institutional Support Services, [Chris Vallejos, has announced his plan to retire on October 31, 2020](#). Chris has been a lifetime Lobo, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from the Anderson School of Management before starting his career at UNM in 1986. He has held the position of VP for Institutional Support Services (ISS) for more than a decade. Under his leadership, ISS auxiliary units have contributed over \$10.5 million to UNM's operating budget to support our academic mission. Vallejos' responsibilities will be reallocated within ISS and an announcement regarding these changes will be coming soon. Please join me in warmly thanking VP Vallejos for his lifelong dedication and service to

UNM and to the Lobo community; he'll be missed.

Early Voting Available through October 31

New Mexico residents may cast their vote early for the November 3 general election. (I voted on Saturday at one of the early voting locations – it felt good to do so!) If you're not registered to vote yet, many early registration sites also provide same day registration. Please visit [NMvote.org](https://nmvote.org) to find your polling location and voting information. And remember – voting is not only your civic responsibility, it's also your right.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President