



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



October 26, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

Next Tuesday, November 3, is Election Day—and in the minds of many, this is perhaps the most consequential election in a generation. It's also one of the most contentious. You don't have to be on social media to know that emotions are running high across the political spectrum; just turn on the news or engage in even the briefest conversation with nearly anyone. And being quarantined and away from each other in the middle of a heated election also hasn't helped to cool things down.

Regardless of where you might be on the political spectrum, or even how you feel about politics, odds are you have an opinion—possibly a strong one—on the coming election. That's a good thing; as Americans, we've been passionate about our politics for even longer than we've been a nation.

But this year feels different. If early indicators tell us anything, it's that Americans are voting early and in record numbers. And due to quarantine restrictions, they're also voting by mail at equally unprecedented levels. Americans are engaged as never before. As Election Day nears, then, chances are good that you're going to be involved in a discussion about candidates, politics, and policies—whether in person, on the phone, over Zoom, via text message, or on social media.

No matter how you engage, I ask that we at UNM treat others respectfully, both those you disagree with, as well as with those who might disagree with you. I know how difficult it can be, but let's all work hard to be better than what angers us.

There's a good chance, too, that we may not know the final results of the election for several days, while votes are counted—that's only going to extend the wait, and the debate. You may want to raise your voice and protest—and that's your right as well, another tradition as old as our nation itself. Here, again, do so safely and respectfully.

As Lobos, we pride ourselves on embracing and respecting our differences—but don't let those differences define us. We're not a red and blue America here at UNM; we're a cherry and silver family.

Remaining Diligent in the Face of COVID-19

I continue to be alarmed by the increase in cases of COVID-19 across our county and our state, and even more distressed by the number of hospitalizations and deaths.

At The University of New Mexico, the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students, and community will always be paramount. That's why UNM has not let its guard down against the threat of the novel coronavirus.

We strictly adhere to, and often exceed, state and local public health orders that help to limit the spread of COVID-19, including rigorous health and safety protocols, strict cleaning requirements, mandatory masking and physical distancing, and an on-campus site where students who believe they may have been exposed to COVID can get tested.

We also update our [online COVID dashboard daily](#), making sure everyone has access to the best and most up-to-date information about the health of our campus. And I am pleased to report that a significant number of those reporting coming to campus have also reported having gotten a flu shot. This is one of the most important things you can do, and there are still many options to receive a flu shot for free.

At this point, I know we've all experienced some degree of COVID fatigue. It's been a long year, being away from family, friends, and each other, missing major events, and being careful about making sure we always know where our mask is. As Lobos, we're all looking forward to the day when we can fully reopen our campus, attend classes and events in person, and celebrate accomplishments together. But we won't do so until we know we can do so safely—and we'll base all of our decisions on the best available science, and with the guidance of local, state, and federal health officials. So, until then, please wear your masks, maintain safe physical distances, stay home as much as possible, and wash your hands regularly.

I know these continue to be uncertain times. I appreciate how responsible the Lobo community has been about adhering to rigorous health and safety protocols—our relatively stable number of cases is due entirely to your diligence.

Remember to Vote on GO Bonds

There's a very full ballot before us when we go to cast our votes in this general election. When you fill out your ballot, please make certain you review the ballot initiatives on the back; there, you'll find the opportunity to cast your vote for several General Obligation Bonds crucial to The University of New Mexico and other institutions of higher learning in our state. [General Obligation Bond C](#) for Higher Education will provide more than \$155 million to New Mexico's colleges, universities and specialty schools for [facility updates](#) and [new technologies](#). Additionally, this investment in higher education across the state will support the New Mexico economy with approximately 1,500 new jobs in 23 cities — all with no tax increase!

The other important initiative, [General Obligation Bond B](#), will provide \$9,500,000 to public and tribal public libraries, including \$3 million each for public, academic and public-school libraries. At a time when university libraries are working to make increasingly more resources available around the clock for students studying remotely, Library Bond B will provide much-needed funding to support the success of students at UNM and across our state. I encourage you to give these initiatives your full consideration.

ASUNM Voting Now Open

For our undergraduate students, voting for the Associated Students of The University of New Mexico (ASUNM) Senate opened this morning at 8 a.m. and closes on Wednesday, October 28 at 5 p.m. To vote, log on to my.unm.edu and click on the VOTE NOW tab! Voting in your local, state and national elections is more important now than ever. Make sure you are also exercising your right to vote as a student as well.

Daylight Savings Begins November 1

Don't forget that Daylight Savings Time begins this Sunday, November 1. Remember to set your clocks back 1 hour when you go to bed on Saturday night—and enjoy that extra hour of sleep.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President