



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



November 9, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

Over the next 10 days, [UNM observes its Fourth Annual First Gen Proud Celebration](#), a time when we commemorate the accomplishments of our first-generation Lobos. Although the definition of “first-generation” can vary from institution to institution, at UNM we define it as “students and their siblings that lived in a household where neither parent received a four-year bachelor’s degree.”

First Gen students are a unique population, facing some unique challenges. Nationally, about 20 percent of college undergraduates are first-generation students—almost half of whom come from low-income families. Many seek a college degree to improve their lives, help their families, or to give back to their communities—but they also struggle with resources, an unfamiliarity with fees and financial aid, and can sometimes feel overwhelmed by a system they have to navigate themselves. Some first-generation students worry they might be stigmatized by their status, whereas others see it as a source of strength and personal pride.

I know, because I’m a proud first-generation college graduate.

As I was lucky enough to discover, going first doesn’t always mean going it alone. Although there were many things about higher education I had to learn about and navigate on my own, I was very fortunate to have the guidance of faculty members who took an interest in me and parents who wanted me to succeed. With their encouragement, I earned a B.A., M.S. and Ph.D.

As part of our First Gen Proud Celebration, UNM is proud to support our First Gen Lobos and joins with campuses around the nation [celebrating these students](#) with virtual rallies, panel discussions, listening sessions, and more. To all our First Gen Lobos: we are so fortunate to have you here, and we look forward to providing you with the support and resources you need to succeed. If there’s anything you need, just ask--as a fellow First Gen, I can promise we’ve got your back.

Lobos Dream Big with Resources Available to Spur Success

With COVID-19 cases on the rise across our state, UNM continues to focus on responsibly protecting our pack. This Winter, we are working hard to keep everyone safe as we provide Lobos with the support and services needed to help them succeed. [Among the changes we’re implementing for the Spring 2021 semester](#): more peer tutoring and supplemental instruction at CAPS, and more in-class peer support; a clear online method for changing grade mode to CR/NC or letter grade (more on that down below); more services for stress reduction and mental health; more remote teaching training for faculty; and smooth transfer pathways, counting all academic credits.

Although still don’t know whether our Spring semester will continue as hybrid instruction or be held entirely

online—we'll keep an eye on state COVID levels and follow guidance from health officials—we're continuing to provide students with plenty of options for creating a schedule that fits their needs. To make things even easier, there will be [no Online Max fee for Spring 2021](#), so students will no longer have to worry about fee differences when selecting a remote instruction mode.

We're committed to ensuring access to a UNM education is as hassle-free as possible. I'm excited about the changes we've got in store and grateful to the many people who have worked hard to make it happen.

New Guidance on Changing Grade Modes to CR/NC

Working with the Provost, we have issued [new guidance to make the process for changing grade mode](#) - to CR/NC or letter grade - clearer and simpler. Before grading opens on Friday, December 4 at 5 p.m., students may use the Enrollment Authorization CHANGE GRADE MODE form to change grade mode to CR/NC. After 5 p.m. on December 4, students may use the Enrollment Authorization AFTER THE TERM form to request a Grade Mode Change.

Please keep in mind that credits taken CR/NC do not necessarily meet degree requirements, but CR grades do not have a negative impact on GPA. Please also keep in mind that a grade of NC can have an impact on financial aid. I encourage students to review the information about limits on CR grades for degree requirements, evaluate the [pros and cons regarding the CR/NC option](#), and discuss it with their academic advisor.

Be Mindful of Your Online Surroundings

As more and more of our time is spent online, in virtual meetings, and on social media, please - just as you would when walking in a strange location - be mindful of your virtual surroundings and conscientious of your online interactions with others. Trolling and other online attacks have increased across all platforms, as have attempts at doxing, in which your private information is maliciously made public on the internet. In addition to posting racist, sexist, or overtly sexual material on social media, we're also seeing Zoom bombing on learning and working platforms with harassing words and photos. We have developed resources for our community to [prevent trolling, doxing and Zoom Bombing](#), as well new ways as to [respond to such incidents](#), and the Office of Equal Opportunity recently hosted a [webinar that identified prevention efforts](#). These types of online abuse have absolutely no place at UNM. Please do not engage with trolls and please do report any inappropriate behavior.

Election 2020: Congratulations

"Dream with ambition, lead with conviction, and see yourselves in a way that others may not, simply because they've never seen it before." - **Vice President-elect Kamala Harris**

On November 7, multiple media outlets reported that Joe Biden had secured the necessary Electoral College votes to become the 46th President of the United States of America. No matter who we may have individually supported when our ballots were cast, we in the Lobo community celebrate our most precious right to select our nation's leaders. We congratulate President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris, U.S. Senator Lujan, U.S. Representatives Haaland, Herrell and Leger Fernandez, and our New Mexico

legislators. We are also grateful to the voters of New Mexico for their [overwhelming approval of higher education and library bonds](#). We look forward to working together to make higher education accessible and exceptional.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President