



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



December 7, 2020

Good afternoon Lobos,

As we count down the last five days of the semester, I wanted to take a moment to wish our students the best of luck on their final exams, term papers, and projects and to acknowledge their hard work during what, under the best of circumstances, has been a challenging – but, I hope, a rewarding – semester.

Here's to you, Class of 2020!

This week, we're celebrating the graduation of our Fall 2020 class—a very special group, and perhaps one of the most unique graduating classes in the history of both our university and our nation. It's been a long year, with much of the world on pause during the COVID pandemic, and, as many of us can attest, creativity and motivation can be tough to muster. But through it all, these dedicated students have done something remarkable--they've attained their degrees.

This Fall, we're proud to have 1,819 new Lobo graduates, a number which includes graduate students and graduates of the Health Sciences Center. For most of their last two semesters, these students had their lives and their routines turned upside down, attending class remotely, spending most of their days in isolation or quarantine, and interacting with instructors and classmates reduced to the size of Zoom windows.

And yet, our students were flexible, patient, and understanding as everything around them changed nearly overnight. In the face of these challenging circumstances, they never stopped achieving and never stopped believing. With hard work, and the support and encouragement of our fantastic Lobo faculty and staff behind them, they did something extraordinary in the midst of the unprecedented. The entire UNM community is so proud of the Class of 2020—certainly one for the record books, and for the history books.

Even though we aren't able to celebrate together due to the ongoing public health orders, we still plan to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of our students virtually with commencement being broadcast live on Facebook and YouTube on Friday, Dec. 11 at 6 p.m. From personalized graduation pages to videos from supporters around the world, the [Fall 2020 Lobo Grad Stream](#) offers opportunities to recognize every graduate. I encourage all pending and awarded graduates from Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 to [sign up by Dec. 9, 2020, 11 p.m.](#)

Although it's not quite the celebration, pomp and circumstance of the traditional commencement, the virtual ceremony is UNM's way to maintain COVID-19 precautions while still recognizing the incredible accomplishments of our Lobos.

We will celebrate in person as soon as we can – Provost Holloway and I are committed to holding an in-person graduation ceremony for all of our calendar 2020 graduates, hopefully in spring of 2021, public health orders allowing.

To our 2020 graduates: I admire the sheer grit and determination you've shown to finish your degrees under the most challenging of conditions, and I thank you for the courage and compassion you've exhibited even as your college experience was unexpectedly altered. The Class of 2020 will always have a special place in our University's history, and in our hearts.

UNM-Taos Chancellor Bids Farewell

As president of a university with four branch campuses, I have the great pleasure of working regularly with our terrific chancellors, who ensure Lobo pride and academic excellence reach the diverse and distinctive communities across our state. It is therefore bittersweet to hear that [Dr. Patrick Valdez, Chancellor of UNM-Taos, has announced he will be stepping down](#) on January 1 to join the Maryland-based education provider 2U as its Vice President for Program Strategy. As a lifelong educator and advocate for first-generation college students, Dr. Valdez brought his own unique brand of dynamic leadership to the UNM-Taos campus, and he has been an invaluable part of the Lobo community. It has been a pleasure to know Dr. Valdez both professionally and personally; please join me in wishing him well in his new role at 2U.

And finally, as an ongoing reminder: we are here for you Lobos, whether you are on campus or not. [Our many resource centers and programs that support your mental health and well-being are available](#), so please know you can reach out and someone will be there to listen to you and support you.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes

President