



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



March 22, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos –

Last week, I talked about our remarkable faculty and their defining work as the heart of our educational mission at The University of New Mexico. But as I also noted at that time, a university is many things at once – from lecture hall to town hall, dance troop to support group – and provides a wide array of services for a large and increasingly diverse community. Even as UNM went almost entirely to remote instruction a year ago this month, we were more resolute than ever to ensure our vast infrastructure of support services remained available in some capacity. In other words, if the community couldn't come to campus, we were determined to make sure we could bring the campus to the community.

[What we learned was astounding.](#) We found out just how critical these services are to defining us as a university, how valued they are by our students and the community, and how they truly help shape and support the overall Lobo experience. We also found that if we made sure we had help and support available, our students would willingly accept it, and I'm so pleased the university community could be there for them.

For example, many of our resource centers saw major increases in the demand for their services when compared to the semesters leading up to the pandemic. Notably, the [Women's Resource Center](#) marked a 60.71% increase in its counseling hours, providing more than 2,250 hours of trauma-informed counseling for students at UNM. On a similar note, [our nationally-recognized Agora program](#), which went entirely online at the beginning of the pandemic, immediately saw demand for its services increase by more than 15%, and found that younger people were particularly grateful for the online services. Meanwhile, the [Campus Office of Substance Abuse Program \(COSAP\)](#), which quickly pivoted to virtual peer-led recovery support operations, witnessed a dramatic 353% increase in the utilization of its life-changing services.

We were also pleased to see students take advantage of academic support programs, most of which also immediately took their services online to ensure students working remotely continued to have access to first-rate tutoring, mentoring, scholarship and course information, and career development. Our [award-winning Center for Academic Programs Support \(CAPS\)](#), which already had a strong online presence, saw demand for its online writing lab jump by 118%. In the Department of Engineering, the [Engineering Student Success Center](#) noted a 100% increase in scholarship applications, while the [UNM Office of Advising Strategies](#) provided more than 15,000 virtual advising sessions, a 29.43% increase from Fall 2019.

And though it all, let's not forget the work being done by the [Accessibility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#), which has worked overtime to ensure our hard-of-hearing students had real-time captioning available to them in an online era marked by poor sound quality, reduced access to body language, and an increase in mask-covered mouths (making lip-reading impossible). Demand for captioning services increased by more than 623%, and I am pleased to note that many of our departments, including the Office of the Provost, have stepped in to

provide much-needed support for ARC and its students.

Finally, when it comes to one-of-a-kind experiences that serve to define an institution, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the extraordinary efforts by the [Maxwell Museum of Anthropology](#) to increase its virtual presence in the wake of the pandemic. The team at Maxwell expanded many of its programs to virtual spaces and produced five new online exhibitions, putting both new and existing exhibits in front of online audiences in New Mexico and beyond. The result was a staggering 478% increase in visitors to its exhibits.

I'm very proud of these programs, and the vast array of services we offer our students—services that will only continue to serve, guide, instruct, and entertain in a post-pandemic environment. Together, they're part of the unique fabric that makes up the overall Lobo experience—and makes our university a truly supportive and engaging community for our students, faculty, and staff.

UNM Stands with the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought us closer together in unexpected ways, there are moments when we are horrified by acts of hatred and violence against our fellow citizens. The recent violence in Atlanta that claimed the lives of eight Americans, including six Asian American women, is a moment for national reckoning and reflection, and our hearts are with the families of the victims. Unfortunately, no community is free from xenophobia; even here at UNM, several members of our Asian American and Pacific Islander community have been the targets of ugly acts of vandalism and ethnic slurs within the last year. We recognize the fear in which our students, faculty, and staff of Asian descent are living, and such hatred will not be tolerated. We at UNM stand in solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) community, and denounce this disturbing rise in xenophobia, racism, and violence against our fellow Americans.

[The UNM Division of Equity and Inclusion](#) has led discussions to address xenophobia and stigma during the era of COVID-19, including webinars focusing on the impact to API groups, as well as publishing the [Equity and Inclusion at UNM During COVID-19 guidelines](#). If you experience discrimination, please visit the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#)--or, to report an incident, [visit Ethicspoint](#). For support during this time, services are available from [UNM Mental Health Resources](#) and from the [New Mexico Asian Family Center](#).

2021 Legislative Session Wraps Up

As the 2021 legislative session came to a close on Saturday, lawmakers passed the state budget for FY21, which includes a higher-education budget of \$865.5 million, up 2.8%. State government workers will receive a 1.5% cost of living adjustment and, thanks in great part to our undergraduate student leadership, \$15.5M was added to the Legislative Lottery Scholarship, which may fund up to approximately 90% of tuition. The NM Opportunity Scholarship, funded at \$18M, will include both two- and four-year degree seekers. Of course, everything now goes to the Governor for her signature.

UNM-related highlights of the session include: a 3.5% increase in Instruction and General (I&G) funding for UNM's central campus, a 4.1% increase for the Health Sciences Center and a 2.8% increase for the branch campuses. Outside of the overall state budget, the Legislature also funded \$1.9M to 18 special projects such

as Chicano/a Studies, the NM Poison & Drug Information Center and UNM Press. We also did extremely well in capital requests, receiving \$18.2M across the institution, including funding for the College of Fine Arts facility renewal, HSC simulation labs, and branch campus infrastructure and improvements

I am pleased with our progress during this less-than traditional legislative session, and would like to thank everyone, especially our student leaders, legislators, Council of University Presidents, and the UNM government relations team, who worked tirelessly to advocate in Santa Fe for UNM. Additionally, I am appreciative of the many Lobos who met with and provided information to legislative leaders to keep the UNM's priorities top-of-mind and to share how the University continues to provide support to local communities and the state. Further details will be provided in the coming days and weeks as we move toward our budget summit and legislation is signed by the Governor.

Slow the Spread of COVID-19 with NM Notify

Thanks to your continued diligence and vigilance—wearing your mask, regularly washing your hands, and maintaining a safe physical distance—New Mexico is making real progress in stopping the spread of COVID-19. However, you may not know that another critical tool for keeping our community safe is something you carry with you every day: your phone. The New Mexico Department of Health, in partnership with Google, will be launching [NM Notify](#) tomorrow, March 23, to anonymously notify you if you may have been exposed to individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, allowing you a timely opportunity to seek medical attention and reduce further threat of exposure.

[NM Notify was created](#) with both public health and public trust in mind; it protects all of us without ever collecting, storing, or transmitting any location data or personally identifiable information. For Android users, it's as easy as downloading an app; if you're on an iPhone, it's as simple as turning on "Exposure Notifications" in your Settings. Like all matters of public health, we work more effectively when we work together. [Check out the latest on how NM Notify works](#); the more New Mexicans who activate the NM Notify function, the more quickly and effectively we will slow the spread of COVID-19.

Multi-Factor Authentication Begins Tomorrow

Please remember that [multi-factor authentication for all main Campus NetIDs \(unm.edu\) will go into effect starting tomorrow](#). This additional layer of security is needed to ensure we protect your personal and financial data from cyber threats. If you have already registered a device to your Bursar Account Suite or Loboweb, no further action is needed. However, if you haven't yet registered a device, you will need to add this additional verification to your unm.edu account by [registering it here](#). For more information on MFA, please visit [FastInfo 7823](#). For assistance with UNM IT services, you can contact UNM IT Customer Support Services at 277-5757. Thank you for working with us to keep your information safe. You're worth the extra effort.

Grab a Spring Treat on March 25

So, you may have just come back from a week off—but that does not mean you still do not deserve a break

every now and then. As the days get longer and the sun stays in the sky later, it's my pleasure to hopefully brighten your day and help you keep going. Swing by the west side of the SUB on Thursday, March 25 between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to pick up your free treat—then enjoy your Spring and the arrival of some of the finest March weather in the country.

As always, I'd like to ask that you please make sure you've [registered with the New Mexico Department of Health to receive the COVID-19 vaccine](#) when it becomes available. In the meantime, please remain diligent about wearing your mask, washing your hands, and maintaining a safe, physical distance from others.

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President