



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



May 3, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos –

The recent and rapid rise of terrific Spring weather is lifting spirits across our campus and our region—and frankly, it couldn't have come at a better time, for there is much to get excited about and much to celebrate at The University of New Mexico as we make our way toward the end of the Spring 2021 semester.

And what a semester it has been. We started the Spring semester in the cold and gray of January, still operating under COVID-related restrictions that had much of our state, and most of our campus, silent; now, as we enter May, we're seeing the state preparing to reopen again—and at UNM, [we have every intention of being back on campus, in person, for the Fall 2021 semester](#). While we will likely still be complying with various federal, state, and local guidelines to protect public health, I can't tell you how excited I am about seeing you all on campus again. And if you haven't yet registered for Fall 2021 classes, [there's still time to do so](#).

At the moment, though, I know you've got plenty of work to do for the rest of the Spring semester, as you prepare for and take your final exams. The past year has been one of many challenges, of getting used to attending classes, taking tests, and communicating with professors, instructors, and classmates electronically, which I know adds a layer of stress you hadn't expected. Whether you're taking your final from home, in a classroom, or online, I'm proud of all the work you've done to get here—and I hope you are, too. However, if you find yourself feeling stressed out, or just need someone to talk to, please [check in with any of the appropriate support services](#). Take good care of yourself.

After all we've been through together, I'm feeling even more optimistic about our future as a university and as a community. This week, we'll be virtually launching UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined, which will help us determine what we'll be by 2040. [There are still slots available](#) for the event, and as we conclude another unique academic year, I hope you will be able to join us as we explore the vision, values, and goals that we embrace and aspire to as Lobos.

Women's Soccer Ends with a Record-Breaking Season, Men's Golf Clinches MWC Title

Even as a global pandemic drastically altered the way they trained, practiced, and competed, the UNM Women's Soccer team finished their season with a Mountain West title and went on to the NCAA Tournament. There, they defeated Navy in a first-round thriller, advancing to the second round—the first time in Lobo history our women's soccer team advanced in the NCAA Tournament. [While the second-round match against TCU ended in a loss for our Lobos](#), I am so very proud of all that our Lobo women accomplished this season under coach Heather Dyché. It was a privilege to watch them compete this season, and I am grateful to our seniors for laying the foundation for an incredible future for our team. Hold your heads high, Lobos—it was a remarkable season, and truly one for the record books.

More exciting news arrived over the weekend, as our [Men's Golf team clinched its second-straight Mountain West Championship title](#) in Tucson, winning a conference-record eighth title and giving The University of New Mexico a remarkable six Mountain West titles this season. Our team also broke a Mountain West record for the lowest 18-hole scoring total. Congratulations to Coach Glen Millican and his gritty, record-breaking team on another outstanding season!

UNM Health Sciences Joins National Study of COVID Vaccine Hesitancy

While our state is leading the way nationally in ensuring our residents have access to the COVID-19 vaccine, there are still many of our fellow citizens who will not or cannot get vaccinated—and [The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center is part of the national effort to find out why](#). As a recipient of a one-year, \$1.4 million federal [Community Engagement Alliance \(CEAL\) Against COVID-19 Disparities grant](#) from the National Institutes of Health, UNM Health Sciences is part of a national effort to understand and overcome the barriers that keep people from getting vaccinated in hopes of stopping the coronavirus pandemic. Led by Dr. Lisa Cacari-Stone, director of the [Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center](#); Dr. Tassy Parker, director of the [Center for Native American Health](#); and Dr. Nina Wallerstein, director of the [Center for Participatory Research](#), the UNM study, dubbed Wide Engagement for Assessing COVID-19 Vaccination Equity (WEAVE NM), will build a consortium of more than 200 partner organizations to engage with communities around the state. This is an exciting and important collaboration for our Health Sciences Center, and I'm proud we're constantly doing more, and doing good, as we make our way out of the pandemic.

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Elected to National Academy of Sciences

On behalf of the entire Lobo community, it's an honor to congratulate Dr. Jeff Brinker, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering, on his [election to the National Academy of Sciences](#). This is the latest in a long line of awards and accomplishments for Dr. Brinker, who is already a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, a member of the National Academy of Engineers, and a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors. The [National Academy of Sciences](#) was established under a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 to recognize achievement in science by election to its membership. That makes Dr. Brinker part of a long and distinguished tradition of excellence, and we're proud to call him a member of the UNM community. Congratulations. Dr. Brinker, on another remarkable achievement.

Lobo Team Wins NASA MINDS Challenge with Martian Robot Gardeners

UNM's researchers are continually working to solve problems not only here on Earth, but on other planets as well. Case in point: the UNM CHILI HOUSE team of undergraduate, graduate, and faculty researchers from across various disciplines—architects, biologists, computer scientists, and engineers—whose [proposal for teaching robots to care for plants on the surface of Mars recently won the national NASA MINDS Challenge](#). Their innovative idea uses robots and sensors working in tandem to automatically water and grow New Mexico chiles on Mars—the same variety of chile, in fact, that will soon be growing on the international space station. Lobos are bringing a piece of home to other planets—and developing ways to sustain life as humans push their way out into the universe. For a better idea of how their exciting idea actually works, [take a look at the UNM CHILI HOUSE video](#)--and congratulations to our team!

Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

At UNM, we're proud to celebrate May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage month, a time for us to celebrate and pay tribute to the generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders who have enriched America's history and are instrumental in our nation's success. May was formerly chosen by [a 1992 Act of Congress](#), which noted that the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States in May 1843, and that the transcontinental railroad—which was constructed largely by Chinese immigrants—was completed in May 1869. The AAPI community is literally a part of the backbone of our nation and remains so to this day. This is especially true at The University of New Mexico, where we are proud to count so many members of the AAPI community among our students, faculty, and staff. Look for a new series of articles spotlighting the Lobo AAPI community, coming from the UNM Newsroom later this month.

UNM Branch Campuses Spur Innovation, Excellence

Around the state, UNM and its faculty, students, and staff continue to embody academic excellence and to bring to life their innovative ideas that improve and enrich not only their home communities, but our entire state. Thanks to the leadership of UNM-Taos, for example, digital entrepreneurs, innovators, and educators will soon find a place to collaborate and create the next generation of digital start-ups at the [UNM-Taos HIVE](#), or Hub of Internet-based Vocation and Education. The award-winning HIVE combines small business coaching and mentorship, a coworking space, and community college classrooms to support any stage of learning in an open, accepting, community-led atmosphere, and it plans to open its doors in June.

Over at UNM-Gallup, the campus is launching an exciting new [Process Technology Program](#), in collaboration with local process industries, to develop the training necessary to work in vital industries that include water and wastewater treatment, food and beverage manufacturing, and pharmaceuticals. This program, training students for valuable and much-needed industries, is the first-of-its-kind in the state and is now accepting students for the Fall 2021 semester.

Finally, I'm pleased to report we have some [remarkable Coca-Cola scholars](#) at our UNM-Los Alamos and UNM-Valencia campuses. Elizabeth Ramsell of UNM-Valencia and Danna Mayer-Llamas of UNM-Los Alamos were each named [2021 Coca-Cola Academic scholars](#), honoring their academic excellence and celebrating their community leadership. These students represent the very best of the Lobo spirit of achievement and investment in our communities, and it's my privilege to congratulate each of them on their success.

Students Receive Vaccine Priority During Student Vaccination Week

The week of May 3 to May 8 is Student Vaccination Week, which means that for the next five days, the New Mexico Department of Health will prioritize New Mexico's high school and college students, up to age 22, to receive first-dose appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations. This is good news for our students who may not yet have received their first vaccine shot. If you haven't yet registered to receive the vaccine, [please do so immediately](#), so you can move to the front of the line this week. If you're a student who has already received your first shot, please keep your current appointment for the second one.

For the rest of our community, please be sure you, too, are [registered](#) and ready to receive your vaccination. We also encourage you to [report your vaccination status through LoboCheckIn](#). This will help give us a

better sense of the level of immunity in our community and will inform our decisions regarding in-person classes and activities into the summer and fall. Please also continue to wear your masks, maintain a safe physical distance, follow all signage, and wash your hands. While our state has proven itself a model for distributing and administering the COVID-19 vaccine, there's still work to do to continue to keep us all safe.

Finally, while our state and much of our nation are beginning to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, many places in the world are not so fortunate. Many of us have been particularly affected by the terrible news and images coming out of India, as its people continue to struggle with a lack of resources and the heartbreaking loss of lives to COVID. For the members of our community who may have family members, friends, or colleagues in the region, please know that we are here for you, and if you need additional support, [please reach out for help](#).

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President