



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



May 10, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos –

This Saturday, we will officially celebrate the UNM Class of 2021 with an *in-person* graduation ceremony at University Stadium. This will be our first university-wide gathering in more than a year, and I can't begin to tell you how excited I am about getting to see all of you again. I am especially pleased that we will finally give our graduates the opportunity to assemble as a class, cross the stage, and celebrate the end of their journey as UNM students—then send them out into the world as proud Lobo graduates and alumni.

And to all of our 2021 graduates, we are so very proud of you. It has been a long year—and it has been our privilege as administrators and educators to watch you so patiently contend with and cope with the challenges of life under a global pandemic. With much of your last few semesters conducted remotely, you were able to successfully adapt to new ways of thinking, new ways of learning, and new ways of communicating with your teachers, mentors, and each other.

But it wasn't just your class time that was upended; your entire Lobo experience was forever altered. Study groups, weekend tailgating parties, dances, and other large gatherings were moved online; if you wanted to meet at the Duck Pond, or on Johnson Field, you were in masks, sitting six feet apart. Our student-athletes saw their seasons cut short or canceled; they had to train, practice, and compete in unconventional ways and in unusual settings. This was a very different college experience than you bargained for—and yet, this most unusual experience bonds you forever; there is no doubt you will always have something to talk about at the class reunion!

And so, congratulations to the nearly 3,100 of you from across all of our campuses, as you celebrate your graduation from The University of New Mexico. Come Saturday afternoon, the Class of 2021 are officially Lobo alumni—and we have never been prouder to call you that.

Lobos Offer Inspiration

Our students and their accomplishments are at the heart of our 132-year story. Each Lobo has their own unique story to contribute, some of which we've been able to capture and share. I hope you'll take a moment to visit the UNM Newsroom to read the [inspiring stories of some of our 2021 graduates](#), which will continue to be posted throughout the week; I guarantee you'll find a Lobo who will stir your soul.

And in that same spirit of each of us defining all of us, the individual accomplishments of our students continue to be bright spots that define our success as an academic institution. Dana Lee, an undergraduate student double majoring in Native American Studies and American Studies, was just [named a 2021 Udall Scholar by the Udall Foundation](#). She is among 55 sophomores and juniors from 45 colleges and universities honored for their commitment to pursuing careers in the environment, Tribal public policy, or Native health care, as well as for their leadership potential, record of public service, and academic achievement. UNM

students Chenoa Scippio and Dora Bean were also selected as honorable mentions. We look forward to seeing all of our Lobos' future successes, and I personally wish them the best of luck in all their endeavors

Our Thoughts are with the Global Community

Even as our state continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many places around the world where they are still struggling to contain the virus. The recent surges and the horrifying accompanying images of the devastation and loss of lives that we are seeing out of India and South America are of great concern to all of us, and we know there are many members of our community with family members, friends, or colleagues in these regions. Our thoughts are with you at this difficult time, and we are here for you – so please [reach out](#) if you need support, assistance or just someone to talk to.

UNM 2040 Gets Under Way

Last week, we formally launched [UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined](#) with a virtual conversation and breakout sessions to discuss our vision, values, and goals for the future of The University of New Mexico. As we emerge from the pandemic, I am more optimistic than ever about our future as a university and as a community, and I was excited by what I saw during last week's breakout sessions. If you were unable to attend the Virtual Launch, not to worry: in the coming weeks, there will be plenty of opportunities to attend a [faculty/staff](#) or [student](#) focus group to share your ideas about the future vision of UNM. There will also be plenty of other ways to engage throughout the process; your voice is a vital part of our future.

Interviews Begin for UNM-Taos Chancellor

At UNM, we always remember that each of us defines all of us—and that is never truer than when we talk about our branch campuses in Taos, Los Alamos, Valencia, and Gallup. As a state institution, our branch campuses play a key role in reaching communities across our state, providing valuable services—beyond a great education—where they are needed most. We are very fortunate to have our branch campuses under the leadership of some of the most talented administrators anywhere, and we have an exciting opportunity for new leadership at our state's northernmost campus. [Interviews with our three finalists begin today, and run through May 20](#). Each candidate will meet with faculty, staff, students and the community during their interviews, and will hold presentations open to all constituents. These interviews take place on Zoom, so I hope you'll take the opportunity to join the interviews and learn more about our finalists.

Follow the 10 to 100 Challenge

Over the next ten days, the UNM Health System is taking part in the national 10 to 100 Challenge, a multi-platform blitz designed to increase the percentage of employees vaccinated in health care systems across the nation, with the national goal of getting 100 percent of employees vaccinated within the ten days. Each day of the challenge will focus on a different topic relating to the vaccine—vaccine hesitancy, urban myths, impact on specific cultural groups— with a dedicated website, videos, social media posts, media phone banks, and more. This is a community-wide educational opportunity with content that will continue to be available to inform and educate the public long after the competition. You can learn more about the challenge at: unmhealth.org/10to100.

Send Us Your Input on the Proposed Vaccination Policy

[As I mentioned last week](#), UNM is optimistic about returning to mostly in-person instruction and student residency for the Fall 2021 semester. As part of our transition back to a more normal mode of instruction and campus life, [we are discussing whether we will join other universities across the nation in requiring our students, faculty, and staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#). While no final decision has been made, we have posted a [draft policy](#) and are seeking your input. I hope you'll take a moment to review the draft policy, then [send us your comments](#).

In the meantime, [please be sure you 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 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, best of luck with your final exams, Lobos. I know you've worked hard this semester, and you're nearly ready to put this one in the books. Please take care of yourself this week—and if the stress gets to be a bit too much, [please don't hesitate to reach out for some support](#).

Stay safe, stay healthy, and I'll be seeing you on campus very soon. Until then, let's go Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President