



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



*June 7, 2021*

Good afternoon, Lobos –

Our Summer 2021 semester begins today, and it looks much as it did last year: mostly remote, though with some in-person classes. However, while last year's session was conducted among considerable uncertainty as the pandemic raged around the planet, this year we have much to be excited and optimistic about. Cases of COVID-19 are on the decline across our state and across our nation. Our campus, our community, and our state are all opening back up again. If these positive trends continue, we intend to be back on campus full time for Fall 2021—bringing our pack together again after more than a year.

As our state recovers, we are continuing to be cautious, which is why we decided on mostly remote instruction for the Summer 2021 semester. New Mexico ranks among the top states in the nation in getting its population vaccinated—nearly half our population is fully vaccinated—but if you haven't yet done so, [please get registered and ready to receive your shot](#). The University of New Mexico is proud to participate in the national [COVID-19 College Challenge](#), where we are working to ensure we can get as much of our community vaccinated as quickly as possible. Everyone 12 years and older is eligible for a vaccine, it's free, and there's likely [a location nearby where you can receive the shot](#). Let's all keep doing everything we can to #VaxThePack—I can't wait to see you on campus this Fall!

## **Celebrate the LGBTQIA+ Community with Pride**

June is National Pride Month, a time when we celebrate and support the LGBTQIA+ community and allies everywhere, as well as pay tribute to those who demanded and fought for LGBT+ rights in the wake of the raid of the Stonewall Inn in New York in June 1969. We're very fortunate at UNM to have an active, compassionate, and supportive [LGBTQ Resource Center](#), under the leadership of Frankie Flores, that strives to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, as well as a safe zone environment, for all members of UNM and our surrounding community. The newly instituted LGBTQ Advisory Board is hard at work helping to inform what the next 10 years of the center—and beyond—will look like, even as they continue to keep centering our LGBTQIA+ students.

It is my privilege to work with the Center to ensure UNM remains a supporting environment, and I was honored last month to receive their Jozi De Leon Advocate Award. I am proud to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community, to work together to uplift equity for LGBTQ people, and to celebrate the mutual love and humanity that brings us all together.

Celebrate Pride Month proudly and loudly; as Frankie and our colleagues at the LGBTQ Center regularly remind us, having fun is an important part of celebrating the occasion.

## **AAPI Center Opens in Fall 2021**

As the University for New Mexico, we are always striving to ensure the needs of our incredibly diverse student body are met, and that they are valued and supported, regardless of background or the communities they come from. I'm very pleased, then, that [this fall will see the opening of the UNM Asian Pacific American Culture Center \(APACC\)](#), designed to create community and foster success in students of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Desi American (APIDA) heritage. The new center will be modeled on our other similar resource centers, to provide culturally relevant programs and academic support that will cultivate APIDA student leaders within the UNM campus community. APACC will be a welcome and much-needed presence on our campus, and I am grateful for the advocacy and leadership that helped make this project a reality.

## **Welcoming Two New Deans**

Excellence at The University of New Mexico is embodied by our remarkable faculty, whose commitment to student success is at the very core of our mission as an institution. It was a pleasure then, to support the work of Provost Holloway in filling several critical vacant Dean positions, and after a national search, and months of meeting with some extraordinary candidates, the provost has selected two outstanding new Deans. [Moving into the role of Dean of UNM's Honors College and the Dean of University College is Dr. Eric Lau](#), who previously served as Professor of Music – Saxophone and Chair of the Department of Music on the UNM College of Fine Arts; [at UNM's College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences, our new dean will be Dr. Leo Lo](#), who comes to The University of New Mexico from The Pennsylvania State University, where he has been serving as the Penn State University Libraries Associate Dean for Learning, Undergraduate Services and Commonwealth Campuses. Congratulations to our newest deans; we're fortunate to have you leading our students into the future.

## **Lobo Team Tells the Stories of New Mexico's COVID Resilience**

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, with much of the state shut down and the long-term impacts of the virus on our communities uncertain, a team of Lobo students, faculty, and leaders from the [New Mexico Chapter of the American Planning Association \(APA-NM\)](#) began to gather the [stories of how communities across our state were remaining resilient in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic](#). The written and multimedia accounts the team compiled have been collected into a printed and [digital booklet available online](#)—and what you read is certain to inspire you. As team member Mia Held, a Masters in Community & Regional Planning student, explained: “New Mexicans are even tougher than I already thought. We spoke with interview participants who lost family members, had children, endured job loss and all kinds of other struggles in the pandemic. In spite of all this, all the participants I interviewed expressed optimism about the future and saw the good in things instead of focusing on the negative. We are a strong and resilient state.” My thanks to our Lobo team for amplifying these remarkable stories.

As always, Lobos, make sure you're taking care of yourselves and each other. [Get registered to receive the vaccine](#), and consider [reporting your vaccination status at LoboCheckIn](#). Tracking our progress in getting our

community vaccinated is one of the best ways we can ensure we plan appropriately, and safely, for an in-person return to campus in the Fall.

Welcome to the Summer semester, and let's go, Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes  
President