



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



July 12, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos –

Last week, after careful consideration and long consultation with health officials, UNM's leadership team determined that, for the Fall 2021 semester, we will [strongly encourage, though not require, COVID-19 vaccinations for faculty, staff, and students](#). Until the FDA formally approves any COVID-19 vaccine beyond emergency use, we are optimistic that an enthusiastic, aspirational policy for encouraging vaccinations is the most reasonable and responsible approach for ensuring we get as much of our community vaccinated as we can.

If you're not yet vaccinated, we want to make it as easy as possible for you to get your questions answered and to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. [Explore UNM HSC's #10to100 website](#) to find answers to some common questions about vaccines, and then [schedule an appointment](#) for a free vaccination at a site near you. As we prepare for the Fall 2021 semester, we will be making it even more convenient to get vaccinated by providing on-campus vaccination clinics. We will also be providing incentives and other promotions to encourage as much of our community as possible to get vaccinated.

We are very much looking forward to seeing everyone on campus, in person, this fall—and getting vaccinated is the best thing you can do to help us ensure that our campus remains open, and that the group gatherings and activities that are an integral part of the college experience can safely resume. Let's all keep working together to ensure the Lobo community is safe and healthy—and if you're not vaccinated, please continue to wear a mask.

As always, I also very much appreciate the more than 10,000 of you who have already reported your vaccination status through [LoboCheckIn](#). This information helps us keep an eye on our progress toward protecting our community and determining whether in-person instruction and gatherings remain safe.

UNM-Valencia Breaks Ground on Workforce Training Center

In our vital role as The University for New Mexico, we're striving constantly to change lives and improve the standard of living in communities across our state, and our branch campuses remain one of our most valuable assets when it comes to building a smarter workforce and stronger economies in every part of New Mexico. At our UNM-Valencia campus, as part of our ongoing efforts to provide state-of-the-art technical and managerial assistance for small businesses, we are thrilled to [break ground on the new and long-planned Workforce Training Center \(WTC\)](#). The WTC, due for completion in November 2021, will serve as a base for invaluable assistance for small businesses, promoting growth, innovation, productivity, and revenue for businesses in Valencia County and surrounding communities. This is an exciting addition to our Valencia campus and community, and a boon to the ongoing economic development efforts in the region.

Engagement with NM Federal Delegation Supports UNM Mission

While our Federal delegation is always advocating for New Mexico in Washington, DC, it is always a pleasure to welcome them to UNM when they return to their home state. As the only tier-1 public research institution

in the state, our distinctive mission often intersects with the critical work and decision-making undertaken by our delegation. This past week I met with our newly elected Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury. We discussed the strengthening of educational and professional pipelines within New Mexico and her objective to support keeping expertly educated and trained health professionals in our state - I look forward to a continued strong partnership.

Additionally, [the exemplary work of Dr. Heather Edgar](#) (Department of Anthropology/Office of the Medical Investigator), was showcased to our senior U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich and his staff. Her anthropological and forensics work to improve the available knowledge base for the identification of (otherwise unidentified) American Indian and LatinX human remains may be critical to help solving crimes and rendering appropriate justice for disadvantaged populations in New Mexico. Many thanks to our entire New Mexico delegation for their leadership and service to our state, and for advancing the mission of the University for New Mexico.

Project ECHO Continues to Earn National Recognition

UNM's internationally renowned [Project ECHO](#)—a guided-practice model that reduces health disparities in under-served and remote areas around the world—was recently [spotlighted in the prestigious Journal of the American Medical Association](#), where it was noted that in areas with more Project ECHO clinicians, patients with the hepatitis C virus—especially those in underserved communities—were more likely to receive the most effective medication for treatment. Meanwhile, [Project ECHO's Vaccine Confidence Guide](#), produced for U.S. nursing homes reckoning with the impacts of COVID-19, [has been downloaded nearly 7,000 times](#) and is getting wide distribution in the nursing home industry. More important, nursing homes are putting its guidance into practice—practical knowledge that is saving countless lives daily, and all in a day's work for Project ECHO.

Homeland Security Withdraws Proposed “Duration of Status” Rule

Last fall, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [proposed a fixed “duration of status” rule applying to international students](#) studying in the United States on F and J visas, a rule that would have set hard limits on their time in the country and established cumbersome procedures to extend their stay as they complete their studies. At the time, I [submitted comments on behalf of the UNM community](#) strongly objecting to the proposed rule as unnecessary and disruptive, and requested that it be withdrawn. I am very pleased, then, that DHS last week published a [notice in the Federal Register](#) withdrawing the proposed duration of status rule. We at UNM are proud of our international community, many of whom have made enormous sacrifices to study in the United States, and I am pleased DHS has abandoned this rule change that would have impeded their continued path to success.

Have a good week, and let's go, Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President