



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



September 13, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos.

You don't need me to tell you that we're living in stressful times. Every day, millions of Americans strive to cope with mental health issues, whether they are looking out for their own mental health or supporting the health of others. For many, it can all get to be too much to bear; in 2020, nearly 45,000 Americans died by suicide. In New Mexico, we continue to reckon with [one of the highest suicide rates in the nation](#).

But there is hope, and help is available. [September 12th through the 18th is Suicide Awareness Week](#), a time to spotlight resources, share stories, and support those whose lives have been affected by suicide. All week long, [organizations across The University of New Mexico](#) are hosting events to help educate on effective suicide prevention, empower our community and show support for the many people affected by behavioral health conditions. Already today we observed a campus-wide moment of silence in remembrance of those who have taken their lives, and those who still remember and grieve, and [more events are planned throughout the week](#).

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), three times as many U.S. adults reported feeling anxiety and four times as many reported feeling depressed in June 2020 than during the same period the year before. Young adults, minorities, and essential workers have experienced disproportionately worse mental health outcomes. Here at UNM, [Agora Crisis Center](#) and [CARS](#) have also seen an increase in demand for services through their centers.

As a community, we at UNM work to promote hope, connectedness, support, treatment, and recovery – all year long. Look out for each other, Lobos, and if you or someone you know is in need of help, please call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 800-273-TALK (8255) or dial 911 immediately.

## **Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month and the Lobo Legacy**

[National Hispanic Heritage Month](#) officially kicks off on Wednesday, September 15 and runs through Friday, October 15. For the next 30 days, we as a nation pay tribute to and honor the cultures and contributions of Hispanics and Latin Americans. As Lobos, we celebrate our Hispanic heritage every day; it is a rich and vibrant part of our cultural DNA. We're very proud that our nationally recognized [Chicana and Chicano Studies Department](#) continues to explore and examine our state and nation's Hispanic heritage, while recognizing and making new contributions to Hispanic history, arts and culture, and countless other disciplines. I encourage you to take part in [some of the unique events across our campuses](#), explore and appreciate the history that has shaped us, our community, and our university, and take pride in this unique part of our legacy as Lobos.

## Search Underway for Dean of School of Medicine

I am pleased to announce that [we are now actively seeking the next dean for UNM's School of Medicine](#), who plays a key role not only in framing the exceptional education of our medical students, but in improving the health of all New Mexicans as well. As the state's only medical school, the dean's role is a vital part of an innovative and influential health system and health sciences program. We strongly encourage applications from diverse individuals, especially those with lived experiences in communities historically underrepresented in medicine. Interested applicants and nominations should be submitted by e-mail to [UNMSOMDean@Wittkiewer.com](mailto:UNMSOMDean@Wittkiewer.com). In the meantime, I continue to be very grateful to Dr. Martha Cole McGrew, presently serving as our interim dean at this critical time.

## UNM Strengthens Accessibility, Prioritizes Inclusion

As part of our continuing efforts to ensure The University of New Mexico remains a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning, working, and living environment, UNM is constantly striving to ensure our campus remains accessible and supportive of all students, faculty, and staff. As part of these efforts, UNM will be taking steps in the coming months to further [align our campus facilities with the Americans with Disabilities Act](#), including creating and distributing a survey to evaluate accessibility needs across campus.

We have also worked to ensure you can better [reflect and represent your identity in LoboWeb](#). All Lobos can now update at any time their demographic information, including gender non-binary designations and affirmed (preferred) pronouns. Our demographic form also allows you to reflect Tribal affiliation, disability, or veteran status—whatever information you choose to convey.

## UNM Launches Clinical Trial of COVID-19 Vaccine for Children

As part of the national effort to ensure the safety and efficacy of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in children under the age of 12, researchers at The University of New Mexico School of Medicine have begun enrolling participants in clinical trials. [UNM is one of only 88 sites in the United States and Canada participating in Moderna's KidCOVE Study](#), which aims to enroll close to 7,000 children and follow them for about 14 months. Given our population, the UNM participants are more likely to include a larger proportion of Hispanic and Native American children than sites located elsewhere, which makes UNM's participation in this study particularly valuable.

## Woof! Woof! Woof!

Congratulations to our Lobo student-athletes for a successful start to the 2021 season! After spending last season without playing a single home game, our football team is off to a 2-0 start after beating in-state rivals New Mexico State 35-24 in a thrilling game at University Stadium on Saturday night. Our women's volleyball team is also off to a great start, standing at 8-1 after hosting the UNM Tournament in The Pit this weekend, while our always-exciting women's soccer team is at 4-2. Plenty of our other athletes are in action this coming week, including our golf teams, the women's tennis team, and our nationally ranked women's cross-country team. It's great to see all our Lobo athletes back in action again; we're proud to come cheer you on.

As usual, please remember that masks are required in all indoor locations at all times, except when eating, drinking, or in an office alone. Please remember, too, that [The University of New Mexico requires all students](#).

faculty, and staff to be fully vaccinated by September 30, and that there could be serious consequences for those who aren't. To make getting vaccinated as convenient as possible, our on-site vaccination clinic at the SUB Atrium is open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with the exception of September 20 and 21. UNM's vaccination incentive program has also been extended through September 30, so upload your proof of full vaccination at our [vaccination verification site](#).

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes  
President