



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



*December 6, 2021*

Good afternoon, Lobos -

As we move into the final month of 2021, it's wonderful to see all of you, and our campus, looking and feeling so festive for the winter holiday season. And what a difference a year makes; last year at this time, our campus was practically empty. Due to our concerns about the pandemic, once everyone left for Thanksgiving break in November 2020, we didn't return to campus until the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester—and even then, we were engaged in mostly hybrid instruction.

Now, however, thanks to your continued care and diligence in looking out for the health and safety of your fellow Lobos—through vaccination, indoor masking, and maintaining good health protocols—we're able to enjoy events, and each other, in person. Our community education and vaccination efforts have made it possible to return to many of the events and traditions that we were not able to enjoy last year, like the beautiful Hanging of the Greens ceremony that was held this last Friday evening.

December is traditionally one of our busiest months, with plenty of big events between now and the winter break. Final exams begin the week of December 13, and if you're uncertain what your exam schedule might be, you can refer to the [final exams schedule](#)—though as usual, please check with your instructor if you have any questions. [Online tutoring also continues to be available](#) in the weeks and days leading up to finals, so don't hesitate to ask for help.

I'm also very excited about our upcoming commencement ceremonies, where we'll be celebrating both the Class of 2021 and the Class of 2020 in-person. For graduate students, commencement will be held on **Thursday, December 16**; for undergraduates, we'll be celebrating on **Friday, December 17**. Both events will take place at 6 p.m. in University Arena, bringing commencement back to The Pit for the first time since 2019. We're also always [looking for volunteers](#) to help us keep things running smoothly.

Again, thank you for all you've done to make these in-person celebrations possible. As we continue to organize public events in the coming months, it is more critical than ever that we remain vigilant about public health, and any setback could jeopardize our plans for future in-person celebrations. I urge you to keep up your good work and keep watching out for each other.

## **State-of-the-Art Center of Excellence Opens on UNM Health Sciences Rio Rancho Campus**

Last week, I had the pleasure of participating in the [ribbon cutting for our new UNM Center of Excellence for Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation](#) in Rio Rancho, and what a stunning facility it is: 50,000 square feet of great minds bringing together clinical, academic, and research activities under one roof--which makes it the only facility of its kind in our state. Apart from housing the majority of our health system's joint replacement surgeries and rehabilitation, the center also provides plenty of support for all health systems in

the state, spurring innovative research and providing the training needed to meet the anticipated shortage of health care professionals in our communities. I'm grateful for the support of the citizens and leaders of Rio Rancho and Sandoval County, who helped bring this facility from proposal to reality through their gross receipts tax revenues, and I appreciate the leadership and support of all those who have worked so hard to make this amazing center possible.

### **First-year Lobo Presents at National Public Health Conference**

This year's American Public Health Association annual meeting in Denver—the largest public health conference in the nation—featured not just one, but *three* [presentations from UNM-Taos first-year pre-science student Sydnie Pino](#), who spoke on mental health and equity issues from the perspective of an Indigenous student. Pino attended the conference as part the team from New Mexico, which presented on “Indigenous Health During COVID: What We Know, What We Can Learn.” Sydnie called it a “huge deal” and it truly was. Congratulations, Sydnie, on your poise and expertise; you make all Lobos proud.

### **UNM To Host International Admissions Conference in 2022**

I am delighted to announce that we are still on track to [host the 2022 International Association for College Admission Counseling \(INTL-ACAC\) conference](#) in July of next year, after postponement of the 2020 conference due to COVID-19. This conference is expected to draw participants from more than 90 countries and is the premier annual gathering for approximately 1,400 international recruiters and high school college counselors from secondary schools across the world. Having been recognized as one of only 35 Fulbright HSIs in the country as a result of our active engagement with exchange programs and opportunities, we are honored to now host this outstanding group of international professionals on our campus. I look forward to our guests coming to the Land of Enchantment and experiencing our unique community, and what it means to be a Lobo.

### **UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined Survey Reminder**

As we continue our work on [UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined](#), our multi-year plan for the long-term future of our university, your input is a critical part of the process. This fall, we launched task forces of broadly representative Lobos across our campuses to help build out our goals as we move toward 2040. With the input of diverse stakeholders across communities, we have created a realistic framework for our plan. I am now coming to you to encourage you to [complete a short survey](#) to let us know your thoughts about that draft framework. The survey will be open until December 15, so I hope you'll take a moment to help us solidify our goals and objectives for this effort. Many thanks to those of you who have already responded. And a heads up -- I'll be coming to you again next semester to ask for your further perspectives as we finalize our plan.

### **Lobo Women's Cross Country Finishes Third at NCAA**

Our women's cross country team wrapped up its incredible 2021 season with a [third-place finish at the NCAA championship](#) in Tallahassee, Fla.—the 12th straight year our team has ended its season in the nation's top 10. We also had four Lobos earn All-American honors: **Emma Heckel**, **Gracelyn Larkin**, and **Stefanie Parsons** from the women's team, and Abdirizak Ibrahim from the men's team, who earned his second consecutive All-American. Congratulations to coach Joe Franklin, his coaches and staff, and the entire team on yet another inspiring season. Go Lobos!

Please remember The University of New Mexico presently requires all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to wear masks at all times in UNM buildings—including The Pit—unless actively eating or drinking, or in an office alone.

Additionally, Governor Lujan Grisham has announced a new [public health order that includes requiring COVID-19 booster shots for hospital workers](#). The UNM HSC has recently communicated the requirement and how it applies to their employees, students and learners. We will continue with our practice of evaluating current conditions, consulting with our health experts and complying with the latest health protocols, and will update the University community in the coming days on any changes to the [vaccine mandate](#).

COVID-19 booster shots are available and are recommended for anyone who is fully vaccinated and meets the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria. Please visit the [New Mexico Department of Health Vaccine Registration System](#) to check your eligibility and find a location—then update your status at the [UNM Vaccine Verification Program site](#). And now that New Mexico has approved vaccination for children aged 5 to 11, UNM Health Sciences has information to [answer some of the questions parents may have](#).

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes  
President