



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



February 22, 2021

Good afternoon, Lobos -

Last week was a good week for science and a reminder that perseverance can be pivotal in achieving success. Last Thursday, February 18, we watched NASA's Mars rover *Perseverance*—launched during the first months of the global pandemic—touch down on the surface of Mars. *Perseverance* safely made it through what NASA scientists call the “seven minutes of terror,” those uncertain minutes when the rover enters the Martian atmosphere completely on autopilot, unreachable until it touches down. And among those who joined in the celebration with NASA's Mission Control were a number of UNM scientists, professors, graduate students, and alumni involved in the mission.

UNM's active group, including Professors Horton Newsom and Louis Scuderi, and Ph.D. students Zach Gallegos, Tim Nagle-McNaughton, and Joshua Williams, have been involved with some of the work on the characterization and selection of the Jezero Crater area, which was likely once a Martian lake, and which served as the landing site of *Perseverance*. Based partly on their work, NASA determined that this site may be ideal for its search for signs of past life on the red planet.

A number of UNM alums are also highly involved in the mission including Dr. Larry Crumpler, Dr. Amy Williams, Dr. Nina Lanza, Dr. Ann Ollila, Dr. Chris Herd, Roberta Beal, Jade Comellas and Patrick Gasda. Dr. Crumpler, a volcanology and space sciences researcher at New Mexico Museum of Natural History, and Dr. Roger Wiens, a planetary scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, are adjunct professors in the Earth and Planetary Sciences Department at UNM.

Among the key contributions to the *Perseverance* mission is the “SuperCam” mounted on the rover, which examines rocks and soil with a camera, laser, and spectrometers. With this technology, it will be possible to identify the chemical and mineral makeup of a sample from more than 20 feet away.

UNM's larger Mars team, including Professor Laura Crossey and many of our Lobo students, are involved in research that will contribute to understanding the history of Mars, with a particular focus on Gale Crater—the landing site of the earlier *Curiosity* mission—as well as Jezero Crater, where *Perseverance* is doing its work.

I'm so proud of and thrilled for our Lobo scientists—truly exemplifying the kind of exciting and innovative research that's possible at New Mexico's only R1 university.

Project ECHO Joins International Consortium to Roll Out COVID-19 Vaccine

Project ECHO, The University of New Mexico's groundbreaking telementoring program, [is partnering with a consortium of global health organizations](#) to ensure that all countries receive support in their COVID-19 vaccine rollout efforts. Project ECHO joins the international Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator's

[Country Readiness and Delivery Workstream](#) to support virtual collaborative trainings for those involved in the vaccination effort around the globe. This is yet another exciting effort undertaken by the team at Project ECHO, and I am so proud of the hard work they continue to do to bring the Lobo brand of smart, compassionate, and innovative health services to those in need around the world.

UNM Earns Military Friendly Gold Designation

As a member of a military family—and the spouse of a retired Army officer – one of my priorities as president of The University of New Mexico is to make our campus, our curriculum, and our community supportive of and accessible for our veterans as possible. That's why I'm honored that [The University of New Mexico has recently been named a 2021-2022 Military Friendly Gold University](#) by VIQTORY, an organization that connects the military community to civilian employment and educational opportunities. [This designation](#) positions UNM as a desired destination for military-affiliated students in New Mexico—and beyond. From our Green Zone training to our administrative support and job advisement services, I'm proud that UNM has supported more than 1,200 military-affiliated students in the past year alone. We're honored by their service—and honored to serve them.

Law Professor Honored with ABA Spirit of Excellence Award

Last week, UNM Law School Professor Barbara Creel, a member of Jemez Pueblo, received the Spirit of Excellence Award from the American Bar Association Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. The Spirit of Excellence Award is presented to lawyers whose commitment to racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession is evident in their workplace and at the national, state, or local level. As a law teacher, Professor Creel introduced her students to federal habeas corpus in the Southwest Indian Law Clinic, arguing and winning habeas cases filed on behalf of Native Americans—but she is perhaps best known for teaching cultural competence and helping students go on to lead fulfilling careers as lawyers who make an impact. Congratulations to Professor Creel.

Reach Out and Thank Our Medical Resident and Fellows

This Friday, February 26, is the Gold Humanism Honor Society's Thank a Resident Day, when we take a moment to recognize the hard work being done by medical residents and fellows in communities around the world. Our Graduate Medical Education learners are in hospitals, emergency rooms, trauma centers, and countless other facilities putting their training to good use and saving lives. If you'd like to take a moment to record a short message of thanks for those learning, working, and training in our School of Medicine, [you can do it right from your computer.](#)

UNM Libraries are Open for Business

As students prepare for mid-terms and need a reliable place to read, research, and study, I'm pleased to report that UNM Libraries are open and accessible to students, faculty and staff. Your LoboCard is required, and hours and access can change quickly, so [please confirm that a particular library is open](#) before you visit. As always, you can also [Ask a Librarian](#) if you need further help—or call (505) 431-4711. Meanwhile, the Center for Southwest Research continues to be accessible by [appointment only.](#)

And finally, here's your regular reminder to please [make sure you've registered with the New Mexico Department of Health to receive the COVID-19 vaccine](#) when it becomes available. Help is on the way—but please remain diligent about wearing your mask, washing your hands, and maintaining a safe, physical distance from others.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and let's go, Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes

President