



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



February 28, 2022

Good afternoon, Lobos—

Happy Birthday, UNM! Today marks the date 133 years ago when the [Legislative Assembly for the Territory of New Mexico approved House Bill 186](#), creating “an Institution of learning to be known as ‘The University of New Mexico’.” As House Bill 186 specified at the time:

Said institution is hereby located at or near the town of Albuquerque, in the county of Bernalillo within two miles north of railroad avenue in said town, upon a tract of good high and dry land, of not less than twenty acres

Today, our university sits on more than 700 acres, and continues to deliver on the promise that was made that day in 1889: to provide our students “with the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of literature, science and arts.” And so much more!

I hope you had an opportunity to enjoy some of our Lobo Day activities, and I enjoyed celebrating with so many of you out on Cornell Mall earlier this afternoon. If you missed your chance for one of the free Lobo Day 2022 long sleeve T-shirts today, not to worry: [they're available for purchase at the UNM Bookstore](#).

Celebrating Women's History Month

As March begins, we note with pride that this is Women's History Month, a time for commemorating and encouraging the study and celebration of the vital role of women in American history, as well as reflecting on continued challenges. Inspired by a 1978 Women's History Week celebration, President Carter issued the first executive proclamation to declare a week in March 1980 as National Women's History Week. By 1987, the week had been extended to a month, which still doesn't leave a lot of time to celebrate the accomplishments of so many extraordinary women in our nation's history.

And there are so many brilliant and groundbreaking women who deserve to be recognized and celebrated—like Maria Tallchief, for example, the innovative Native American dancer considered the first prima ballerina in the United States. She was also the first Native American to perform at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, the first star of the New York City Ballet, and was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement. She remains influential to this day for her revolutionary style of dance and for breaking down barriers in traditional ballet.

I'm also inspired by Sylvia Rivera, the Latina transgender activist who became a prominent activist for the LGBTQ community after the police raid of the Stonewall Inn in New York in 1969. Rivera led the charge for the first gay rights ordinance in New York City and founded an organization to provide housing for homeless transgendered and queer youth—a legacy still changing lives through a non-profit foundation that bears her name.

Women have been on the front lines of our history for as long as we've been a nation, though many of their achievements remain anonymous or uncredited to this day, still awaiting the writers and researchers who will discover them and tell their stories. At The University of New Mexico, we're writing those stories now, through the many inspiring women we call our students, mentors, colleagues, and leaders.

I am particularly proud that *Albuquerque Business First's* recent list of 24 Women of Influence includes [two remarkable women from The University of New Mexico](#): Cinnamon Blair, UNM's Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, and Gina Urias-Sandoval, Chief of Staff for UNM Health Sciences. It is a privilege to know and to work with each of these amazing women, and I am delighted to see them both so prominently recognized.

I'd also like to also applaud the pioneering efforts of [Advance at UNM](#), our initiative to recruit, retain, and promote women and minorities in STEM, and the UNM [Women's Resource Center](#), which has been advocating for women since 1972.

This month, I hope you'll take a moment to reflect on the known and unknown contributions of women in our history and in our own lives—and if you're so inclined, [check out any of these related books available from UNM Press](#).

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Felt Across the World

Like many of you, I have been watching the dramatic and deeply disturbing events that continue to unfold in Ukraine with great concern for the loss of life and the threat to democracy across our globe, as well as with great compassion for members of the Lobo community who have family, friends, and colleagues in the region and are directly affected by the conflict. I also know that other members of our community have traumatic lived and extended experiences of social and political oppression, conflict, war, and genocide. Our pack is here for you.

During uncertain times like these, I hope that all of us will continue to lean into roles of advancing civic leadership, human rights and equity and societal self-reflection within our own communities. For anyone personally affected during this challenging time who needs some additional support or just someone to talk to, please reach out to any of the appropriate [mental health support services](#). Students may contact [Student Health and Counseling \(SHAC\)](#), while Faculty and Staff will find support available through [Counseling, Assistance, and Referral Services \(CARS\)](#). [UNM's Veteran and Military Resource Center](#) is ready to offer support to our Veteran community.

U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich Visits UNM Researchers

It was an honor to host U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich during a recent visit to our Albuquerque campus, where [he met with Lobo researchers in our Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering](#) working on sensor systems for natural gas leak monitoring and detection. The research has been conducted using a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to research and develop new sensor technologies that can detect methane leaks from oil and gas equipment. Methane reduction is a priority of Senator Heinrich's, and we were pleased to showcase our on-the-ground efforts that could potentially help decrease emissions from the more than 300,000 miles of pipelines across the country.

FCC Commissioner Advocates for Broadband at ASM Roundtable

We were proud to host another distinguished guest last week, as Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Brendan Carr visited The University of New Mexico to participate in [a roundtable event at the Anderson School of Management \(ASM\) about broadband access in our state](#). Arranged by the office of U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján, who has fought to make broadband more accessible and more affordable, Commissioner Carr was joined in the discussion by Chief Information Officer Duane Arruti and members of the Connect NM council. One of the many lessons we've learned over the last two years of living, working, and learning on Zoom is that access to quality internet is not a luxury; it's a requirement, and I'm proud we were able to be a part of this critical conversation. Later the same day, Commissioner Carr visited with UNM Project ECHO to hear more about how improved access to broadband can transform health care delivery across New Mexico and throughout the U.S.

Graduate Students Honored with ESA Awards

I am thrilled to learn that two of our Lobo graduate students, Benjamin Gerstner and Cassandra Miller, were recently [selected to receive the Ecological Society of America \(ESA\) Katherine S. McCarter Graduate Student Policy Award](#). As winners of this award, each will have the opportunity to participate in virtual visits with Members of Congress to discuss the value of investments in the biological and ecological sciences. They will also meet with ecologists in federal agencies to discuss career options that exist at the intersection of science and public policy. Congratulations to our Lobo winners, who I know will make the most of this remarkable opportunity.

UNM HSC Wins Grant to Cultivate Diversity in Biomedical Researchers

As the State of New Mexico's only teaching hospital, it's vital we continue to cultivate and develop the next generation of health care workers and researchers. It was exciting to learn, then, that The University of New Mexico's Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program (BSGP) has been awarded [a five-year \\$2.71 million grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences to develop a diverse pool of PhD researchers](#). The funding from this grant is targeted at increasing the diversity of trainees in biomedical PhD programs in hopes that it will eventually increase the diversity of the biomedical workforce, and make our workforce look even more like New Mexico.

Post Legislative Session Update

While the New Mexico legislature formally adjourned on February 17, we are awaiting final determinations on a number of [issues of vital importance to The University of New Mexico](#). Several key bills and appropriations measures are currently under review by Governor Lujan Grisham, including the state's primary budget bill and the Opportunity Scholarship package, which rolls together several higher education scholarship programs, including the Opportunity Scholarship, the Legislative Endowment Scholarship, and the College Affordability Grant program. Aside from this combined resource that will provide a significant boost to students participating in undergraduate certificate and degree programs throughout the state, UNM is particularly pleased to see that the Lottery Scholarship will continue to deliver significant aid to UNM students with an additional \$130 million in one-time funding that was appropriated to sustain the program for at least the next 4 years.

In regards to other UNM priorities, we are also pleased to report legislative approval of the General Obligation Bond bill, which provides funding for a cutting-edge Center for Collaborative Arts and

Technology facility and construction of a new Children's Psychiatric Center. Funding for these items will now go before voters in the November election. Additionally, the Severance Tax Bond bill would provide an additional \$13.2 million for UNM facilities improvements if approved by the Governor. We are also encouraged by the progress made during the session to create a transformational School of Public Health at UNM that would build upon our existing College of Population Health while growing an associated program partnership with our colleagues at NMSU. The legislature also responded favorably to several UNM-led workforce pipeline initiatives related to teacher education and nursing. I am grateful for the thoughtful consideration the governor and the legislature have given to many UNM priorities and programs and hope to hear of some positive final legislative outcomes soon.

I am also thankful, as always, for the hard work of Nathan Bush and his team in the Office of Government and Community Relations, and for the support and advocacy of the rest of UNM's Senior Leadership team. I also appreciate all the interest and outreach that has been done to further many of our initiatives by our students, faculty, staff, researchers, health care providers, alumni, retirees, Regents, community partners, and legislative interns. Our Faculty Senate and Staff Council also provided invaluable support, as did ASUNM and GPSA, who were instrumental in ensuring that the needs and concerns of students, faculty, and staff were effectively conveyed in Santa Fe. It has been a genuine group effort by the entire Lobo community; it has been a privilege to work with you during this brief but important state legislative session.

Finally, last Thursday, I had the honor of sharing with you my pride in, and hopes for, The University of New Mexico as I delivered my 2022 State of the University address. If you missed it, [you can view my remarks in their entirety on my website.](#)

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

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President