



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



August 15, 2022

Dear Lobos –

In the week before we begin the fall semester, I'm excited to watch our campus fill with students and families and returning faculty, joining those of us who remained over the summer. Many Lobos will be [moving into residence halls](#) later this week, and for our new Lobos, this means exploring our campus. We are here for you as you begin your UNM journey, so please get to know your classmates and ask any of our friendly staff and faculty for assistance, directions or advice as you get to know your new home. The [UNM Student Activities Center](#) has planned an exciting series of [first-year and welcome back events](#), kicking it off with [Friday Night Live](#) on August 19 from 7-10 p.m. at the Student Union Building (SUB). Join your fellow Lobos for karaoke, a DJ, henna tattoos, laser tag arena, photo booths, student organization tables, and UNM club sports teams. This is an event not to missed!

## **UNM Innovating the Student Experience to Drive Success**

Among the many dimensions of the student experience at UNM, one that must be considered are the barriers to inclusion that may exist and how they can be mitigated. How students experience UNM – especially in their first year – shapes how they pursue their degree and future. I'm incredibly proud of the [contributions that UNM has made to the Student Experience Project \(SEP\)](#), a national initiative of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) in collaboration with the Raikes Foundation and other external partners.

Along with national researchers and colleagues, [135 UNM faculty across our colleges and campuses](#) [have](#) developed and applied new tools, resources, and practices to make the process of earning an undergraduate degree as welcoming and inclusive as possible. The evidence-based practices developed through this initiative have improved grade outcomes and student retention. UNM's commitment to these practices will allow us to provide opportunities to our diverse population of students and enhance a welcoming environment of equitable education.

## **The Transformative Legacy of Title IX**

As many of you know, it has been fifty years since Title IX was signed into law, providing federal protection prohibiting sex discrimination in schools, universities, and educational programs receiving federal funding. Since the enactment of Title IX, we've seen a profound impact on gender equity by transforming women's access to athletics and education opportunities. While Title IX has expanded to address issues related to pregnancy, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination, The University of New Mexico continues to advance Title IX progress through creative initiatives aimed at establishing—and maintaining—a community that is inclusive and equitable for our students, staff, faculty, and visitors. This inclusiveness, in fact, is at the

very heart of our institution's values and articulated in our multi-year roadmap, [UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined](#).

Last week I was honored to welcome colleagues from across our state, and across disciplines, to engage in critical discourse and learn from one another at a Title IX symposium, hosted on our campus by UNM's Compliance, Ethics and Equal Opportunity (CEEO) Office. Title IX is about more than compliance and campus disciplinary proceedings. It is about ensuring our campuses are safe, supportive, and responsive to the needs of the entire community. With more changes to Title IX in the coming year, we know the partnerships we create with institutions in our state and region will also be instrumental to our success.

#### Built for the Future of Health Care in New Mexico

It was with great excitement that I joined Executive Vice President of Health Sciences and CEO of the UNM Health System Doug Ziedonis, Governor Lujan Grisham and many others to break ground on the UNM College of Nursing and Public Health Excellence Building. With nearly 94,000 square feet of wet and dry laboratories, classrooms, offices, and workspaces serving our UNM healthcare professionals and patients across our community and across the state, the College of Nursing and Public Health Excellence Building embodies not only our continuing mission as a university to provide exceptional education and training, but also reflects our ongoing ambitions to Advance New Mexico, one of the core values of UNM 2040.

If these last two and a half year have taught us anything, it's that the health and well-being of our state, and our country, are directly linked to the health and well-being of our citizens. We know that a healthy New Mexico is a prosperous New Mexico—and as we continue our work together to deliver to our citizens the services they need and deserve, this new facility will help ensure we provide our health professionals with the resources they need to do more and do good.

#### Healing as a Pack

I know the deep impact that the senseless murders of Muslim men in our community in recent weeks, including UNM alum and student leader Afzaal Hussain, have had on many of you. I share in your anger, grief, and concern. We can be grateful that a suspect has been arrested and charged in at least two of those heinous crimes and that the investigation continues to yield new information. But we know that there is still healing that needs to happen and that concerns brought to the University and our city and state leaders will need to remain top of mind as we move forward. I will share information and updates with you as we continue to heal together as a pack.

Our UNM Police Department will continue to work closely and engage with the entire University community, as well as local law enforcement, to ensure a safe and aware environment. Again, if you are struggling in any way, our [UNM support resources](#) are here for all Lobos, as are the many people who make them possible.

#### A Reminder About Masks and Vaccinations

The University of New Mexico continues to recommend that masks be worn indoors at UNM's campuses in Bernalillo, McKinley, Sandoval, and Valencia counties, which, as of this morning, are presently [categorized as "high COVID-19 community levels" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

This is also your regular reminder that all UNM faculty, staff and students who access campus facilities, housing, programs, services, and activities in person must be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations, subject to limited exemptions, before September 30. Effective August 16, in accordance with the current COVID-19 public health order, UNM Health Sciences and UNM Health (which includes UNM Hospital, UNM Medical Group, UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center and Sandoval Regional Medical Center) will no longer require weekly testing and reporting for individuals who have an exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination requirements. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [guidelines for COVID-19 masking and vaccines](#) are still in place.

Please continue to refer to our Bring Back the Pack website for more information on masking protocols, as well as the vaccination requirement.

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

Garnett S. Stokes  
President