



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



September 11, 2023

Good afternoon, Lobos --

We've been back on campus for three weeks, and if you've been thinking that the campus seems more crowded and energetic than usual this Fall . . . well, that's because it is. [For the second year in a row, total enrollment is up at The University of New Mexico](#). Not only that, but with a 3.1 percent increase in our new first-year student registrations at the Albuquerque campus—which puts our number unofficially at 3,626—the [Class of 2027](#) has just become our largest class of first-year Lobos in UNM's history. And that is four years in a row with significant increases in the number of first-year students!

But there's more good news. Our first-year class is an incredibly diverse one, with 71 percent coming from traditionally underrepresented populations. Several of our branch campuses have also seen increases in enrollment, growing collectively by more than six percent over last year's level. We are also pleased to see enrollment increases in returning students, including an increase of nearly 17 percent in our sophomore class, and as always, we remain incredibly proud that so many of our first-year students—nearly 82 percent of them, in fact—are from our state.

Finally, [a recent New York Times study of economic diversity at the 286 top colleges in the United States](#) has The University of New Mexico tied at number nine, making us one of only three public institutions in the top 10. And when it comes to State flagship institutions, UNM is ranked *number one in the nation*. This ranking looks at the percentage of students receiving assistance from federal Pell Grants and reflects an institutional commitment to serving lower-income students. We are proud of our record in this regard.

To our students and their families: we know you have many choices for where to attain a college degree, and we appreciate you choosing The University of New Mexico. It is our privilege to have all of you as Lobos.

Celebrating Our Newest Grand Challenges

Later this week, we'll be marking a major milestone in our UNM Grand Challenges initiative as we celebrate the addition of [three new Level 2 multi-disciplinary teams to our institutional Grand Challenges](#). Joining our [current three Grand Challenges teams](#) – Sustainable Water Resources, Substance Use Disorders, and Successful Aging – will be **Child Health, Just Transition to Green Energy**, and **Sustainable Space Research**. We are excited about adding these Challenges to our institutional research priorities; by continuing to expand and reimagine our Grand Challenges for the coming decades, we are encouraging and celebrating innovation at UNM, while creating exciting new opportunities for the citizens of New Mexico. I hope you'll join me for our [Grand Challenges Day and Team Research Symposium](#) this Thursday at 11 a.m. in the SUB Ballroom to learn more about each of these remarkable new Grand Challenges teams.

Federal Funding Helps FOCUS Meet Growing Needs

As New Mexico's only Academic Health Center, UNM's Health Sciences Center provides high-quality, compassionate health care for New Mexicans who need it—especially some of our most vulnerable or at-risk

populations. One of our early intervention programs, [FOCUS](#), has been providing exceptional services and specialized care for families of children with developmental delays for nearly thirty years—but is constantly aspiring to provide more multi-generational support for more families, particularly those with substance use disorders and complex trauma. Working closely with FOCUS leaders, [U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich](#) recently secured federal funding from the [Federal Administration for Children & Families](#) to [help the FOCUS program increase services and access](#), including providing more social workers and nurses, meeting transportation needs, and collaborating with local childcare centers. Congratulations to the team at FOCUS, who are delivering critical life-changing services to families in countless communities across our state.

UNM Launches Research-Focused Bi-weekly Podcast

A new podcast promises to make even some of our most complex research more accessible and engaging, as UNM's University Communications and Marketing team launches the "It's (Probably) Not Rocket Science" podcast on Tuesday, September 12. The biweekly podcast will feature conversations with our Lobo faculty experts, creatives, and researchers, as they discuss their latest research and explore its impact on the everyday lives of New Mexicans. The first episode will feature a conversation with Leo Lo, dean of the College of Learning and Library Sciences, and Sonia Gipson Rankin, a computer scientist and professor at the School of Law, as they look at the rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on higher education, government, and the law. You can subscribe on [Spotify](#) or [Apple Podcasts](#)—and I'm looking forward to listening in on the conversation.

Information Technology Hosts 11th Annual App Contest

Are you a creative undergraduate student at UNM or CNM with a passion for app design and innovation? The [UNM Office of the Chief Information Officer](#) is [hosting its 11th Annual App Contest](#), providing an incredible opportunity to showcase your skills and make a positive impact on your community. Assemble a team of enthusiasts, connect with expert mentors, and [register your team by Tuesday, October 31](#). Up to 10 teams will compete in the finals at UNM Rainforest in November, with the winning app design team taking home \$5,000.

Lobos Discuss Food Insecurity with U.S. Rep. Vasquez

As the U.S. Congress continues its work on the comprehensive [Farm Bill](#)—which authorizes federal programs to address food insecurity—it was a privilege for the University of New Mexico to host a roundtable discussion with [U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez \(NM-2\)](#), who serves on [the U.S. House committee crafting the legislation](#), to discuss the critical services these programs provide for students. Lobo student advocates, UNM Honors College, Student Affairs, and leaders from state agencies contributed to the discussion of solutions needed to address student eligibility for food accessibility programs like [SNAP](#). We are grateful to Rep. Vasquez for his leadership in prioritizing the needs of higher education students and cultivating new opportunities for Lobo student success. Thank you for joining us, Congressman.

Seeking Nominations for the Sarah Belle Brown Award

Each year, I have the honor of recognizing one student, one faculty member, and one staff member as recipients of UNM's [Sarah Belle Brown Award](#), presented to those in the Lobo community who serve as examples of social responsiveness and who have donated considerable personal time and effort advancing The

University of New Mexico's public service mission. Nominations are due by 5 p.m. on October 13, so [let me know who inspires you](#). The faculty and staff recipients each receive a cash award of \$1,500 and the student recipient receives a \$1,500 scholarship, all generously endowed by Doug and Sarah Brown.

Campus Safety Week is September 18-22

Campus Safety Week is a time when the UNM Community comes together to observe [National Campus Safety Awareness Month \(NCSAM\)](#), held every year in September. [Our Campus Safety Week events and programming](#) begin next Tuesday evening with our family-friendly Annual Campus Safety Walk. This is an opportunity to walk the campus together and learn more about its layout and [identify possible places where we can improve safety](#), whether it's a need for better lighting, for example, or trimmed branches. I live on campus with my husband at University House, so UNM isn't just my workplace; it's also my neighborhood, and I hope you'll walk with me on Tuesday evening. Doors for the event open at the SUB at 6:30 p.m., and we'll begin the walk by dusk, likely around 7:15 p.m.

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

Garnett S. Stokes
President