



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



November 27, 2023

Good afternoon, Lobos --

Welcome back from what I know was a *much-needed* and well-deserved break. I hope you had an opportunity to relax and take some time for yourself as we begin the final weeks of the Fall 2023 semester. We're also entering a joyous time of the year, a time when so many different cultures celebrate the winter season with a wonderful diversity of holidays, celebrations, and observances. It's also the season for connecting with each other, understanding that the different ways we celebrate actually unite us as Lobos, and as human beings, in a common joy for life and for living.

Communication and language are perhaps the most valuable tools we have for connecting with each other. That's why I'm always encouraged by the work being done by our Lobo community to ensure that language is never a barricade to that human connection, and that differences in languages--from local dialects to American Sign Language--can and should be preserved, taught, and celebrated.

I was recently inspired, for instance, by the work being done by Joshua Birchall, an Assistant Professor in UNM's [Department of Linguistics](#), who has [not only deciphered the rare South American language of Moré-Kuyubim, but has also just published the first dictionary in the language](#). Apart from translating, preserving, and explaining the language, Professor Birchall's work is also helping to bridge a communication gap between generations. "There's an intermediate generation whose parents spoke the language, so they kind of understand it, and can speak it a little bit," he says. "Then there's that next generation who maybe heard some, but never really connected with it as their language."

Then there's the [important role that UNM's Department of Communication & Journalism is playing in promoting Indigenous storytelling](#). The department recently hosted [NPR's Next Generation Radio Program](#), a training program for journalism students that focuses on promoting the voices of the next generation of Indigenous storytellers through audio-driven narratives. This helps ensure that their stories and traditions will be preserved and passed down, and you can [listen to some of their stories on NextGenRadio](#).

Finally, in [the latest episode of the UNM podcast It's \(Probably\) Not Rocket Science](#), Lobo Professor Melvatha Chee, director of the Indigenous Child Language Research Center at UNM, and Lobo alum Cheryl Yazzie, caretaker supervisor at Saad K'idilyé, an Albuquerque-based nonprofit that promotes Diné Bizaad language, discuss how children learn and develop the Navajo language. This work is especially vital because little has been published on how children develop their words and speech in the language. It is research that encompasses not only the physical and mental components of the language but the emotional and spiritual sides as well. Chee and Yazzie hope their work will inspire Indigenous speakers to conduct their own research into their language.

I hope you'll listen in and then have a conversation about it with someone else, regardless of your language.

UNM Libraries Receives \$2.5M Gift to Establish New Endowment

Last week, I was honored to help The University of New Mexico Foundation announce a [transformative \\$2.5 million gift from Rosalyn Roembke Hurley establishing the Wilson Hurley Collection Endowment](#). This generous contribution will support the College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences (CULLS) and the Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections. The endowment aims to preserve and showcase the artistic legacy of [Wilson Hurley](#), a prolific painter whose work celebrated the landscapes of the American West, seascapes, aviation, and outer space. The funds will facilitate the acquisition, processing, and digitization of over 40 years' worth of paintings and fine-art studies, offering a comprehensive view of Hurley's artistic evolution. We are honored to receive this gift, and it is our privilege to acquire and curate this work for generations to come.

Celebrate the Traditional Hanging of the Greens

One of my favorite annual Lobo traditions, the [Hanging of the Greens, happens this Friday, December 1](#). Hanging of the Greens has been a Lobo custom since the 1930s when students would gather greens from the pine forests in the Sandia Mountains and use them to decorate our library and Student Union. Nine decades later, the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society, working in tandem with many other campus organizations, has turned that tradition into something distinctively special—and it just gets more spectacular each year.

This year's celebration begins at 5:45 p.m. just outside the UNM Bookstore, with carolers leading the community in a procession across campus, walking among the more than 13,000 luminarias lighting our buildings and walkways. The procession ends up at University House, where I have the honor of receiving the ceremonial wreath before we all gather for a warm reception at Hodgin Hall, including posole and hot chocolate. [The Maxwell Museum will also celebrate the evening](#) by opening its galleries and filling them with music, food, and Oaxacan hot chocolate. Come kick off the holiday season and celebrate a proud Lobo tradition.

Faculty Showcase Spotlights Strategies for Student Success

One of our major institutional goals articulated under UNM 2040 focuses on Student Experience and Educational Innovation to ensure lifelong success for all Lobo learners. This Friday, you'll have an opportunity to learn more about some of the innovative approaches our faculty are taking to improve student success as part of a [Faculty Showcase](#), which will feature an opportunity fair and presentations spotlighting just three of our most successful strategies for improving student engagement and performance. This will include a session led by Professor Allen Butt, a faculty fellow participating in the [Student Experience Project](#), whose novel approach to improving academic outcomes lowered DFW rates in an introductory psychology class by 12 percent. [The Faculty Showcase is this Friday, December 1, from noon to 1:30 p.m.](#), on the third floor of the Student Union Building in Lobo Rooms A & B. Drop in and be inspired.

HSC Hosts Town Hall to Discuss Climate Survey Results

As part of our institution's ongoing effort to create a campus climate that fosters diversity and success, the UNM Health Sciences Center Office for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion recently conducted a campus climate survey, in conjunction with [similar campus climate surveys administered by the UNM Division for Equity and Inclusion](#). [The survey was completed earlier this fall](#), and now UNM Health Sciences, led by Dr. Doug

Ziedonis, UNM's Executive Vice President of Health Sciences and CEO of the UNM Health System, and Dr. Valerie Romero-Leggott, HSC Vice President and Executive Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, will be hosting a hybrid Town Hall meeting to share the findings of the survey and discuss the results with the UNM community.

The Town Hall begins at noon on Wednesday, December 6, in the Domenici Auditorium, and you are encouraged to [register to attend](#); if you're participating virtually, you'll receive a Zoom link when your registration is completed. This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the work being done to create an environment of diversity, belonging, and true equity for our learners, trainees, staff, and faculty.

Tomorrow is Giving Tuesday

Tuesday, November 28, is this year's [Giving Tuesday](#), a day of global generosity and giving back to our communities and to each other. The spirit of giving and pride in community inform several of our goals under UNM 2040, including our commitment to enhancing the vibrancy of our campus and the greater Lobo community, "by improving wellness, including food, housing, and physical security." Tomorrow, [if you are looking for ways to contribute to good causes in our community this season](#), perhaps you will consider our [Lobo Food Pantry](#), the [Little Lobo Holiday Wish Fund](#), the [UNM Gives Campaign](#), or another organization of your choice. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

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

Garnett S. Stokes

President