



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



May 6, 2024

Good afternoon, Lobos --

Congratulations to our [nearly 3,000 Lobos who are completing their degrees this week as our Spring Class of 2024](#)—and welcome to the ranks of more than 200,000 Lobo Alumni around the world. The entire Lobo community is proud of you and all that you've accomplished in your time at The University of New Mexico.

To our graduates, I want you to know that we are honored that The University of New Mexico has been your school of choice; your time here as scholars, researchers, artists, athletes, and leaders has truly helped make UNM a place where each of us defines all of us. [You have inspired us](#)—and as you leave us to make your way in the world, I know you will continue to strive for excellence, act boldly, and look at the world with the same curiosity and compassion that shaped your time as a Lobo student.

In the coming days, there will be many of us attending [college, school, and department recognition events](#), culminating with the Spring Class of 2024 commencement on Saturday, May 11, at 9 a.m. in University Arena. I am excited about sharing this momentous occasion together, and I am looking forward to hearing from [our keynote speaker, U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Lobo alum Deb Haaland](#). For those who are unable to attend in person, we will live-stream the ceremony on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and on [UNM's graduation website](#).

This is a special time of year for our students, their families and friends, some of whom are visiting our campus for the first time. With that in mind, while the university continues to support the expression of free speech and the right to peaceably assemble, I also ask that you please be respectful of your fellow Lobo students and their families as they commemorate this major milestone. Thank you for your understanding and courtesy.

As you cross the stage on Saturday, our [UNM Alumni Association](#) is here to help you as recent graduates and new alumni to stay in touch with the friends you have made during your time here and to connect you with other Lobos in your communities. Whether you continue to forge a path here in New Mexico or explore opportunities around the world, you will always be a part of the Lobo family. I also want to thank our exceptional faculty and staff who have helped to guide you as you successfully made your way from student to graduate to Lobo alumni. It has been our privilege to take this journey with you.

For the rest of our students, I know this is a big week for you as well. As we head into the final weeks of the Spring 2024 semester, I expect that most of you are busy with exams, finishing projects and papers, and preparing for the summer. Good luck with your finals, Lobos; you've worked hard to get here.

Congratulations to our Class of 2024!

Lobo Professor Elected to American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Congratulations to Political Science Professor Mala Htun, who has just been [elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#), one of the oldest and most prestigious honor societies in the United States. Professor Htun, chosen under the Class III Social and Behavioral Sciences portion of the nominees, is among 250 members elected, recognized for their excellence and invited to uphold the [Academy's mission](#) of engaging across disciplines and divides, from scientists and scholars, to writers, artists, and other public professionals. I know the entire Lobo community joins me in congratulating Professor Htun on this major achievement.

Navajo Nation President Visits UNM-Gallup

Recently, the [UNM-Gallup campus was honored to host a visit by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren](#), who toured the campus and spoke with students of his own educational journey. Nygren told our students how he overcame the challenges he faced—including questioning whether a college education was even right for him—until he discovered his passion for construction, eventually attaining a Bachelor of Science in construction management. “You’re at this wonderful institution at UNM, and I just want you guys to know you are on the right path,” Nygren told Lobo students. “Don’t ever forget that you’re on the right path. You’re going to make that difference, whatever it may be.” Thank you for honoring us with your visit, President Nygren, and for sharing your experience and wisdom.

Celebrating UNM's Outstanding Educators

Last week, I had the pleasure of joining the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Office of Graduate Studies, and the College of Arts and Sciences to help present [the 25th Annual Teaching Excellence Awards, celebrating some of UNM's most exceptional educators](#). This is an opportunity to recognize innovation and leadership in teaching, and I am always in awe of the faculty, lecturers, adjunct instructors, and graduate teaching assistants who help The University of New Mexico make such [a difference in the lives of our students](#) while also striving to [advance New Mexico](#). The afternoon was made even more special for me in that I also had the pleasure of presenting Associate Professor Leola Tsinnajinnie Paquin with the Presidential Teaching Fellow of the Year, helping to create a core group of innovative faculty members who share their experiences with the university community. My [congratulations and heartfelt thanks to all 16 of our remarkable educators honored this year](#); you represent the very best of the very best.

2024 Cancer Challenge Registration Now Open

[Registration is now open](#) for one of our most popular fundraising events, the Lobo Cancer Challenge. Now in its eighth year, [the Lobo Cancer Challenge supports cancer research, patients, outreach, and education and training at The University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center](#), the only cancer center in the state to hold Comprehensive designation from the National Cancer Institute. Participants—better known as *Challengers*—can raise money in several ways, from 25- and 50-mile bike rides, to running or walking in a 5K, to climbing all 1,668 stairs in University Stadium. Last year, more than 1,300 Challengers from 20 states raised just over \$550,000, bringing the total raised for our cancer center by this event to more than \$2 million. The Challenge takes place on September 28, but you can [register early for a discounted rate](#).

Volunteers Make the Difference at Campus Cleanup Day

If you think our Albuquerque campus is looking its best just in time for graduation, it's not only because of the beautiful Spring weather. At the end of April, a group of more than 40 UNM staff from various departments within the office of the Executive Vice President for Finance & Administration [volunteered to help clean up our campus as part of the first-ever Campus Cleanup Day](#). For this inaugural event, co-sponsored and organized by Institutional Support Services (ISS) and Facilities Management (FM), volunteers spread out across the campus to help our groundskeeping and landscaping crews pull weeds, spread mulch, pick up trash, and plant trees, making our campus not only more beautiful but [more sustainable](#) as well. My thanks to everyone at ISS and FM and to all our volunteers for decking out our campus in its finest for the end of the Spring semester. Working together truly makes a difference.

Project ECHO Hailed as National “Superstar” in Treating Hepatitis C

In a recent New York Times article on the global effort to manage hepatitis C, [Project ECHO at UNM HSC was highlighted as a “superstar” model program](#) for providing access to treatment. Despite the United States lagging behind other nations in treating this disease, New Mexico is ahead of the curve thanks to Project ECHO's unique model, which upskills rural physicians and prison inmates across the state. Thank you as well to our partners at the New Mexico Departments of Health and Corrections for collaborating with us to make such a tremendous difference for our state.

On This Week's Podcast . . .

Researchers say the long-closed [Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine](#), located just 40 miles from Albuquerque, continues to leak radiation into nearby water, air, and soil decades after the pit was covered. On this episode of [It's \(Probably\) Not Rocket Science](#), we hear from the director of the [UNM METALS Superfund Research Center](#) about remediation research, health risk reduction and the importance of building strong working relationships with tribal communities. You can learn more about it on this week's episode of [It's \(Probably\) Not Rocket Science](#), available wherever you get your podcasts.

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

Garnett S. Stokes
President