

# Academic Dispatch

## August 29, 2019

This year we will often come back to a set of recurring themes of student success, faculty success, and enrollment at UNM. The reason for this focus is simple: our students and faculty are core to delivering on UNM's mission. Both groups are the sources of new ideas, discoveries, and creative works that impact our New Mexico communities and create a better world. Both faculty and students are here to learn and to grow the reach of human knowledge. Fundamentally, we exist as an institution for our students and our faculty, to allow them to create impact on the world through their wisdom and their action.

### Student Intern a Helping Hand at the Crossroads

UNM student Taylor Velasquez, a political science major with a summer internship at KUNM, wrote a story about [Crossroads for Women](#), an Albuquerque program dedicated to helping women emerging from incarceration. Crossroads was holding its annual [backpack and school supply drive](#) because the costs associated with going back to school can be especially challenging for the women they serve.

The story aired as an 80-second clip and was heard by one of KUNM's longtime listeners, Rick Thaler. Inspired by the story, Rick delivered a donation of nearly \$5,000 from his company, Albuquerque's OGB Architectural Millwork, to Crossroads in the days following the broadcast. When KUNM General Manager Richard Towne shared this story with us, he said, "Taylor (of course) was elated, as are we all. We are also humbled at the opportunities we have to serve our communities."



OGB Architectural Millwork President Rick Thaler with Crossroads Community Engagement Coordinator Dalilah Naranjo.

As the University *for* New Mexico, we are dedicated to serving the public good in concert with all those who also serve our communities. The Crossroads program saw a problem and shaped a response, but needed resources. Taylor, a conscientious student with an opportunity to help, amplified their call through KUNM, the University's community-powered radio station, and the call was picked up by a local business leader with long ties to Albuquerque, all in the service of helping the women in the Crossroads program improve their lives. This story embodies the ideal of public service, and reminds us of the power our students have to bring change to the world.

## **External Funding for Creative Works and Scholarship**

For faculty, external sources of funding are critical for research and the creation of new cultural artifacts. The Office of the Vice President for Research has assembled a number of resources to allow faculty to find these external grants that are so essential to success. All faculty, students and staff can use the Pivot database, a global source of funding opportunities that allows researchers to develop their own customized funding searches. Log in with your UNM ID at [pivot.proquest.com](http://pivot.proquest.com). Through University Libraries, the UNM community also has access to [Foundation Directory Online](#), which provides information on U.S. foundations and corporate donors. Finally, the [Faculty Research Development Office](#) has great staff who will work with you to use these resources effectively and develop competitive proposals.

## **Reducing Faculty Administrative Burden**

Since joining UNM this summer, my faculty colleagues have repeatedly noted to me that UNM can display an unfortunately process-centric culture, and this culture can sometimes obstruct the important research and teaching work that they do. I have certainly seen an administrative burden realized on my faculty colleagues; it can clearly be argued that there are sometimes too many steps, too many checks, too many forms, too many days required to accomplish basic work that should instead smoothly allow us to accomplish our mission. From the excessive complexity of the faculty hiring process, to the intricacies of purchasing research equipment, to the uncertainty of travel reimbursements, our faculty must engage in numerous administrative steps that, while not unimportant, are not focused on the fundamental work of discovery and education that is the heart of faculty expertise.

Some of these issues are inextricably linked to our lack of an integrated approach to planning and budgeting, leading to mismatched or out-of-phase decisions. Senior Vice President Teresa Costantinidis and I are partnering to work on this overarching problem, and hope to implement a more holistic and multiyear planning and budgeting process. But this will take some time to contrive and for impacts to be felt.

Other needs we can attack more quickly. For example, working with Senior Vice Provost Barbara Rodriguez, we are moving quickly to review, overhaul, and streamline the faculty hiring process this fall. Stay tuned on this one!

In the meantime, I can use your help: I am new to UNM, and still discovering both our full prospects and challenges. During this academic year I will be monthly inviting small groups of faculty to lunch in order to hear from our colleagues what they see as the opportunities and the burdens, big and small, that we should address institutionally to allow us to be more successful in educating students, creating new

knowledge, and serving our state. I want to be clear here — we can't eliminate all vexatious tasks, as some are inherent to the legal and moral realities of our environment, nor can we realize all of our opportunities, certainly not in the short term. But we can make progress! And so it's important to identify the most promising places to do so.

If you have ideas for the most important ways that will allow faculty to be even more effective in their work to learn, teach, and serve, please share with us at [academicdispatch@unm.edu](mailto:academicdispatch@unm.edu).

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