

Academic Dispatch

September 17, 2020



Sandia Foothills. Credit: University Communication and Marketing.

Happy September, Lobos!

We are doing well – masks are on, infections are off, students are learning, and new knowledge is being created in our labs and archives. But we are by no means done with this pandemic. While our positivity rate is low and infections are generally decreasing in the metro area, across the state they are roughly constant when our need is for strong downward trends. So don't let up! You know what to do, and while it's still hard, you protect your families and your communities by practicing good public health habits.

As I've mentioned before, UNM has been slowly and conservatively opening up more public spaces for UNM faculty, staff, and students. Next week there will be some space available inside the SUB for dining, and the white tent on Smith Plaza – which I call Ryan's Roadhouse – is also available. Over the next few weeks additional outdoor dining spaces will be created around La Posada, and in early October we will open up the Johnson Center for students, faculty, and staff. I know you have been waiting to take advantage of the renovated facilities and burn off some of those zoom calories.

I'd also like to acknowledge that some of our students living in the dorms are feeling isolated. It's kinda empty around campus on the weekends, and these are times when we need to keep some physical distance. But do reach out to each other, meet your hallmates, and if in doubt connect with your RAs or the on-site professional staff. They can help you identify programs and activities.

Student Regent

The University of New Mexico is governed by a Board of Regents appointed by the Governor of the State of New Mexico, Michelle Lujan Grisham. One of these regents is always a student, and this position is coming open. Check out the [ASUNM](#) and [GPSA](#) websites for more information. Applications for the position are due September 23.

Faculty Kudos

UNM's faculty are an accomplished group. I'd encourage you to navigate on over to Cell Mentor for their list of [100 Inspiring Hispanic/Latinx Scientists in America](#), which includes three UNM faculty (as well as two other New Mexican scientists)!

Africana Studies Departmental Transition Committee

Arts & Sciences Dean Mark Peceny and I are excited to announce the formation of the Africana Studies Departmental Transition Committee, chaired by Professor Hansel Burley, Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences. Other members of the committee include: Charles Becknell, Director of the Africana Studies Program; Steve Bishop, Associate Professor of French; Finnie Coleman, Associate Professor of English and Faculty Senate President; Chris Duvall, Professor and Department Chair of Geography and Environmental Studies; Ray Hernandez-Duran, Professor of Art and Art History; Natasha Howard, Assistant Professor of Geography and of Africana Studies; Tiffany Lee, Professor and Chair of Native American Studies; Alfred Mathewson, Emeritus Professor of Law; and Sonia Gipson Rankin, Assistant Professor of Law.

The Office of the Provost, with full and enthusiastic support from Dean Peceny, is establishing this committee to plan the transition of the Africana Studies Program to a department. An academic department is an organizational unit rooted in an area of scholarship and research, that creates new knowledge and understanding, and disseminates this knowledge and the modes of thought and analysis that lead to it. This scholarly work is driven and guided by the tenured and tenure-track faculty of the department, so a key need in creating the department is to identify the founding tenured faculty who will cement its initial intellectual direction. This, and other academic organizational matters comprise the charge of the committee. I look forward to seeing and supporting their work, which we expect to extend into the 2021 calendar year.

Please, Lobos: keep your masks on, and complete your daily symptom screening.

James Paul Holloway

Professor of Nuclear Engineering

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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