

Academic Dispatch



Rainbow over the duck pond.

September 1, 2022

One University Advancing New Mexico

Welcome Back, Lobos!

After an exciting opening week of special events and activities, this week we are starting to settle into the more routine rhythms of the fall semester. But routine does not mean dull – there’s a ton going on at UNM!

One of the many beauties of the complex and varied rainbow of New Mexican cultures is our focus on family and community. We eagerly embrace our responsibility to support each other. This ethos pervades UNM too – as the state’s flagship research university we embrace our responsibility to Advance New Mexico. One manifestation of this was on display this week: we launched ten new concept teams within our Grand Challenges Initiative. The Grand Challenge project was launched in 2019 by UNM President Garnett Stokes to foster research that would directly confront the challenges of our state while also bringing together scholars and students from across UNM, taking advantage of the skills to be found throughout our One University. Two of the original three Grand Challenge projects, those focused on Substance Use Disorders and on Water Resources, have now established major nationally-funded centers and have growing impact on addressing these important issues that affect our communities.

Today we launched new research concepts into the Grand Challenges ecosystem: we are providing facilitated opportunities for faculty to learn the process of developing large-scale research teams and creating ten new opportunities to serve the communities of New Mexico. With topics ranging from diversity in STEM education to Just Transitions in our energy economy, some of these ten new concept teams will graduate into full-fledged Grand Challenge teams headed towards major nationally-supported research centers to help address some of the major challenges of our day.

While several of the new Grand Challenge concept teams have a focus on issues that surround education, UNM is fortunate to have a whole college devoted to this! The College of Education and Human Sciences (COEHS – no prizes for pronouncing it) is dedicated to the development of the primary and secondary education systems in New Mexico. COEHS creates and develops the teachers, counselors, nutritionists, and other professionals who teach your little brothers and little sisters. There can be no more important profession, no better way to support our families and communities, than to teach the youth of New Mexico. Each of us has the capacity to grow intellectually, creatively, and emotionally, but this capacity for growth lies fallow if not stimulated and fertilized by a great teacher. And great teachers can learn and grow too, fostered under the tutelage of a great professor. We are excited that the State of New Mexico has invested millions of dollars this year into COEHS to grow our capacity for this development and gratified also that the state has similarly invested into teacher pay across New Mexico. With the funds invested in UNM, and resources we have set aside from Academic Affairs, we expect to increase the faculty in COEHS by about 20 members, the largest growth of a UNM college in recent years. It's an exciting time to be in teacher education!

Teaching is a joy, and seeing learning happen in a bright young face is bliss. Yet there is a need for thousands of new teachers across New Mexico. Perhaps you can be one, and see for yourself that bright light in the face of your younger sister or brother, or in the child of a friend or neighbor. It will be bliss.

There's lots that each of us can do to Advance New Mexico. Thanks for your choices in how to do so.

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