



The Acting Provost's Weekly Brief

August 18, 2017

Welcome back!

I hope you had a great summer. It is exciting to be back in the midst of getting ready for a new academic year. Things in academic affairs have been busy over the summer. During this time, I sent you some updates and other notes. I have included below a reminder on two of the items (the reorganization in academic affairs, and the announcement of the Honors College dean).

We will be facing many challenges over the course of the coming year. The challenges range from budget to facilities to enrollment to building a constructive campus climate amid the controversies and hate speech in the wider society (more on this below). I am optimistic, however, that we can find ways to work together to meet our common goals. We continue to see progress in important metrics such as graduation rates and research funding. Interim President Abdallah is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to accomplish our mission in a time of change. We are in the planning stages of an initiative to reengineer the university, and continue to implement the UNM 2020 Strategic Plan.

The background for this work takes place in a challenging national climate with implications for our local community. The troubling events over the weekend in Virginia illustrate how some seek to tear us apart and foment hate in our communities, and how that can lead to violence. Witnessing these events should strengthen our resolve to stand up against racism in all its forms, even as we commit to dialogue with those willing to disagree civilly.

Even before the events in Charlottesville, political and racial tensions had been increasing in our country. At UNM, one of the major goals for the coming year is to focus on initiatives and discussions that bring us together as a community, not always in agreement, but in a respectful manner in the best traditions of a civil society, free speech, and academic freedom.

There are many other items to bring to your attention, and I look forward to communicating with you more as the semester moves along.

UNM Bookstore

The UNM Bookstore has made great strides over the past several years to address course materials costs for students. The recent successes in reducing those costs are a credit to the cooperation of faculty and bookstore staff. We would like to continue making college more affordable.

Faculty: It's not too late to send a list of books needed for your courses to the UNM Bookstore. Many students depend on financial aid to obtain their books, as well as the use of their student charge accounts. The UNM Bookstore is the only place they can use those accounts, so getting your book order lists submitted is critical.

The main campus bookstore has also lowered textbook prices (below retail prices, in many cases) at the same time as it has been urging students to try out its [Dare to Compare](#) tool. Students can use the tool to compare UNM Bookstore prices to online retailers like Amazon and Alibris, among others. They can then shop directly from those sites, or purchase from the bookstore.


These are just two of the ways that faculty and bookstore staff have worked together to bring lower priced materials to students. In a future message (later this fall) I will highlight some of the many other efforts the UNM Bookstore has undertaken.

Academic Affairs Reorganization

I would also like to review and update campus on [changes to the Office of Academic Affairs](#) this summer. We put together a small task force earlier in the year to review and recommend changes to the leadership structure in our office. The recommendations focused on realigning job duties, filling critical positions, and increasing efficiency.

To that end, we are filling a number of key positions on an interim basis, before launching full searches later this year. This approach allows us to continue support of the academic mission now, while also providing an opportunity to gain more input before filling the positions on a more permanent basis.

The first position addressed was the senior vice provost position, which oversees faculty affairs, policy matters, and general operations in the Office of Academic Affairs. Dr. Richard Wood, professor and former chair of the Department of Sociology, former president of the Faculty Senate, and former special advisor to the Provost, was [appointed to this position](#).



We then initiated searches for two part-time associate provosts for curriculum and assessment, and for faculty development. Those expedited searches are nearing the final stages, and I expect to announce a final decision very soon.

Honors College Dean

Earlier this summer the national search for a new Honors College dean was completed, and I appointed Dr. Gregory Lanier to the position. Lanier was most recently the director of the Kugelman Honors Program at the University of West Florida. He has had a distinguished career as a faculty member and leader of a number of academic programs at the University of West Florida, including as a founding dean of their University College. I am looking forward to Dr. Lanier's arrival at UNM and to see how the Honors College continues to develop over the coming years.

We are indebted to Dean Kate Krause, along with the team of Honors faculty, who presided over the transformation from the University Honors Program (founded in 1957), to the Honors College, which officially opened in 2013. While Dean Krause is stepping down from her role in the Honors College, she will continue in her other capacity as the dean of University College.

Craig White

Acting Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this weekly brief is available on the [Academic Affairs website](#). Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu.