



# The Academic Affairs Communiqué

**August 30, 2018**

Welcome to the Fall 2018 semester, well underway by now as everyone settles into new rhythms and schedules. Classes, research endeavors, and creative projects have re-launched or continued. I hope new students, staff, and faculty have been warmly welcomed to campus and felt the excitement of life in a diverse public research university. We all have much to learn, explore, question, and enjoy here.

UNM faces some extraordinary opportunities this year as well as no shortage of challenges. I am confident in where we are as a university, our capacity to address the challenges, and our energy to build on the opportunities in ways that move us forward. The last academic year was a time of transition, with interim leadership in most of the key roles within Academic Affairs: both associate provosts, the VP for Equity and Inclusion, the senior vice provost, and the provost. We used that year to lay crucial groundwork for building on recent progress on student success, for doubling down and reinvesting in the university's research endeavors, and for fostering a campus climate and culture in which all can thrive. With Dr. Pamela Cheek, Dr. Alex Lubin, and myself now having been appointed in the first three roles and Dr. Gabriel Lopez continuing as the long-term Vice President for Research, we now feel ready to launch key initiatives built on that groundwork. Watch for news of those initiatives in coming weeks.

National searches will soon be underway for the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and, subsequently, for the long-term provost role. Dr. Lawrence Roybal continues as interim VP for Equity and Inclusion, and President Garnett Stokes recently appointed me to serve as the interim provost this academic year while that national search is conducted. Finally, an internal search for an interim senior vice provost has [recently been posted](#). Given the challenges and opportunities that UNM faces, my role will not be as a caretaker figure: The Academic Affairs leadership team—in collaboration with the deans, faculty leadership, key administrators, and student, staff, and community stakeholders—will be moving forward with initiatives on student success, research and community engagement, campus climate and culture, and more—all within President Stokes' strategic direction. UNM and New Mexico deserve no less, and I am fully confident of our collective ability to succeed—witness the recent more-than-doubling of UNM's four-year graduation rates. That's an extraordinary achievement and resulted from linking vision and leadership out of Academic Affairs to strong commitment to student success from key advisors, faculty, staff, administrative leaders, chairs, and deans.



Interim Provost Rich Wood hiking in the Sandias with graduate students and faculty from UNM, August 2018.

I conclude by highlighting a theme you will see repeatedly this year: Our academic mission is the reason UNM exists, and as budgetary and other challenges emerge we will systematically protect the academic mission as our core domain. As a public research university, that mission is broad and complex: teaching and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students; building dynamic faculty-led research agendas, creative work, and graduate programs at the intellectual cutting edge in strategic areas; engaging deeply with communities in New Mexico and beyond to foster societal advancement; contextualizing our work within a globalizing world; and serving clients, patients, and students with excellence and a generous spirit. We all carry that work, and it is the reason UNM exists. Academic Affairs exists to support that mission, ensuring that UNM fosters a transformative experience for those who have entrusted their future partly to the University.

Please watch for more in the weeks ahead. We in Academic Affairs look forward to the academic year alongside you.

**Richard L. Wood**

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**Professor of Sociology**

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