



The Wednesday Communiqué


September 13, 2018

All of American society today is struggling with how to sustain civic life and healthy democratic dialogue in a time of deep polarization and widespread skepticism regarding those whose views differ from one's own. The resulting distrust affects all of our institutions, making both daily work and big decision-making harder for all. Of course, polarization and skepticism are not bad in themselves. Polarization can help the nation address acute problems such as the [vast increase in inequality](#) in American life over recent decades. Skepticism can pressure all of us to question our assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas. But taken to extremes, they undercut our ability to work together toward common goals.

Like other institutions, universities are subject to these negative dynamics. But we are also one of America's best resources for reversing them. *At our best*, universities bring together people with differing views but also serious expertise, with an orientation toward decision-making based on evidence and respectful dialogue—not dialogue as scoring points, but real dialogue that values intellectual discipline and legitimate authority while simultaneously raising hard questions. Now more than ever, let's all work to make UNM an exemplar of this role of universities, from big institutional decisions to in-classroom pedagogy and departmental meetings.

One terrain on which I would like to invite such dialogue at UNM: Constructing a campus culture that truly values the voices of women in everything we do, a campus climate at every level in which all can thrive. The #MeToo movement has prominently flagged the ways that American society has not done so. A recent set of essays on [Women and Power in higher education](#) raises these questions vis-à-vis higher education and thoughtfully debates the answers. I would invite you to choose a few essays from this collection (or other resources of your choosing) and ask others to read them and think with you about the questions and concerns raised there, asking together: *How can we better assure (here in this classroom or department or research project or provost/dean's office) that we are creating an environment of gender equity in our daily interactions and key decisions? How are women of color differentially affected by pressures within the academic community?* These questions are relevant in every group setting in the university; please think together about how to best answer it—and move forward with those answers. We will be doing that in my office.

In building the campus culture and climate that allow UNM to best contribute to answering today's societal challenges, these are key questions. We also need to systematically ask parallel questions about



other terrains of inequality and exclusion, and to draw on good research to help answer them. Let's start now—or continue.

The State of the University

Next week will mark the 200th day of the presidency of UNM President Garnett Stokes, with [daily events](#) to mark the new academic year. On Monday at noon in SUB Ballroom C, President Stokes will give a major address on “The State of the University.” All are encouraged to attend or watch on [live stream](#).

Find Great Events at UNM

Sometimes find it hard to know what great events are happening at any given time? UNM hosts an amazing variety of events every week. List events for your own organization or department on the [UNM events calendar](#), and consult it to find your next inspiring, thought-provoking or entertaining outing.

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