

# Academic Dispatch

**September 20, 2019**

## **Lots happening in New Mexico higher education!**

Here at UNM we are well into a new term, with scholarship and teaching driving our days. The same is true across the state, where higher education is key to building successful communities and families.

I was excited to join higher education leaders from across the state this week at the annual [Higher Education Summit](#), hosted by Secretary of Higher Education Kate O'Neill and by Central New Mexico Community College. Leadership from all the many and varied kinds of higher education institutions in the state were present, along with key representatives from the New Mexico executive and legislative branches of government. UNM Professor Emeritus Peter Winograd gave an excellent talk on the current status of higher education in New Mexico, discussing our collective challenges and opportunities, and the critical role of higher education in addressing the needs that face us as a nation and species.

The highlight of the summit, of course, was the announcement that you have now all heard: during her keynote address NM Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham announced a plan to develop and present legislation to implement an Opportunity Scholarship for New Mexico residents. The goal of the Opportunity Scholarship would be to top-up other financial aid to fully cover college tuition and fees for New Mexico students in both two-year and four-year institutions. This announcement was only a part of the Governor's keynote address to the Summit, in which she was clear in identifying the important work that we do as educators.

She complemented our work to expand access,



NM Higher Education Summit at CNM. Photo courtesy of University Communication and Marketing.

assess outcomes, and keep our students on track for success. She noted that the work we do is essential for the state, observing that we create the K12 educators, health care workers, film and media talent, the engineers, and more, that represent the workforce of the state (and to which I would add for UNM, the *leaders* of the state). Governor Grisham wants to be sure we “keep our brightest and most talented right here in New Mexico,” and, acknowledging a 30% decrease in per-student funding over the last decade, she said, “we are incredibly serious about investing in higher education.”

Her announcement of the Opportunity Scholarship came towards the end of her remarks, and she characterized it as the “moonshot for higher education.” The ambitious and optimistic tone of her remarks, followed by the challenges presented by Prof. Winograd, launched a day of engaged and substantive discussions about higher education in New Mexico. The details of the Opportunity Scholarship proposal are yet to be worked out, and the higher education staff at the meeting listened carefully to our ideas and concerns about how to best implement the program. The higher education leadership at the meeting were not only energized, but recognized this as a singular moment for us to act collectively for the benefit of all. As Professor Winograd noted, it does not have to be a zero-sum game. The takeaway from the summit was not in the details, but in the sense of engagement and partnership that was evident, and in the optimistic and forward-looking perspective of the participants. We have challenges, and we can address them.

## **UNM Dean Search Advisory Committees**

In the spirit of “lots happening,” we also seem to have a few dean searches to do! The deans of our schools and colleges are critical leaders on campus, helping to steer our institution and build the academic excellence of our university. The selection of excellent deans is one of the key responsibilities and joys of being provost, and I’m pleased to formally announce the launching of four dean searches: for the College of Fine Arts, Anderson School of Management, College of Education, and School of Architecture and Planning. Each search is being led by a search advisory committee, chaired respectively by Deans Greg Lanier, Mark Peceny, Julie Coonrod, and Christos Christodoulou. More details on these searches and the memberships of the search advisory committees are available on the [executive search website](#). Isaacson/Miller is assisting us with these searches.

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