

# Academic Dispatch

**August 28, 2020**

What brings together an academic community? UNM prepared all summer to offer classes and continue our research mission while setting up strong COVID-19 prevention measures — symptom screening through covidscreen, [self-reporting](#) of a positive diagnosis, [targeted COVID-19 testing](#), contact tracing, socially distanced classrooms and carefully cleaned facilities, mask wearing policies, and ambassadors to promote mask wearing, to name just a few. People in a university need safety to learn, to teach, to pursue research or creative work. Because students, staff, instructors, and faculty are being smart about wearing masks and following social distancing, UNM is in a good position so far. Yet safety isn't quite enough. People also need human connection to be creative. This is especially difficult to foster in a largely remote environment. So now we need to get creative about fostering community. Here are a few suggestions. Students: can you partner with other students, a student club, your instructors, or staff at one of UNM's resource centers to design a creative virtual collaboration, a game, an optimal study group, or an online event? Can you reach out to a new Lobo and help them build a connection with the university you know in a way they yet cannot? Instructors: can you generate interest in study groups and then help assemble these groups, perhaps through a brief survey of interest. Can you suggest a light ice-breaking activity and a first problem for the group to work on? Can you identify a relevant online cultural or scientific resource (a play, musical performance, demonstration, ...) and organize a virtual happy hour around it?

While you are thinking about how you can connect Lobos, here are a couple of updates.

## The Student Guide on MyUNM

UNM unveiled a new application last week designed to help students get ready for their semester with a user-friendly timeline of essential tasks, along with collections of helpful resources available in one virtual space. The "Student Guide," is accessible when students log into MyUNM ([my.unm.edu](http://my.unm.edu)) and select the "Student Guide" tab. In one stop, students can connect to advisors, registration, UNM Learn, computing resources, COVID19 response information, and free and discounted software (such as Adobe Creative Cloud). The app will be made even more user friendly in future updates.



Image: Student Guide tab on MyUNM.

## **UNM Campus Mental Health**

The new UNM Campus Mental Health Team, formed by campus mental health providers and key personnel across all UNM campuses, constructed a brief screening tool to help us understand how the pandemic and its related stressors have affected all our lives. Please take 5 minutes to complete this anonymous and confidential mental health screen. At the end you will be directed to support services and resources that are available to you as a part of the Lobo Pack. We thank you for your participation, and are here for you in support. You can link to the screen here:

<https://esurvey.unm.edu/opinio/s?s=126163>

## **Voluntary Retirement Incentive Option**

UNM is offering a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Option (VRIO) to eligible faculty and staff (this does not include HSC faculty and staff). Eligible individuals were contacted via email by Benefits & Employee Wellness on Monday, Aug. 24. If you believe you are eligible and have not received an email from [hrbenefits@unm.edu](mailto:hrbenefits@unm.edu), email your inquiry to [vrio@unm.edu](mailto:vrio@unm.edu). Details about this benefits program can be found on the [VRIO webpage](#).

## **Provost's Committee for Staff Scholarships**

The Provost Committee for Staff (PCS) is currently accepting applications for the Staff Scholarship. The scholarships are designed to help staff participating in the Tuition Remission Program with additional expenses such as textbooks, course fees, and supplies. To apply, or to find more information, please visit the [PCS website](#). The deadline to apply is Friday, Sept. 4, 2020.

## **The Sarah Belle Brown Community Service Award**

The Sarah Belle Brown Community Service award recognizes volunteer service to our community. Doug Brown, the current president of the Board of Regents and Dean Emeritus of the Anderson School of Management, established the award in honor of his wife, Sarah Belle Brown. Please [nominate](#) deserving students, faculty, and staff to recognize their generous contributions to the UNM community.

Have a great week, and please continue to wear your masks and practice social distancing. We are doing well, but we are not even close to done!

**James Paul Holloway**

**Professor of Nuclear Engineering**

**Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs**

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