

Academic Dispatch

March 4, 2021

*Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live.*
—William Shakespeare, Henry IV Part III

*Please hear me clearly: At this level of cases,
with variants spreading, we stand to completely
lose the hard-earned ground we have gained.*
—Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director C.D.C



One year. Credit: University Communication and Marketing

Almost a Year

Last March we stepped away from campus and learned new ways of living, working, and knowing our world. Social distancing. Masks. Rates of spread. Flattening the curve. Spike proteins. Zoom.

Now the end seems to be in sight. Vaccinations could be available for everyone by the end of May. Yet we may now be stumbling even as we approach the finish. Cases are no longer decreasing in New Mexico, and are starting to increase. Cases on campus have not declined in weeks. We are tired of it all, but we are only a hairsbreadth from returning to serious lockdowns.

What can we do? Masks. Wear them. Even with your friends. Socially distance. If you gather, gather outside, and take advantage of the increasingly inviting New Mexico weather. If you are sick or have symptoms of COVID, don't go to work or class. Call the appropriate health care provider and let them assess your symptoms. All these things work, as we have seen. But only if we do them.

Spring break is coming, providing a time to relax from some of our daily toils and reset for the remainder of the term. Do take this time to attend to your mental and physical health. But don't let break become a source of virus transmission. I urge you to explore the wonders of our state, and not travel beyond its borders, especially not to places where you might gather in large groups or be close to people who are not masked or practicing the public health habits that the times require. If each of us fails to do the right things, we put our family, our friends, and our community at risk.

Be healthy, Lobos.

Leadership Transitions

Ellen Fisher: I'm excited to welcome Dr. Ellen Fisher to UNM, as Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology and Vice President for Research. Ellen started on February 22, 2021, and is already digging in to better understand the opportunities and potential of the vast enterprise of discovery that the UNM research. I am very excited to have a scholar of Dr. Fisher's caliber joining UNM. I look forward to working with her to advance the Grand Challenges and further develop the critical research enterprise of our university.

Cheo Torres: Eliseo (Cheo) Torres has recently announced that he will retire from UNM on August 1. Cheo has served UNM as Vice President for Student Affairs for 25 years. After August, he will remain at UNM quarter-time as a faculty member teaching his Curanderismo course, which he has regularly taught online and as a summer offering. Cheo certainly leaves a lasting impact at the university, and I will have more to say about Cheo in a future Dispatch.

Student Highlight

Finally, I'd like to recognize Claire Karo for her distinguished service to student governance at UNM, to the many organizations of which she is a part, all while carrying a truly impressive schedule of academic courses. ASUNM has recognized her with a formal commendation, and I'm happy to add my congratulations!

James Paul Holloway

Professor of Nuclear Engineering

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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