

Academic Dispatch



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October 21, 2021

Gratitude for the food we can share

October is often the month for brisk days, candy corn, and Halloween masks. Of course, masks don't seem so special now. Some of us await the winter mountain weather, when skis come out and the blanket of snow mutes the sounds of the day. Of course, muting does not seem quite the same thing now. Still, this is a time of celebration, centered traditionally in harvest festivals and gratitude for the life-giving support that our Earth brings us.

I was happy yesterday to join New Mexico Secretary of Higher Education Stephanie Rodriguez and UNM President Garnett Stokes for the grand opening of the new location of the [Lobo Food Pantry](#) in the Student Union Building (the SUB). The pantry was brought to life by Lisa Lindquist, Director of the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center, and by Olivia Torres Jojola, Program Coordinator in the Center, as well as by a dedicated group of volunteers and supporters. Since its creation in 2014 the pantry has continually evolved, starting as a mobile pantry, then, based on the feedback of the students who needed its services, moving into on-campus space in the University Advisement & Enrichment Center. The pantry has served thousands of UNM students, providing them with some of the nutritional resources they need to be successful learners and contributors to our community.

The move to the new space in the SUB was inspired by ASUNM Vice President Ryan Regalado, who realized that greater visibility would allow more students to find this important resource, and remind the rest of us of the need. Ryan was moved to act by the [UNM Basic Needs Study](#), led by Professors Sarita Cargas, Marygold Walsh-Dilley, and Ann V. Murphy. Dr. Heather Mechler was also a key driver for this study, and the lead data analyst. These colleagues realized that no university in New Mexico had

undertaken a basic needs study, and that UNM should be the first. Secretary Rodriguez recognized the importance of this study, and reflected on how it was influencing state policy. The chain of influence should remind all of us that none of us alone can offer the solution, but the unexpected connections between us can create movement on a complex challenge. The basic needs study data demonstrated the necessity of supporting students' nutritional needs, for you cannot feed and grow your mind if the rest of your body is not also nourished. The move to the SUB will allow a better quality of space and service, and will allow us to provide refrigeration to expand the nutritional offerings the pantry can keep on hand. Arranged to provide something of a grocery store experience, the new Pantry location has had over 80 patrons per week take advantage of its service.

Our Earth brings us the basic elements of life: holding a blanket of air to breathe, recycling water to slake our thirst, and growing the food that we all must eat to allow our purpose of creating a stronger, more peaceful, and beautiful society. It is fitting at this time of harvest to be grateful for this food, and it is fitting at this time to recognize the hard work of all the Lobos, and the many others who have helped them, in bringing this food to those who need it through the Lobo Food Pantry. It is easy to be proud when there are so many amazing people at our university.

Gratitude for the graduation that is coming

Another happy event is soon coming to UNM: Fall Commencement! We are excited this year to welcome to commencement in the Pit all of our 2020 graduates, whose graduation ceremonies were diverted by covid, as well as our new Summer and Fall 2021 graduates. A ceremony on Thursday the 16th, 2021, will host those who have completed graduate or professional degrees, and a separate event on Friday the 17th will be for those who have completed undergraduate degrees. Please see the graduation website, <https://graduation.unm.edu>, and students, you must sign up by December 10, 2021. Faculty can still sign up too, but the Secretary's Office likely cannot provide academic regalia at this point.

The Office of the University Secretary is seeking volunteers to help with these wonderful ceremonies. If you have questions or want to volunteer, write to graduation@unm.edu or call their office at 277-4664.

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