

# Academic Dispatch

Communication from the Office of Academic Affairs

**November 14, 2024**

## Engaging with the pack

We are halfway through the penultimate month of 2024, and it's the 173rd anniversary of the publication of *Moby-Dick*. Having completed a contentious election, we are nearly to finals, the celebrations of a holiday season, and a congenial break. There is a lot to unpack and juggle as we wrap up courses and projects and make plans for the winter break and spring semester.

Here at UNM, there continue to be numerous opportunities to refresh and grow. This is **Research and Discovery Week**, and tomorrow we will host "Breaking Barriers," a daylong **Symposium on Community Engagement**. UNM is currently preparing a report for reaffirmation of our Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, and this classification - or rather the scholarship, learning, and service that underlie it - is just one of the many ways that we live our UNM 2040 values and our goal to **Advance New Mexico**. The symposium, organized by Tim Castillo, director of Community Engagement Initiatives, will provide education, awareness, and actionable ideas for faculty and others at UNM who are interested in community-engaged learning and scholarship. It will undoubtedly demonstrate the many benefits of creating the partnerships that uphold this work and enable our service through outreach. I hope many of you will participate in the symposium, as there will be fruitful discussions and opportunities to establish exciting partnerships that will benefit our New Mexico communities while furthering our academic mission.



A recent Cuddle a Canine event at UNM that is focused on providing a positive outlet for stress. (University Communication and Marketing photo)

For each of us, community engagement can take many forms. Within the university, it might be service tied to learning and scholarship, but for individuals, another vitally important form is through voting. I first cast a ballot when I was a student at the University of Illinois. I was excited to do so, and through my choice, shape the future of our nation! My preferred candidate lost. But the purpose of voting is not to win, it is to participate. To participate in the ongoing, never-completed project that is democracy. I have voted in every election since.

So I am heartened to see that New Mexico had near-record voter turnout of over 66%. Our state participated. As I walked through the Student Union Building on Election Day, I was encouraged by the long line of students

and others waiting their turn to participate via a vote, some likely for the first time. This was a powerful demonstration that young voters care about our community and know the value of participating in the project. And if your preferred candidate failed to prevail, it remains an opportunity to consider honestly and with empathy why others might have made other choices, to continue to use the various tools of democracy to influence our elected officials as our wisdom suggests, and to work toward the next election with vigor.

In New Mexico, our robust voter turnout showed strong support for UNM and our missions of discovery, learning, service, and patient care. The General Obligation Bonds supporting student success, learning, and public libraries passed, as well as the essential mill levy supporting the UNM Hospital and the New Mexico constitutional amendment that provides needed flexibility to the UNM law school dean in chairing the state judicial nominating commission. And our branch campuses in Los Alamos and Valencia saw local bonds pass that will support their missions as well.

This strong support shows that UNM is on a good track, with support from the people of our state. Our values as an institution of higher education remain unchanged, and we are steadfast in our support for all the communities of New Mexico and the varied and diverse persons who comprise our students, staff, and faculty. As outlined in our **UNM 2040 strategic framework**, our values and goals embrace inclusion, integrity, and the idea that despite our differences, we are One University. These principles provide the stable foundation for UNM and guide every decision we make. And we have more in our toolkit. We have the ability to work together; to listen to each other with compassion; to support each other; and to act with respect even when we disagree. Let's take care of ourselves and protect the pack, modeling the values and behaviors that make us Lobos.

## **Support graduate student research at LoboBITES**

And last but certainly not least, in just a few hours, there is another way to support all the positive work that is going on with one group in our community — graduate students. From 4-6 p.m. today at the Student Union Building Ballroom C, the annual **LoboBITES competition** (now part of UNM's Research and Discovery Week) will feature 10 finalists who will make three-minute presentations on their research — each using a single slide or visual — while vying to present their research findings clearly and persuasively for a public audience. This is a great opportunity to learn about and support the research and creative works of our graduate students.

Have a great rest of the month and Thanksgiving holiday break.

**James Paul Holloway**

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

**Professor of Nuclear Engineering**