

# Academic Dispatch

Communication from the Office of Academic Affairs



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## **Putting a spotlight on our teaching mission**

In *Experience and Education* (1938), John Dewey wrote “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative.”

Dewey was reflecting that education is a result of the engagement of the learner with an experience, ideally one purposefully created for stimulating the learner to grow. After all, I can’t rewire your neurons, but I might be able to put you in an environment that will do the trick.

I’ve been influenced a bit by Dewey’s writings, and this distills much of it. I was certainly thinking about this in drafting [Goal Two of the UNM 2040 strategic planning framework](#) on student experience and educational innovation, which states our purpose to “Transform the educational experience by creating supportive, intellectually challenging, exciting, diverse, joyful learning environments...” Our work as teachers is ultimately to create the environment in which learning is stimulated in the learner.

I was long indifferent to the ideas of mathematics and had to attend summer school to catch up. But then a pair of teachers in high school helped reveal the beautiful structure of these ideas, leading ultimately to my earning a graduate degree in mathematics. Most everyone can recall a teacher who made a difference in their lives. It might have been that middle school science teacher who displayed utmost patience when you were flummoxed by stoichiometry. Or the high school social studies teacher whose discussions about the Constitution sparked your interest in law. Or the fourth-grade teacher who, upon learning of the death of your loved one, visited to console your family.

Teachers do much more than the mammoth task of stimulating learning. They advise, awaken, advocate, allocate, administrate... Teachers create the foundation of our society, and indeed, without teachers, you would

not even be reading these words. At UNM, we are proud to educate hundreds of K-12 teachers a year, ensuring that generations to come have the same strong educational foundation from which our forebears benefitted. Of course, at UNM we are, ideally, all teachers. Some of us have been educators for decades, others are taking their first tentative steps into leading a classroom, and others are creating learning environments in our residence halls, our sports fields, and our grounds.

We are fortunate at UNM to have some incredible resources to support formal teaching, especially the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), which provides a wide variety of trainings, workshops, and informational sessions that support the teaching mission at all levels. One major opportunity to engage with what CTL has on offer is coming up on April 9-10: the [2025 Teaching Conference](#). Registration for the Teaching Conference is open through April 2. The event is free and open to all instructors, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students. If you are a UNM teacher, instructor, or professor of any discipline, at any level, I hope you can take advantage of this amazing opportunity to learn, engage, and be inspired by fellow educators around campus.

This year's theme is "Teaching, Learning, and Well-being at UNM," and the program will combine in-person activities (April 9), including the Teaching Excellence Awards, and online sessions (April 10). Topics will touch upon diverse meanings of well-being; authentic classroom experiences as well-being practice; storytelling; pedagogies of well-being in large classes; and centering culture and communal well-being in teaching practices. The keynote address will be "Faculty Wellbeing as Pedagogy: Building a Sustainable Community of Practice" delivered by Leola Tsinnajinnie Paquin, associate professor of Native American Studies and the 2024-2026 UNM Presidential Teaching Fellow. Register and learn more at [ctl.unm.edu](http://ctl.unm.edu).

## Meet the finalists for Center for Teaching and Learning director

And speaking of the Center for Teaching and Learning, after a national competitive search, we are excited to announce finalists for the next CTL executive director. They will hold presentations and open forums for the candidates on March 26, March 28, and April 1. Meet the candidates and learn more on the [Executive Search website](#).

## Provost Committee for Staff nominations open through March 31

Our staff at UNM ensure the mission. Without them, no learning would occur, no research would take place, no patient care would be provided. I am grateful beyond measure for the service that they supply. The Provost Committee for Staff awards was established back in 1989, and each spring semester we honor outstanding individual staff members who have provided extraordinary service – those who have gone above and beyond the required job duties to make a difference. Now through March 31, nominations for the Outstanding Staff Award are being accepted. Additional information about the awards, along with a list of previous winners, can be found on the [Provost Committee for Staff website](#).



Enjoy the rest of today's spring equinox!

**James Paul Holloway**

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

**Professor of Nuclear Engineering**



**Comments or questions? Contact us at [academicdispatch@unm.edu](mailto:academicdispatch@unm.edu)**