

# Academic Dispatch

Communication from the Office of Academic Affairs

February 6, 2025

## The world is unpredictable, but our mission endures

Over the past decade, there have been many voices challenging the work of higher education in all of our missions: learning, discovery, outreach, and patient care.

While some voices have doubted the value of higher education, we have still seen millions of young (and not so young) people start their college journey each year in the United States. And we have seen over 3 million learners each year complete their journey with an associate's or bachelor's degree, and another million with a graduate degree. This represents a profound and positive impact on our nation, transforming the lives of these individuals and improving the communities in which they subsequently live and thrive.

While the pursuit of new ideas, new understandings, new processes, and new cultural creations is seldom easy, our institutions of higher education nevertheless have pursued these things for decades, contributing directly to many of the social, cultural, and economic systems that allow us to flourish. Within the U.S., our universities collectively expend over \$100 billion on research annually, and while dollars spent is not the same as impact, it certainly gives a sense of the scale of the mission of discovery.

UNM proudly contributes to all this essential work, which I believe is foundational for human society. Last year we graduated 5,928 contributors to civilization and conducted about \$390 million in research. We have printed bendable concrete and launched work to increase participation in early childhood programs to improve child health. We have advanced policy and treatment practice to reduce deaths due to alcohol, and we are revolutionizing the way that teachers are prepared to help K-12 students learn. All of this is possible because we pursue our missions with an eye toward access and success for all.

I know that higher education is not the right path for everyone, but one of our core missions at UNM is to ensure that the opportunity to attend is available to all. While discovery can occur in many places and arises out of



Lobo Louie makes an appearance during UNM Day at the Roundhouse on Jan. 29.

many intellectual traditions, at UNM it is an organizing center for all that we do — in teaching, outreach, and patient care. We will continue to live our mission, to “promote discovery, generate intellectual and cultural contributions, honor academic values, and foster an educated, healthy, and economically vigorous New Mexico,” because this is who we are.

We are confronted with changes in the national landscape that test us and our mission, as change always does. It behooves us to listen to every voice, including those that challenge us, for we exist not for ourselves but for all in the broader society of our state, nation, and world. In the end, we listen and must then distill all we hear into action aligned with our values, mission, and capacities. And within our values, all are welcome at The University of New Mexico, provided only that they come to listen, to learn, to grow, and to serve.

Addressing challenges for the betterment of the people of New Mexico is what we are about. We will keep doing it.

## **The sound of unity**

*“Where words fail, music speaks.” — Hans Christian Andersen*

In these times when so much divides and distracts us, it’s important to focus on the things that join us together and bring us joy — all the things that remind us of our shared values, and perhaps most importantly in times that stress our minds and bodies, provide us with a chance for our brains to rejuvenate and find the inspiration that makes us each a unique human. Music can boost our mood, take us back to the best times of our lives, spark our creativity, relieve pain, lower blood pressure, and maybe even make us smarter. Probably each person who reads this message can immediately think of a song that transports them to a distinct time and place far away from the one they are in now.

Music can be found many places in our interconnected and digital world, and here at UNM, we are fortunate to have a robust Department of Music — led by Professor Michael Hix — which not only produces amazing student musicians (several of whom performed at UNM Day in Santa Fe recently) but also enriches the community with a wide array of musical performances from its talented students, faculty, and staff. These events are open to public, and there is something for every taste. Whether your interest lies in vocal performances, music from other countries or cultures, jazz, symphony, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and more you will undoubtedly find a sound that moves you in their offerings.

I invite you to check out their live programming and as well as the UNM Music YouTube channel. Whatever is filling your head during your work or school hours, I dare you to have the same amount of intensity about your concerns while attending, say, UNM Clarinet Day or the Musicology Colloquium Series. Not only will you come away personally enriched, but your support and presence will enrich the lives of UNM Music students and faculty.

As we go forward, let’s continue to take care of ourselves as well as others in the Lobo community.

### **James Paul Holloway**

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