

Academic Dispatch

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A welcome — and a farewell — at KUNM

Radio has a rich history — both scientific and cultural. From German physicist Heinrich Hertz demonstrating back in the late 1880s that electric disturbances could be transmitted and received wirelessly — and thereby proving Maxwell's theory on the electromagnetic waves — to Italian engineer Guglielmo Marconi's creation of a practical radio wave-based system to wirelessly send signals — earning him and Karl Ferdinand Braun the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics for the development of wireless telegraphy — radio was groundbreaking by connecting people in a way that no other communications medium at that time could.



Jeffrey Pope

Radio is an important part of the American story, with families gathering around the radio for everything from the panic-inducing drama of the 1938 "The War of the Worlds" broadcast by Orson Welles, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats during the Great Depression and World War II, to bringing music into that most American symbol of independence, the automobile. Radio has the power to inform, inspire, unite, entertain, and spark imagination, as it demands the listener develop their own images from the words they hear.

Radio has come a long way over the years, but despite competition from technologies ranging from television to the internet, radio is still very much a part of our lives. And particularly relevant in these times is publicly funded radio, stations such as KUNM-FM, which is an important part of not just the UNM community but of the state of New Mexico.

KUNM brings us news, entertainment, locally relevant programming, and even is at the heart of the emergency alert system used to warn New Mexicans of life-threatening emergencies.

KUNM has been extremely fortunate to have [experienced and steady leadership for the last two decades in Richard Towne](#), who helped KUNM thrive in a variety of directions, including news coverage, storytelling, fundraising, and community engagement. Under Richard's leadership, KUNM has expanded support for rural areas outside the Albuquerque-Santa Fe metro area — communities in our state that are often overlooked but are essential in fully representing our citizens.

And as Richard departs UNM, we are fortunate to have found another strong leader to assume his duties. [Jeffrey Pope, who has led public radio stations around the country for nearly two decades](#), began in May transitioning into the role of general manager of KUNM, and on June 16, he will take on the duties full time.

Jeff comes to this position with a background that includes not just public radio management, but also community organizing, small business development, strategic communications, and teaching. Originally from St. Louis, he has led teams at KSJD in Colorado and Blue Ridge Public Radio in North Carolina, setting both stations on a course to sustain and even grow newsrooms when the need was greater than ever



Richard Towne (at work in 2017).

in the face of declining local newspaper staffs. As a self-described “place maker” whose primary mission is to “build community through story,” he is eager to learn more about the peoples of New Mexico and the UNM community and create strong and lasting partnerships that build from the foundation he inherits from Richard Towne.

Thank you, Richard, for the many years you devoted to making KUNM a station that is an authentic reflection of the vibrant and diverse population that makes up New Mexico. And welcome, Jeff, to this amazing campus and community. I am sure you will find UNM and New Mexico to be a supportive, creative, and passionate place to make an impact, one that makes some of the most difficult work and longest days well worth the effort. Thank you both for making the decision to invest your considerable talents in this community.

James Paul Holloway

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Professor of Nuclear Engineering



Comments or questions? Contact us at academicdispatch@unm.edu