

Querencia at UNM

THE PROVOST'S PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HEART OF UNM

Gratitude for those who bring our vision to life

November marks the beginning of the holiday season, a time when we begin to devote more time to our families, friends, and refreshing our community connections — a time when we can slow down from our busy schedules to cherish our querencia.



Next week is Thanksgiving break for UNM, so in the spirit of the season, *Querencia at UNM* this month is devoted to highlighting some the things I am most grateful for here in Academic Affairs — namely, our amazing people who put our ambitious goals into action. This is the ultimate demonstration of Academics in Action.

This role opens doors to opportunities that can shape the future of UNM. But true transformation happens through the creativity, dedication, and energy of the Academic Affairs team. Every success — every initiative that improves the experience for students, faculty, and staff — comes from the combined efforts of people working together with vision and commitment. When we align our talents and passion, we don't just move projects forward, we create lasting change that strengthens our university and its mission. Together, let's imagine what's possible and lead UNM toward a future defined by innovation, opportunity, and academic excellence.

Academic Affairs is a hub of activity, with numerous initiatives in motion at any given time — each at different stages of development and implementation. While this is not an exhaustive list, it highlights some of the impactful projects being driven by talented people in Academic Affairs:

- **General education in support of healthcare workforce expansion:** Academic Affairs, along with key partners that include the Office of the President and the Health Sciences Center, is leading a task force to support the goal of doubling the healthcare workforce.
- **Recruitment efforts led by Enrollment Management:** From Fall and Spring Preview Days to year-round events, these on-campus experiences play a major part in introducing prospective students to the opportunities UNM offers.
- **Advisor appreciation:** Helping students succeed is a major focus of Academic Affairs, and academic advisors are a vital resource as students navigate their UNM journey.

- **Capital projects for academic facilities:** Through academic resource management, we ensure that learning spaces are designed and equipped to foster excellence for students, faculty, staff, and the community.

- **Communicating our querencia:** Achievements matter most when they are shared. *Querencia at UNM* is one of many communication channels that amplify our success, and the positive response to this reimaged communication platform reflects the pride and engagement of our community.

Our days often fill up with tightly packed schedules and endless to-do lists. In the rush to keep up with meetings, emails, and texts, it's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture — the beauty around us, and the contributions of those we work alongside. Taking time to pause and practice gratitude not only helps us notice these moments but also supports our health and well-being.

Poet Mary Oliver often wrote about the power of gratitude. As we enter this season of reflection, I invite you to consider a few of the questions she posed in *Gratitude* — questions that can help us slow down and appreciate what truly matters:

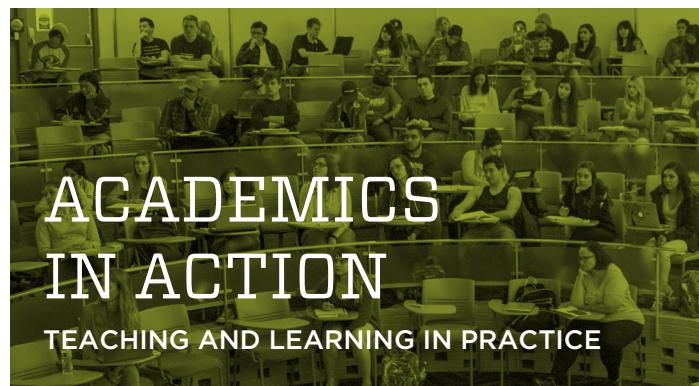
- What did you notice?
- What did you hear?
- When did you admire?
- What was most wonderful?

The answers you discover may surprise you — and remind you of the richness that surrounds us every day.

With much gratitude,

Barbara Rodriguez

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



As we have examined the last several months here in *Querencia*, it is our community and sense of place that makes UNM a special place to be. For November, we turn the focus of Academics in Action to some of the efforts we are grateful for right here in Academic Affairs.

General education in support of the healthcare workforce expansion task force

Academic Affairs is leading a central and branch campus effort to support the healthcare workforce expansion. With an increase in students pursuing health-related degrees,

strategic academic planning is essential to ensure we maintain the highest quality undergraduate education. The goal of doubling the healthcare workforce will amplify demand for undergraduate courses, faculty, teaching assistants, and instructional resources. It will also create opportunities for curricular innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration and research, interprofessional learning, and increased access to the health-related professions.

In the spring 2026 semester, Academic Affairs will announce members of the task force charged with delivering recommendations in the following focus areas:

- Undergraduate and graduate education
- Enrollment modeling and course demand
- Academic personnel capacity
- Instructional resources and infrastructure
- Financial modeling
- Intercampus communication and collaboration

The task force will be charged with delivering a comprehensive set of recommendations, including identifying challenges and opportunities, as well as developing short- , mid- , and long-term plans to enhance academic capacity and ensure sustainable, high-quality education. All recommendations will remain aligned with the UNM 2040 strategic framework.



We deeply appreciate the collaborative spirit that will make this work possible. Academic Affairs looks forward to designing a governance and communication model that will underpin this ambitious plan. There is much more to come — stay tuned!

Fall Preview Days — and much more

UNM's enrollment has grown steadily in recent years, and recruitment plays a key role in attracting new Lobos. This fall, Enrollment Management, led by Vice President Dan Garcia, hosted three Fall Preview Days — on-campus events for prospective students and families from New Mexico, Colorado, and the El Paso, Texas, area. Combined with Spring Preview Days, these events drew about 3,200 attendees, including 1,150 high school students.

The impact is real: for fall 2025 alone, more than 600 admitted students had attended a Preview Day, and at least 485 enrolled. When paired with open house events across campus, this is a powerful outreach effort. As Matthew Hulett, director of admissions, notes: "It takes a campus to recruit and retain students, and Enrollment Management is grateful for a campus community that invests so much effort into the student recruitment enterprise — leadership, faculty, staff, and many more."

Advisor appreciation

Academic advisors play a critical role in student success. They guide students through UNM's curriculum, platforms, and services while offering empathy that enables students to find their path. From improving students' access to support and advocating for course needs to connecting students with study abroad or research opportunities and assisting with financial aid or academic recovery, advisors handle complex responsibilities that may often go unnoticed — but make a profound impact.

As Abdulmajeed Yamani, an advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences, explains: "Every student comes in with all their hopes and dreams, as well as with all their fears, anxieties, and stressors. In my role, I can make information accessible and interact with students so they feel that they are supported and belong at UNM and in the future they want to make for themselves and their loved ones."

We appreciate the dedication of our advising community, strategically led by Pamela Cheek, vice provost for student success.

Building successful spaces

One of the most exciting projects under way is the future Center for Collaborative Arts and Technology (CCAT), set to become a state-of-the-art home for the College of Fine Arts and its partners when completed late next year. The 58,000-square-foot facility will feature a 600-seat multipurpose performance theater, soundstage, Arts Lab, classroom, gallery, and public spaces.

Construction began last fall and is now in the structural phase, with interior work in progress and acoustical masonry being installed in the concert hall. Academic Affairs thanks Nicole Dopson, assistant vice president for academic resource management, and her team — Lea Briggs and Araceli Ramirez — for ensuring academic spaces align with UNM's strategic priorities.

CCAT is just one of the major projects that will transform UNM's academic environment in the coming years. More updates will follow soon.

Communicating from the heart of UNM

And last but certainly not least, the very publication that informs you of these accomplishments is worthy of a shoutout. Coming in as interim provost, Barbara Rodriguez wanted a distinctive vehicle that both inspired the campus and reflected who she is as a "Norteña," and both a native New Mexican and a Lobo alumna. In August, *Querencia at UNM* was born. Querencia is a Spanish word that means a place of belonging and deep roots. That sentiment of honoring our place, our people, and our shared path resonated with many in the UNM community. Many people expressed gratitude to Academic Affairs for this focus of keeping students, faculty, and staff informed and inspired by the impactful work happening across our campus.

In addition to the newsletter, Academic Affairs also joined [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#) this summer. These communication channels help spread our news about people and impact to new audiences and connect with other campus partners who inform and inspire us. Academic Affairs is grateful to Kim Delker, senior communications and marketing manager, for leading these efforts, and the collaboration of University Communication and Marketing, which ensures that these efforts reach a campuswide audience.



An artist's rendering of a completed CCAT.



Take note

Brief news you need to know

One of the things that makes our Lobo community strong is the way that we each pitch in when needed to support a common goal. We are so grateful of all our volunteers. And right now, the Office of the University Secretary is looking for volunteers for fall commencement that will take place Dec. 11 (graduate ceremony) and Dec. 12 (undergraduate ceremony). Both ceremonies will begin at 6 p.m. at University Arena (the Pit). Those interested in volunteering can view the positions available and [sign up at the volunteer registration site](#). For more information about commencement volunteers, email graduation@unm.edu or call (505) 277-7664. For 2025 graduation information, visit the [UNM Class of 2025 Fall Commencement website](#).

And tomorrow (Nov. 19), be sure to catch the last Faculty Lightning Lounge of the semester in Honors College Forum from 3:30-4:30 p.m. The presenters will be: Matthew Lakin, associate professor of computer science, whose talk is "Through the Looking Glass: Mirror DNA for Biomedicine;" Sara Abbaspour, an assistant professor of photography, whose talk is "floating ocean;" Gwyneth Doland, a professor of practice in journalism, whose talk is "Mapping the Local News Ecosystems of New Mexico;" and Suzanne Schadl, a professor in the College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences, whose talk is "Archives, Metahistory, and Community Engaged Description." Lightning Lounge is hosted by ADVANCE at UNM, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Office of the Vice President for Research. Ideas for future speakers? Contact Christopher Lyons (clyons@unm.edu) or advance@unm.edu.