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OFFICE OF
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Querencia at UNM

THE PROVOST'S PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HEART OF UNM

Welcoming our newest Lobos into the community

A year ago this month, I introduced *Querencia at UNM* as a way to share stories about the people, work, and sense of place that make our University distinctive.



Lobo Louie revs up the crowd at First-Year Family Day.

Querencia is a Spanish word often used to describe a place of belonging and deep roots. For me, it also carries a sense of responsibility — to care for the places and communities to which we belong. That idea is deeply connected to New Mexico and to the work we do at UNM.

As we begin a new academic year, it seems especially fitting to return to that idea as we welcome the newest members of our Lobo community.

Throughout the summer, thousands of new students and their families arrived on campus for orientation and First-Year Family Day. Some of our students come from communities across

New Mexico; others are experiencing our state for the first time. They bring different backgrounds, experiences, interests, and aspirations, but they share something important: they have chosen UNM as the place where they will take their next steps.

We also welcome new faculty across an extraordinary range of disciplines, along with new department chairs, directors, deans, and other academic leaders. Whether you are new to New Mexico, new to UNM, or simply beginning a new role here, welcome. We are glad you are part of this community.

And, of course, we welcome President Steve Goldstein, who joined UNM this summer. President Goldstein has committed his first months to listening and learning — meeting with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members to better understand UNM and New Mexico.

That commitment to listening and learning is one we can all carry into the year ahead.

As I begin my first academic year as provost, I ask our community to keep three commitments in mind:

Know this place. New Mexico has a history, culture, and sense of community unlike anywhere else. For those of us who have called New Mexico home for many years, it can be easy to take that distinctiveness for granted. For those who are new, there is much to discover. I encourage all of us to learn more about the communities we serve and the histories and traditions that shape our University and our state. What makes us different also makes us distinctive.

Build community. Universities are at their best when we move beyond the boundaries of our own disciplines, departments, and familiar circles. Attend a lecture outside your field. Visit an exhibition. Learn about research happening in another college. Introduce yourself to someone new. Some of the most interesting ideas emerge when people who see the world differently have an opportunity to learn from one another.

Put students first. The return of students changes the campus almost immediately. They bring energy, questions, ideas, and purpose to our work. Educating, mentoring, advising, and supporting them is at the heart of our academic mission.



This is our reminder to keep students at the center of all we do.

For faculty and staff, putting students first can begin with something quite simple: answer a question, listen carefully, understand their experiences, and remember that many of our students carry responsibilities and challenges beyond the classroom. And as leaders, we must continually ask whether our decisions, structures, and practices are helping students succeed.

Students should remain at the center of the decisions we make.

As a New Mexican and a UNM alumna, I know that belonging to this University means more than simply being here. It means understanding the people and communities we serve and recognizing our responsibility to them.

That is what *querencia* means to me.

As we begin 2026-27, I hope each of us will think about what we contribute to this place: how we welcome those who are new, how we strengthen our community, and how we ensure that our students have every opportunity to succeed.

Welcome back, Lobos. I look forward to the year ahead.

With much gratitude,

Barbara Rodríguez
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



Listening and learning with President Goldstein.

To provide an opportunity for UNM to shape how AI will impact the campus, the AI Steering Committee is holding the **UNM AI Conversation Kickoff on Sept. 3**. Students, staff, and faculty are invited to the event that will feature discussions and informational sessions on the current and future use of AI and related tools at AI at UNM. The keynote address will feature Melanie Moses, Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, and participants will have an opportunity to provide feedback that will guide the University's institutional values, ethics and principles on AI. I encourage everyone to attend as your schedule allows.

Applications are now open for the **Fall 2026 Provost Professional Conference Support Funds**. This program will provide up to \$2,000 per tenured or tenure-track Albuquerque campus faculty member for the purpose of travel to present a paper or results at a professional conference, or to attend an exhibition or performance of their own creative work. Applications can be submitted through **InfoReady** and are due by 11:59 p.m. on Sept. 21. Award announcements will be made early in October. For more information, email provost@unm.edu.

UNM's Research and Discovery Week — an annual opportunity to bring together the community through amazing research and creative works — will take place Nov. 3-6 at the Student Union Building and other spaces around campus. Once again, we are seeking proposals from all of our community who engages in some form of research, including undergraduates, graduates, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and staff. Do you have an idea for a proposal? [Learn additional information and submit your idea by Aug. 31](#).

