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Issue 10



OFFICE OF  
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

# Querencia at UNM

THE PROVOST'S PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HEART OF UNM

## Grounding student success in care and community

As we pause to reflect on another meaningful and productive semester, campus will soon begin to feel a little quieter as many of our students and faculty transition into the summer months. Yet across the University, there is a group whose work continues steadily through every season — our staff.

In this issue of *Querencia at UNM*, as we celebrate the [more than 3,600 Lobos who will earn degrees and certificates this spring](#), I want to recognize the extraordinary contributions of the staff members who support our students each day, often in ways that are unseen, but deeply felt.



Student success does not happen through any one office, classroom, or interaction alone. It is the result of a community of people working together to help students navigate challenges, discover opportunities, and remain connected to a sense of purpose and belonging. Staff are central to that work.

Across UNM, staff members help create the conditions that allow learning and discovery to flourish. They maintain the spaces where our community gathers. They ensure technologies and systems function when students need them most. They guide students through admissions, advising, registration, financial aid, research opportunities, graduate studies, and commencement. They answer questions, solve problems, offer reassurance, and often provide encouragement at exactly the right moment.

Faculty ignite curiosity and help students deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff, in so many ways, help sustain that journey. Together, they create the network of support that allows students not simply to persist, but to thrive.

For many of us, there is a staff member whose kindness, guidance, or belief in us changed the direction of our lives. That is certainly true for me.

Years ago, as an undergraduate student at UNM, I began my studies in accounting before ultimately finding my way to the Department of Communicative Disorders, where I later earned both my bachelor's and master's degrees. Not long after, I received a phone call from Florence Gonzales, then a department administrator in the department. She asked whether I would be interested in teaching English phonetics as a temporary part-time instructor while I was working as a speech-language pathologist.

I said yes.

At the time, I could not have fully understood how important that conversation would become in shaping my future. That moment — a staff member reaching out with encouragement and opportunity — helped light a path that eventually led me to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Washington and ultimately return home to UNM as a faculty member and now interim provost.

Florence is still part of the UNM community today, and I remain deeply grateful for the role she played in my journey.

Stories like this exist across our University. They remind us that what may seem like a small act of care, encouragement, or support can leave a lasting impact on a student's life.

This month, we highlight two staff members whose work has made a meaningful difference for graduating students: Senior Academic Advisor Catherine Young in the School of Engineering and Kyle Harvey, graduate services coordinator for Native American Studies. Their stories reflect the care, dedication, and commitment that staff across UNM bring to their work every day.

At UNM, student success is a shared responsibility and a shared accomplishment. It is built through relationships, trust, and the sense of connection that helps students know they belong here. That spirit of community — of *querencia* — is strengthened every day by the people who quietly and consistently show up for our students.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026. And to the staff, faculty, families, friends, and supporters who helped our students reach this important milestone: thank you for all you do to sustain and strengthen our UNM community.

In deep appreciation,

**Barbara Rodríguez**

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

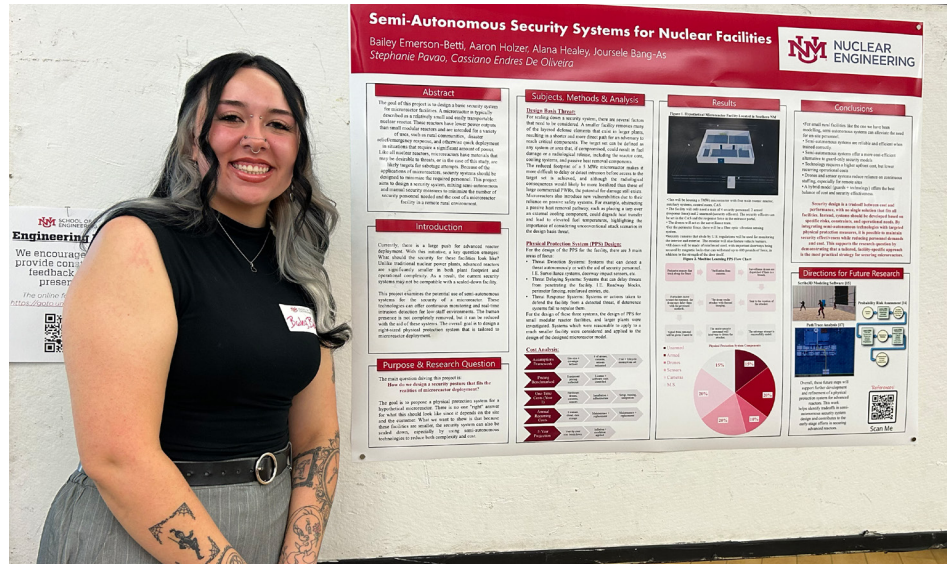
A graphic with a purple background and a white grid pattern. On the left, the text "Staff Shoutout" is written in large white letters. Below it, "CATHERINE YOUNG" is written in bold white letters, followed by "SENIOR ACADEMIC ADVISOR" and "CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING/ NUCLEAR ENGINEERING" in smaller white letters. On the right side of the graphic is a portrait of Catherine Young, a woman with reddish-brown hair and glasses, smiling.

Catherine Young, a senior academic advisor in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering and the Department of Nuclear Engineering, has been with the School of Engineering since 2022 after beginning her advising career at Texas A&M University. During the spring semester, she has been on maternity leave, and while she may be physically away, she is still top of mind — and of heart — to her graduating seniors.

Krista Navarrette, manager of academic advisement in the School of Engineering, said that seniors of both departments got together to get her a baby shower gift as a token of appreciation for all that she has done for them. “Catherine has been a diamond for our CBE and NE students.” That sentiment is echoed by

Young's coworker, Alisa Sadilek, administrative assistant in chemical and biological engineering. Every day, she witnesses Young serve as an inspiration to her students — and to Sadilek herself as a student (Sadilek will receive a bachelor's degree in psychology next spring). "All the students here sing her praises. Catherine inspires our students, and that inspires me."

Bailey Emerson-Betti, who is receiving a bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering, struggled to find her way when she began the program, but she credits Young with setting her on a successful path, in particular through connecting her with an internship she's held the last three years at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. "She is the main reason I'm here." In the fall, Emerson-Betti will be pursuing a doctorate at North Carolina State. "She has helped me all along the way, including with my graduate school applications."



**Bailey Emerson-Betti, graduating senior in nuclear engineering, participates in Engineering Expo on May 8.**

From solving obstacles big and small, graduating seniors have endless praise for Young: "I couldn't have done it without her," said Emil Guibadouline, who is graduating with a bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering and headed to a Ph.D. program at Texas A&M.

Chemical and biological engineering senior Emily Russell went to Young when she was grappling with a complex issue with a professor that could have derailed her academic career. But Young was able to find a solution and a sustainable path. "Catherine was invaluable," Russell said. "I don't know how I would have navigated without her." Russell is now in the 4+1 shared-credit program and will be continuing next year at UNM to earn her master's in chemical and biological engineering.

From simply taking 15 minutes to solve a minor but perplexing problem to learning her students' names, "she has been a godsend for our entire cohort," said Jordayna Miller, a graduating senior in nuclear engineering.

A member of that cohort, nuclear engineering senior Ryan Kornreich, concurs, offering the highest praise. "She is among the best, if not the best, academic advisors on campus."

Dylan Bernal, who will be receiving a master of arts degree in Native American Studies, was positively impacted by Kyle Harvey, student and graduate services coordinator for the department.

In addition to his staff role, Harvey is also part of the Ph.D. cohort in the department. Through their shared classes, Bernal said he was able to learn about Harvey's work and passion for education.

## Staff Shoutout

**KYLE HARVEY**  
GRADUATE SERVICES  
COORDINATOR FOR  
NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES



"Outside of class, as the student success specialist, he has gone above and beyond to help students navigate the academy," Bernal said.



**Dylan Bernal**

That includes being the go-to problem solver who possesses a strong willingness to jump in and help whenever needed.

"Aside from his listed job duties, he has shown a deep love and belief in the program, and those qualities help make the department what it is," Bernal said. "On a personal level, he has helped me on my own academic journey, listening to me vent in his office, and offering guidance and thoughtful reflection."

That connection has been an extremely important factor for Bernal, who is a farmer from the Pueblo of Sandia in addition to being a graduate student.

"I appreciate his dedication to helping students succeed in the department," Bernal said. "He has my deepest respect as a colleague and friend, and I am humbled and proud to highlight his achievements."

After graduation, Bernal is looking forward to working with his tribe on several projects related to education and land and water.



An annual UNM tradition, the Staff Appreciation Cookout, will be held on May 20 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Mesa Vista Courtyard, Cornell Mall, and Union Square on UNM's central campus. Hosted by Staff Council, the event offers an opportunity for staff from across the University to come together in celebration and recognition of the many contributions they make throughout the year. The afternoon will include live music, green chile cheeseburgers and veggie burgers, and plenty of Lobo spirit — UNM apparel is encouraged. A group photo will be taken at 12:30 p.m.