

10-1-2012

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## Recommended Citation

Frank, Robert G.. "Report on 120 Days of Listening Campaign." (2012). [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/frank\\_papers/2](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/frank_papers/2)

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# REPORT ON 120 DAYS OF LISTENING CAMPAIGN

President Robert G. Frank  
The University of New Mexico



When I came back to my alma mater, the University of New Mexico, to serve as the 21st President, I committed to investing the first 120 days of my presidency in a listening campaign. My intention was to listen to the ideas, thoughts, and concerns of the many different constituencies that make up our UNM community. I wanted to gain a full understanding of what the UNM community and the people of New Mexico hope for and expect from higher education and our state's flagship university. I wanted to know more about the inherent quality of our university and hear from our stakeholders how we can build on all that is great about UNM to expand our potential to an even higher level. I wanted to hear from all of you how we could best determine the right actions to take to serve the many varied and wonderful communities of this state.

On October 15, my 120 days formally ended. In looking back over that time, I have realized is that there is much more to be heard and that therefore the listening is far from over. To my mind, there is so much more to the story; I have only completed the first chapter. I am also aware that much of the narrative of this section is oriented to the community around and outside UNM. As I turn the page to chapter two, the theme will be oriented to hearing more from the community within UNM. My intention is to shift the focus now to listening more closely to faculty, staff and students. I have heard the expectations of the UNM president. I have heard that I should be visible on campus. To that end, Janet and I are delighted to be living in University House and I enjoy each opportunity to meet and get to know the people that make this University great. I have heard that transparency in my actions and those of the University are critical to building trust, and I am committed to being open and honest. I have heard that the economic challenges that UNM has faced have taken a toll on morale, and I have also heard the pride and passion that our people have in this University each other. The innovative and creative thinking generated on this campus have been a critical part of our success in keeping UNM moving forward in uncertain times. You have my assurance that, as your President, I will be a strong advocate for the University and its people, and rely on you for continued guidance and support.

While I will continue listening to the many voices of UNM, I would like to share with you the key themes that have emerged from the conversation thus far.



# As the state's flagship university, UNM has an important role to play in the economic development of New Mexico

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The seismic shifts in the global and national economies have shaken New Mexico and will continue to reverberate for quite some time to come. The old models of economic development are being superseded by new systems and approaches. Our reliance on Federal dollars must give way to a more vibrant entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented economic development strategy. UNM is viewed as part of the solution, and we have an obligation to work side by side with the state, county and city to support their efforts. For such collaboration to be successful, we must reach beyond the boundaries of our own organizations. We must also engage our graduates and our faculty, who are critical contributors to the source of solutions.

The conversations arising from our September 'Rainforest in the Desert' economic development summit were very revealing. They were, in my opinion, also very hopeful. New Mexico has tremendous strengths to bring to the process of economic development. For example, our state is a desirable place to live and is a destination for capital. Our nonprofit STC.UNM corporation has an established infrastructure and can play a critical role in the growth of knowledge businesses. At the same time, there is much work to be done. New Mexico lacks sufficient business expertise for managing the diverse demands of micro and small businesses, in particular the leadership skillsets to expand from start-up status to national competitor. The rainforest model of economic development nurtures an entire ecosystem of supporting knowledge businesses surrounding innovators and entrepreneurs, and UNM is well positioned to play a significant role in the arena. In addition, the University should consider using flexible funds to invest in robust start-ups likely to succeed.



We have many positive relationships with civic, community and government leaders that provide us with a solid foundation from which to engage and lead as the state's flagship university.

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UNM enjoys strong support from Albuquerque's leadership. Mayor Berry is committed to the University as a graduate and as a leader of the city. His ABQ The Plan supports city infrastructure that improves the quality of life in Albuquerque that indirectly benefits the University, and he is a willing partner who wants to be at the table with us on many projects. The Bernalillo County Commission is open to partnering with UNM is well, and will support our critically needed hospital expansion. Our collaboration on the North Golf course has been a huge success and is indicative of how improved relations and communication between UNM and the County Commission can be mutually beneficial.

Legislators have mixed views about UNM. Some see UNM favorably and support us. Others do not see UNM as favorably, and feel that we have garnered too many resources because we are a large institution. As a new president, I must provide a strong presence during the Legislative Session to tell the UNM story. Fortunately, we have a strong Government Relations team that is assisting me with telling an increasingly persuasive and compelling story about our multiple levels of impact and with becoming a powerful advocate for UNM.



## We can build stronger and more positive relationships across all our constituencies by telling our story better.

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During this 120-day listening campaign, I learned of many stories, programs, initiatives and efforts across our university that are extraordinary, creative, and dynamic. Too often, they were unknown beyond their immediate spheres and typically unheard of outside our campus boundaries.

As UNM responded to the economic climate of the past few years, we had to significantly reduce our communications and marketing staff and budget. This resulted in an unintended consequence: our ability to effectively engage with the community beyond our campus has been compromised more than expected. In order to build strong and healthy relationships beyond our campus, and improve our reputational capital with all of our key constituencies and stakeholders, we must begin to tell our UNM story better, integrating our efforts to more efficiently and strategically to maximize our reach.

We have profound and powerful stories to share with community members, legislators, the media, and our national audiences about the work our faculty is doing, about our students and their achievements, about the service our staff provides, and so much more. We took a first step in hiring Dianne Anderson to work with the media and have seen a tremendous positive change in the tone, tenor and number of UNM stories in print and on the air. Much more is needed, however, and we will continue to thoughtfully review our communications, outreach, and reputational management strategy in the coming year.



## Partnering with the national labs - Sandia, Los Alamos and the Air Force Research Lab - is source opportunity for UNM.

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UNM has positive relationships with all of the State's labs, and a number of programs in partnership with the Air Force Research Lab. One place for deeper collaboration is with Sandia National Laboratories, which has a huge impact on Albuquerque with a budget of \$2.5 B and 9,948 employees. The Department of Energy, which oversees the operation of the contract, announced that there would be a competitive bid for the new contract, and several confirmed and prospective bidders have been identified.

The framework of a new contract provides an opportunity for us to define a stronger partnership with Sandia. UNM is uniquely positioned to support the execution of DOE missions and programs at the lab. UNM offers comprehensive interdisciplinary science, engineering, and medical and social science research and education programs. When coupled with our ability to attract world-class researchers and service the workforce needs of the national security labs by educating the next generation of scientists, engineers and analysts, UNM stands uniquely positioned to engage with Sandia to advance their mission.



## New Mexico's archaic and burdensome regulatory environment hampers the educational system as much as it does the business environment.

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As Governor Susana Martinez has been emphasizing recently, excessive government regulations impose burdens that stifle innovation and limit organizational responsiveness. In education as in business, New Mexico is too often hindered by an outdated regulatory oversight system. The burden of 20th century regulations significantly constrains UNM's ability to progress effectively and swiftly in the direction of its 21st century goals. In addition to being frustrating and onerous for UNM's administration and academic leaders, such regulations negatively impact how we serve our students and other constituencies.

One telling example is the process of instituting a new university degree. In creating a new degree, UNM engages in eight levels of internal review and approval including the Board of Regents. The Council of Graduate Deans then reviews the degree, which in most states would be the final step. In New Mexico, however, the degree then goes through three external regulatory reviews; the Higher Education Department, the Council of Academic Officers and then back to the Higher Education Department for a 12th by the Graduate Degree Review Committee. Finally, after receiving approval from the GDRC, the degree is forwarded to the Board of Finance. The Board of the Finance's expertise is public finance, but it is not equipped to evaluate higher education. These kinds of onerous regulatory processes severely inhibit UNM's capacity to respond to the educational needs of our students and community. They should be critically evaluated for their efficacy, and eliminated or restructured to enable New Mexico's universities to respond nimbly to the evolving academic and community environment.



## Student success matters to our community stakeholders and partners as much as it does to us.

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Some of the issues that both legislators and business leaders have raised with me include the quality of advisement and student success factors. One very influential legislator told me directly that he and his wife both got through UNM with little advisement from the University, and that his grandson left after one or two years to attend a small liberal arts school. At another legislative hearing, I was told that UNM ignores students from southeastern New Mexico.

We may also be ignoring too many prospective students who would excel at UNM. In several situations, faculty and people in communities around the state have told me stories about local honors students who were not recruited by UNM, but by other institutions. This signals to me that we need to establish a clearer focus on actively recruiting our State's best performing students.

We can also seek to improve support for our students who are ready to graduate and move on. A group of business leaders told me that it was more challenging than it should be to engage with students for outreach opportunities and to recruit them for jobs.

Opportunities abound for UNM to make our students successful, such as the great work being done in Academic Affairs to enhance the quality of the first-year experience for our undergraduate students.





## We can attract the best and brightest to the University of New Mexico by establishing an Honors College.

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During the 120-day listening campaign many parents, former students and Albuquerque residents spoke to me about honors students who had chosen to attend schools other than UNM. Often, these stories suggested that UNM had made little effort to recruit the brightest students graduating from New Mexico's high schools. Examination of our scholarship policy revealed we had limited our scholarship offers to the very best students to offer scholarships to students along the performance continuum.

Two years ago, the Board of Regents increased the math and science requirements for incoming high school students to assure better-prepared students came to the University. This policy has allowed a gradual increase of class experience and has communicated higher expectations to high school students. Still, many students come to UNM with inadequate math and science preparation.

The UNM faculty has begun conversations regarding the Honor's College. It is anticipated that the faculty will formally approve a model and a curriculum this academic year. In addition, a common living area is needed to increase a sense of community among this key group. A dedicated dorm, or at the least a floor or two on an existing dorm, is needed. The listening campaign validated the community's interest in the Honor's College and the importance of UNM putting increased focus on recruiting the best and brightest New Mexican students throughout the state.



## Being smarter with our resources to drive the educational mission.

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During the listening campaign, several people pointed to examples in which programs were needlessly scattered across several areas, losing the impact of a larger unified program. For example, The Daily Lobo, KNME, KUNM, and our Department of Communication and Journalism have limited formal links. Institutions such as the University of Missouri, the University of Oklahoma and Kent State University have brought at least large portions of these programs together to afford students educational and professional experiences. As journalism undergoes a rapid metamorphosis, we have the opportunity to structure a new series of programs preparing students for 21st century journalism. This would also give UNM the opportunity to serve many students who are going to other universities in pursuit of such majors as journalism, broadcasting, sports broadcasting, and media management. This is just one example of how UNM can align existing academic programs with affiliated resources to create powerful practical learning experiences for our students.



## We have a unique opportunity to establish a College of Public Health that will be a benefit for the entire state.

New Mexico operates accredited public health programs at UNM and NMSU at the master's level. Despite ample public health challenges within the state, we lack a College of Public Health in New Mexico. Recently New Mexico's Secretary of Health noted the increased need for public health education created by the Affordable Care Act, which emphasizes the accountability for health outcomes to enter communities. This emphasis will facilitate the utilization of public health models into traditional allopathic models of care. At UNM this trend has been recognized to obtain a certificate in public health as part of their curriculum. Despite this emphasis, we lack adequate faculty to address the convergence of the health, economic, environmental and demographic data that is fundamental to the management of large populations.

UNM is uniquely prepared with its broad emphasis upon the state of New Mexico and many partnerships with the Department of Health to address the need for advanced education in public health. During the 120-day listening campaign, many faculty mentioned their interest in a full-fledged College of Public Health. A recent survey of our faculty revealed that 256 faculty teach some public health concept in a class.

Legislators and many community leaders also support the establishment of a College of Public Health. It is clear we need a College of Public Health to increase the number of public health practitioners in New Mexico and to work with the State to address the problems we face in lack of access, infectious disease, prevention and research. UNM is the institution best positioned to address this need.



### Transparency in budgeting will facilitate a more effective dialogue with the State and UNM donors about the needs of a flagship research institution.

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Although recent budget processes have been seen as an improvement, many people have expressed concerns with UNM's historic lack of budget transparency. UNM currently uses an incremental budgeting process. While the process is clearly documented, there is no clear basis for many of the budgeting decisions. In 2010 the Legislative Finance Committee recommended that UNM should consider moving to a Responsibility Center Management (RCM) model. To address this model, we have formed a committee to review the issue and make recommendations.

Our academic mission drives everything we do at UNM and therefore, our academic leadership, including Deans, Faculty Chairs, and faculty representation through the Faculty Senate are the ones who would lead the RCM budget process.

Our current approach to budgeting puts authority for financial planning, execution and control in the hands of central management. In an RCM model, the different units are responsible for managing their own costs, and then collectively share in providing fiscal resources for meeting institutional needs, such as libraries, administration, utilities, etc.

With a new kind of visibility and insight into our UNM budget, we can have more candid and open conversations with our legislators, with our community, with our philanthropic donors, and with all our supporters in regard to UNM's role and responsibility as New Mexico's flagship university.



## THEME 11

### We can easily make the Board of Regents meetings more accessible.

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It has been the practice to hold the Board of Regents meetings in the UNM Student Union Building (SUB). During the listening campaign, several people commented upon the seating arrangement used for the Board of Regents meetings. In the meeting, the Regents sit at a head table with the University President. In front of them is a long table with the University Vice-Presidents and representatives of key stakeholders such as ASUNM, GSUNM, the Alumni Association, and the Foundation. This seating arrangement cuts off those in the audience.

Most other universities seat the Board and the President at the main table and have vice-presidents and key constituents sit on the side or in the audience and join the main group for critical conversations. This type of model makes the Board appear more open to input and accessible. Perceived and real access to the BOR of is important to the University community.



## Reorganizing the President's Office

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During the listening campaign I have had the opportunity to work with the team in the President's Office and leadership staff within the University. As you know, after discussions with the leadership of the Faculty Senate's Committee on Governance, the Board of Regents and the Staff Council, I elected to permanently appoint Chaouki Abdallah as Provost. As I have worked with the other senior leadership members, I have felt we are making good progress establishing an effective team able to address the leadership challenges we face.

In order to be most effective, I have also begun to make a few changes within the team in my office. Breda Bova's title is now Counsel to the President. She will handle faculty, parent, student, and athletics issues. I have eliminated the position of Consultant to the President for Strategy and Goals, and have added the new position of Executive Assistant and Chief Administrator to the President, which is currently in the process of being filled. This person will oversee the management of the office, the daily schedule of the president, quantitative and qualitative data analysis projects. Cinnamon Blair has served as the Interim Chief Marketing and Communications Officer for the past year. In the five months I have served as President, she has done a remarkable job and I have decided to make her appointment permanent.

I am considering adding a position in the future that will be determined after the changes described above are implemented. If it is deemed critical, this additional position will report to the President, providing oversight and coordination of presidential programs, as well as developing and executing the short and long-term strategic agenda for the President's executive cabinet. It will provide leadership to a range of initiatives for which responsibility is shared across the institution, and will lead execution efforts of the President's strategic priorities, including development of action plans and the coordination of relevant activities that deliver on these objectives.



## Listening to the voices within UNM

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The listening campaign has been a powerful experience, but there is much more to be heard. These first months, which have been focused on the intersection of our university with the community beyond our campus has been enlightening and created a foundation for representing UNM as a strong partner to both the public and private sectors. I would like to acknowledge that I have indeed heard the call from inside our campus. Although I am a native son of the Land of Enchantment, I have been away for a long time. In coming home to serve UNM, I needed to start becoming reacquainted with Albuquerque and New Mexico. Re-forging those bonds with our broader community as UNM's new President is important for all of us if we are to realize the grand vision we have of our place as a premier research university. At the same time, I know that it is now time to turn inward, to the voices of experience, wisdom, creativity and vision within our UNM community.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

These themes, which have surfaced in so many conversations, offer all of us insight not only into where we have been, but also to where we can go. In that regard, they provide information that we can factor into our UNM2020 plan. As I conclude my formal 120-day listening campaign, I will turn more to our faculty, staff, and students to hear what they have to say. I promise to keep listening, not only as we begin the second chapter, but for as long as I serve as your UNM President.

