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President's Report, 12/6/2007

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UNM has had some outstanding news in preparation for today’s meeting. The New Mexico Board of Finance approved our 2007 institutional bond issue on Nov. 20. This $143 million issue is focused on classroom modernization and academic facilities as well as renovation and improvements to the Pit and University Stadium. It signals UNM's commitment to take care of business and not depend on the state for all of its capital needs. In addition, bond rating agencies, Moody's and Standard and Poor's, have given UNM a strong Aa3/AA rating. I’m asking our independent auditors to do a public presentation to the regents on UNM's 2007 finances. I will also direct these auditors to undertake a long-term projection of the university's future finances. I want everyone to be as confident as I am about the university's financial future.

Working with the North Campus Neighborhood Association leadership, I have appointed the North Golf Course Community Advisory Board. This nine-member group is charged with providing the UNM president, the Board of Regents and any potential future developers with recommendations and the parameters for the future of the property. This includes a footprint for a regulation nine-hole course, with enhancements and improvements to the course and its adjacent jogging trails, and suggested funding sources to cover these enhancements and improvements. Once the footprint is determined, we can then work on development that will support the future needs for the university.

We're pleased to announce the sale of the Frank Hibben House to brothers Dennis and Douglas Lutz, whose family homesteaded in New Mexico a century ago and who have pledged to restore the property as an exhibit, education and research center that will be available to the public. Dr. Dennis Lutz, an alumnus of UNM’s School of Medicine, is currently professor and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Douglas Lutz is president of High Desert Bank in Albuquerque and president-elect of the Independent Community Banker’s Association of New Mexico. These brothers share the same enthusiasm and dedication to preservation, research and education that heralded Dr. Hibben's career.

I was delighted to see the CNM expansion election in Rio Rancho win approval by substantial margins. This positive vote is vitally important to the future presence of UNM in Rio Rancho and signals an acceptance of the partnership we have forged with CNM. Congratulations to CNM President Kathie Winograd and her team on a job well done. There will be much preparatory work to get done with CNM before ground can be broken on the first building, but this is the beginning of the exciting future of higher education in Rio Rancho.

Janet and I and a number of UNM representatives took a bus up to Farmington a couple of weeks ago. I was particularly impressed with San Juan College, and in meetings with the SJC leadership, pledged to work on a cooperative MOU. We also toured our Extended University operation in Farmington and were pleased to talk to both faculty and students there. Our special thanks go to Jack and Terri Fortner who hosted a reception for us that was attended by a lively group of UNM supporters. It was gratifying to see and hear their love for this university. Farmington is truly UNM country.

On our way to the Four Corners, we spent an informative and productive morning with Governor Raymond Gauchupin and the tribal council of Jemez Pueblo. They shared with us their goals for education and health care in their community and we pledged to them our support. This was our third visit to tribal communities. Next week, we are scheduled to visit Isleta Pueblo as part of our trip to UNM-Valencia. My message to our Native leaders is that working together, we can guarantee increased student success for all American Indian students at UNM.

David J. Schmidly
Group plans future of UNM campus

School of Architecture and Planning Dean Roger Schluntz and Professor Ric Richardson recently directed a campus planning charrette at the request of President David Schmidly. They brought together campus, local, regional and national architecture and planning experts to look at the campus critically with eyes toward growth and development and a vision of sustainability. Proposals include:

- interfacing public and campus transportation,
- mixed-use retail, housing and parking south of Central Avenue,
- an alumni center and entertainment, tourism, retail and housing facilities near south campus, along with turbines to capture wind energy, and
- a campus recreation center.

Cancer Center brings advanced radiation treatment to N.M.

The UNM Cancer Center installed the state’s first TomoTherapy Hi-Art radiation treatment system – one of only 70 in the nation. Because of TomoTherapy’s unsurpassed precision, some tumors can be treated with very high doses of radiation in just three to five treatments, instead of the standard 30 to 40.

Patients who were not eligible for traditional radiation therapy can now be treated with TomoTherapy, including patients with tumors next to the spinal cord, optic nerves and brain tissue. Also, because there is almost no radiation leakage with TomoTherapy, treatment is usually safer for children.

Otter diplomacy at work in agreement between North, South Korea

It could be called otter diplomacy. UNM Biology Research Associate Professor Paul Polechla witnessed the signing of an agreement between North and South Korea to research and preserve the habitat of otters in Korea’s Demilitarized Zone. Polechla said, “Wildlife is being used as an ambassador for the peaceful thaw of relations between two nations.”

Fundraising exceeds goal for eighth year

The UNM Foundation recently released its annual Report of Giving. During fiscal year 2006-07, UNM received $72.6 million in private support from more than 19,750 donors – both new records. The gifts exceeded the projected fundraising goal for the eighth straight year, with an increase of more than $24 million from last year’s record total.