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Spring 2-14-2020

2020-02-14 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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Roth, Paul B.. "2020-02-14 A Message from Chancellor Roth." (2020). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_chancellor/4

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HEALTH SCIENCES

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear colleagues:

The City of Albuquerque is committed to finding a way to address homelessness in our community via the Gateway Center emergency shelter. This is a difficult problem which requires us all to be at our compassionate and creative best.

Responsible civic leaders in the country, and Albuquerque in particular, are working together to provide needed support for individuals and young families who find themselves without a home. The causes of homelessness are as numerous and unique as those who find themselves in that unfortunate situation - a loss of a job, a death in the family, medical debt and yes, substance use disorder and mental illness.

In an effort to address this problem, our Mayor, Bernalillo County officials, the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and I have been working closely together for the past two years to effect meaningful change for our community. President Stokes then assumed the lead for the University and signed a Letter of Intent about one year ago. The major gap in our city's services is the lack of an overnight emergency shelter where the homeless can spend the night in a dignified, safe, warm and supportive environment and then be transported to other services during the day. This shelter would also support our first responders, who often find the only option is taking a person to the emergency room.

It is not surprising, but certainly disheartening, that neighborhoods within the city are extremely reluctant to have such a shelter in close proximity. While a site is yet to be determined, and as the conversations continue through open forums and surveys by the City and The University of New Mexico, those individuals who stereotype all the homeless as violent thugs and criminals are ill-informed and way off base. Homeless individuals are more often the victims of violence and crime than they are the perpetrators.

The Mayor has made it clear that the city will assure the safety of the surrounding neighbors, as well as that of those being sheltered in the Gateway Center. I believe, as I am sure you all do,

that the homeless deserve the same rights and aspirations to wellbeing and health equity as any other human being.

How a society treats its most vulnerable - whether children, the elderly, the poor, those who are helpless, and those who are suffering from difficult life circumstances and are homeless - is a measure of its humanity. How will UNM and Albuquerque be remembered?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul