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Open Letter on the Economy

University of New Mexico Board of Regents

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February 4, 2009

To the University of New Mexico Community:

There is no greater priority during recessionary times than educating our children and preparing them to compete successfully in an ever increasingly complex global and national market. Each day we read of tens of thousands losing their jobs and facing an uncertain future.

Throughout our history educational institutions of higher learning have held us together as a nation and prepared each generation. Research institutions have made discoveries and advancements that have kept the United States more secure and created millions of jobs. Our colleges and universities have helped us to survive world wars and global depression. At the University of New Mexico our mission must be to match the dreams of our students with the skills they need to earn a living, teach them to make the contributions they are capable of and see that as a society we protect our core values as a people, a state and a nation.

In these hard times it is paramount that we rededicate ourselves to these core principles and unite to accomplish our mission. The Regents will examine, together with the President and the executive leadership every level of our organization and encourage every individual to also rededicate themselves to our educational and research missions. The Regents want to assure our supporters and members of the community as a whole that we will examine every aspect of our institution, allowing maximum input from all our members and set a course of action to best serve our students and our state.

Self evaluation and discussion, respecting our various positions, will lead to a greater understanding of the challenges we face. Open discussion and debate is good for an institution and should never be viewed as intrusive or unnecessary. Internal conflicts over compensation levels, administrative strategies and executive decision making without balancing the dialogue against our mission is counterproductive and in truth confusing to the community.

Are we achieving our goals, enrolling more students, graduating more students, making sure our faculty and staff is as diverse as our student body, creating equal executive opportunities for all our faculty and staff? Are we providing the expertise, knowledge and sound advice to our communities as a flagship university? Are we working in partnership to solve the problems we face? These are the questions that should guide our discussion and govern our response.

Today the vast majority of our faculty is highly motivated and dedicated. They are the backbone of any university and now more than ever we need to work to function as a unit and move forward together.

Tenure/tenure track faculty is earned and reflects the talents and skills of the individual and their lifelong commitment to education. When a faculty member is honored by receiving tenure it is a lifetime contract. The majority of our main campus faculty is

tenure/tenure track faculty and is contracted on a 189 day year and earn on an average of over \$94,000.00 in salary. Ninety percent of the faculty has a nine month contract. In the late seventies we established a five classes per year workload. In addition every faculty member receives 39 personal days per year to devote to outside interests and pursuits. In order to retain and attract top faculty we have over the years tried to maintain a fair and equitable compensation package. Now the Regents ask the faculty to join with us in moving forward as a unified institution, as leaders in these troubled times. We must not be just one more interest group fighting for our piece of the pie.

As part of our refocus it is time to work together to establish clear and consistent performance measures, involve our students and staff in looking at every program and every major to identify areas of improvement and set attainable performance standards and goals for the next year.

This is necessary to meet the tremendous challenges we now face.

Last week UNM President Schmidly issued a statement freezing Executive Vice President's pay and his own pay. He took dramatic steps to deal with the worsening economic conditions including a 15% reduction in main campus administrative spending over the next three years. In taking these steps, the President called for a refocus on the core educational and research missions of the university.

The Regents applaud these steps and want to reassure our faculty and our students that we will maintain the highest standards in our classrooms and in our research labs.

It is time to evaluate our results, examine our core missions and focus on our main mission which is educating our students and preparing them for the increasingly competitive global markets.

This is possibly the greatest economic challenge we have faced as a nation since the great depression. That is why now more than ever it is time for all our institutions of higher learning to step up and work with our communities, our businesses and our legislators to keep our promise to this generation and future generations.

Sincerely,

James H. Koch
President, UNM Board of Regents