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President's Report, 2/15/2008

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The 2008 session of the New Mexico Legislature ended less than 24 hours ago, and I suspect there will be a lot of discussion at this regents’ meeting about what finally transpired in Santa Fe. I want to commend the work of UNM’s legislative team, led by Executive Vice President for Administration David Harris and Government Relations Executive Director Marc Saavedra. In a session where new money was scarce, UNM did quite well in getting funding for its student success programs and capital projects. However, we didn’t get everything we hoped for in terms of compensation from the state, and that will mean tough decisions ahead for the regents and for this administration.

In addition to budget preparation, we must turn our full attention to the municipal election in Rio Rancho on March 4. Voters will be deciding on a Higher Education Initiative that we hope will provide the infrastructure funding for the UNM campus there. The quarter-cent gross receipts tax increase would provide $20 million over the next 20 years.

What I have observed in my nine months as president of the University of New Mexico is that the people of Rio Rancho are to be commended for being clear-sighted, courageous and visionary – knowing what they want for their city and taking the necessary steps to see that their vision is realized. Rio Rancho citizens have made it clear that education is of primary importance for the future of their city. Time and again, they have backed up their vision with deeds – voting approval of measures that support education from kindergarten through post-secondary. Last November, they took an important step in approving the CNM and UNM partnership in Rio Rancho. Now they are being asked to take the next step along the path they have envisioned.

We at UNM are working hard to educate the voters of Rio Rancho about all of the benefits a positive vote will mean for their city and its future. We hope to report a positive outcome next month.

As you’ll see from today’s report, spring enrollment continues the trend of stability. However, there is ongoing planning to strategically address enrollment needs and opportunities. We are aggressively going to deal with declining numbers of graduate students. We will also look at proposals that invest resources to increase new enrollment where there is opportunity.

Our strategic planning efforts are also continuing at a brisk pace. As we meet here, the deans are weighing in on the opportunities and challenges they see our university facing in the next few years. I expect to unveil our plan, based on regents’ goals, this summer.

David J. Schmidly
The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene recently honored Michelle Steinauer, a research assistant professor in the UNM biology department, with the Young Investigator Award. She was one of five recipients recognized with the prestigious award.

Steinauer, who has been at UNM for three years, was recognized for her research on schistosome parasites, a flat worm that causes schistosomiasis, one of the major unconquered infectious diseases afflicting people of developing countries in tropical regions, particularly in Africa.

Kathleen “Kit” Elliott, a Medical Reserve Corps volunteer with the UNM School of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine’s Center for Disaster Medicine, was recently awarded a National Daily Point of Light Award. The award honors those who have made a commitment to help meet critical needs in their communities.

Elliott, a full-time nurse at First Choice Community Health, has volunteered her guidance and experience to almost every aspect of the MRC. The national Points of Light Foundation engages and mobilizes millions of volunteers to help solve serious social problems in thousands of communities.

UNM has exceeded the ambitious goal of raising $515,000 for the 2007 United Way Giving Makes Life Better campaign. At last count, university contributors gave $568,199, an increase of more than $74,000 from last year’s record setting mark of $493,600.

UNM exceeds 2007 United Way goal

Medical Reserve Corps volunteer receives National Daily Point of Light Award

UNM names Valdez executive director of RWJF Center

Robert Otto Valdez joins UNM as executive director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy. He joins the university after leading his own research and analysis firm, Valdez and Associates, and serving as a senior health scientist with the RAND Health Sciences Program.
Sklar to give 53rd Annual Research Lecture

Larry Sklar, professor of pathology, will present the 53rd Annual Research Lecture, the highest honor UNM bestows on its faculty members. His talk addressing “Team Science: Partnerships for Discovery and Information” will be held Thursday, April 17, at 7 p.m. in the Domenici Center Auditorium, UNM Health Sciences Center.

UNM student groups win Most Improved Blood Drive Award

Numerous UNM student groups sponsored blood drives in 2007 to provide much needed blood to United Blood Services. The result: 649 units of blood collected for hospital patients in New Mexico. United Blood Services honored UNM and these student groups with its Most Improved Blood Drive award: Community Experience, Army ROTC, Humanist Society, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Student Nursing Association, North Medical Students, UNM Resident Hall Advisors, Pi Tau Sigma.

UNM opens campus to presidential campaigns

UNM wants students to have a front row seat to the 2008 presidential election process. So the university is waiving standard facility fees for all campaigns that have been invited to campus by chartered student organizations.

President David Schmidly said, “With so much at stake in the outcome of this important presidential election and so much they can learn from their participation in it, the students of the University of New Mexico deserve to be an important part of this, the most exciting and hotly-contested presidential campaign in decades and one of the most important of our lifetimes.”
Schmidly named to NCAA Board

The National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Board of Directors approved the appointment of President David Schmidly. His tenure on the board will begin in April.

USA Today calls The Pit one of ‘10 great places to get pumped for NCAA action’

A recent USA Today article listed The Pit as one of the “10 Great Places to Get Pumped for NCAA Action.” The Pit was included among other top collegiate basketball arenas such as Allen Fieldhouse (Kansas), Cameron Indoor Stadium (Duke) and Pauley Pavilion (UCLA). Plans are underway for extensive renovations to The Pit.

Sullivan named third consensus All-American from UNM

Senior kicker John Sullivan became the third consensus All-American in UNM history. Sullivan, a former walk-on who kicked with a torn ACL in his plant (left) leg all season, joins safety Brian Urlacher (1999) and wide receiver Terance Mathis (1989). He received first team All-America honors from ESPN.com, The Sporting News and the Walter Camp Football Foundation, and is the lone player from the Mountain West Conference on the 28-man consensus All-America team.

Bank of America gift benefits Science and Mathematics Lab

UNM announced its first and largest corporate donation for the Science and Mathematics Learning Center’s new Visualization Lab in the College of Arts and Sciences. The $250,000 grant was awarded by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation for construction of the facility, which will be built using green building standards.

The Visualization Lab will feature state-of-the-art computing and media equipment that will provide researchers in mathematics, science and engineering a new tool to study complex phenomena. The facility will break ground in fall 2008, with completion expected by 2010.

Eight students from UNM branch campuses were recognized last month at the All-State Academic Team recognition ceremony held annually at the roundhouse.