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## President's Weekly Perspective, 7/30/2012

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 **UNM President's Weekly Perspective**

Good morning.

The recent monsoons provided a welcome respite in New Mexico's hot, dry summer – reviving our thirsty environment and spurring a growth of green in the high desert. Like any ecosystem, there exists interdependency for continued survival, such as rain for growth. If we look at UNM as its own ecosystem, it depends upon a complex system of human, social, intellectual and financial capital to survive and thrive as an institution. It is quickly apparent that what affects one part of the University, affects the whole in some way.

### **Growing a Rainforest**

I have been reading a book recommended to me by Lisa Kuuttilla, president and CEO of [STC.UNM](#). It's titled *[The Rainforest: The Secret to Building the Next Silicon Valley](#)*, a story in which authors and venture capitalists Victor Hwang and Greg Horowitz compare the rapid blossoming of Silicon Valley to the spontaneous sprouting conditions of the rainforest. This fragile, divergent environment does not control or plan the emergence of new species, but rather creates conditions that allow the ecosystem to spawn robust life forms that compete successfully in unimagined ways. Likewise, Hwang and Horowitz argue that human connectivity is key to building communities that enhance the melding of science and innovation to create new business and opportunity. As we strive increase our relevance in the world of discovery and innovation, I envision UNM as such a place: a place where people from vastly different backgrounds, cultures and places come together to build environments that support interrelated communities of intellectual and social progress.

### **Celebrating the Next Generation of Scientific Discovery**

Last week, [President Obama recognized two individuals from the University of New Mexico](#), Justin Hagerty and Francis McCubbin, who are making a difference in research. These two scientists, including Hagerty, an alumnus with three UNM degrees and currently a research geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, and McCubbin, a senior research scientist in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences here at UNM, were among 96 researchers named as recipients of the 2011 Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). The PECASE is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Government upon these early professionals in the formative stage of their independent research. I echo the President's acknowledgement of what these early accomplishments can do to strengthen our economic growth through science and technology advancements, and that through their research, these individuals will make a difference in our world.

### **New Presidents' Perspectives**

I had the opportunity last week to meet incoming and new presidents from a number of universities, large and small, at the American Council on Education (ACE) Institute for New Presidents in Washington, D.C. It was invigorating and inspiring to see the enthusiasm and knowledge base we all bring to our respective institutions. One overriding commonality we all acknowledge is recognizing the paradigm shifts we are seeing in higher education, especially with respect to how we finance and deliver that education. We must prepare for and embrace change, because it is coming whether we are ready or not. Some of the traditional models of long deliberation that have been part of our institutional operation may not survive in the rapidly moving culture that is now an indisputable way of life.

Our challenge is to make those forces work for us, not against us – to mesh together the best of both tradition and transition. The issue of how we are going to really reinvent ourselves to meet this challenge needs to be addressed through ideas that reach outside our existing boundaries – after all, we are a community of critical thinkers.

### **Mechanics of Change**

One mechanism we are using to meet that challenge of this paradigm shift is UNM2020. As the fall semester begins and the campus is once again in full academic swing, there will be several opportunities for community input, both physical sessions as well as virtual. This is a dynamic model for strategic planning. The data received from the survey that ended in June in which many of you participated, is currently being analyzed. Emerging from the more than 1,200 responses received are several themes that will be used to focus my actions and decisions as President. A resounding message throughout your responses is for me to be visible, to be honest, to be open and approachable. To that, I readily commit. Over the next month, broader input will be solicited through a community questionnaire, which is currently being developed. Additional details and links will be provided as these instruments come online.

### **Committed to a Better Lobo Experience**

As the new semester arrives, UNM will more than double the number of students on campus with the opening of Casas del Rios housing joining Lobo Village, now in its second year. This type of rapid growth on campus requires that we assess the issues that arise along the way, some stemming from having a non-traditional housing model as part of resident life. It is an ongoing dynamic process for us to address concerns that arise stemming from alcohol use, noise, and other disruptive actions, and then to be proactive in heading off potential problems. Students living in this new environment have a responsibility to balance their own privacy with respect for their neighbors. The University and our partner in this new housing venture, American College Campuses, have a responsibility to ensure that we actively respond to all issues concerning the safety and security of our students.

### **Accountability Begins at the Top**

The effects of the much publicized and perused Freeh report that was commissioned by the Penn State Board of Trustees in the wake of the recent scandal are far reaching. Another demonstration that what affects one part of the University, affects the whole in some way. It is a reminder to each of us, regardless of our position, that we are accountable for our actions and observances. This University must continue to foster a culture of openness, respect and truth at every level. It is under these conditions that the people of UNM can have the freedom that allows for unrestricted growth.

Have a great week and Go Lobos!

Bob