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President's Report, 1/8/2008

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Happy New Year! On behalf of the University of New Mexico faculty, staff and students, we wish our regents and our communities a productive and prosperous 2008.

Topping UNM’s priority list this January is the 30-day session of the New Mexico Legislature. As you know, we’ve been preparing our legislative package for several months. Our main focus will be to secure a healthy compensation increase for our faculty and staff, as well as an adjustment up to 70 percent for equipment renewal and replacement and doubling of state work study. We will also work hard for a zero tuition credit.

The University of New Mexico is aligning every aspect of its education, research and service mission in support of its four key areas of focus: student success, excellence in research, healthy communities, and economic and community development. UNM’s 2008 legislative priorities also align with these key areas.

Our first responsibility is to the success of our students, so a major initiative aimed at student engagement and success seeks to improve the success of UNM students through engagement in significant educational or professional off-campus experiences. We also seek to improve the teaching and learning environment with the hiring of more minority faculty and support of library programs with high concentrations of minority students and faculty.

UNM is responsible for excellence in research so a number of initiatives are aimed at invigorating the educational experience of our students while bolstering a productive economy and a superior quality of life for our citizens. The Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Program, for example, is an initiative designed to support one of the state’s premier economic development activities.

UNM is responsible for promoting healthy communities in this state so we will work hard to secure funding for programs like the Community Health Initiative, which is an innovative collaboration with New Mexico State, the State Department of Health and communities around New Mexico. We will also work for funding that will secure our B.A./M.D. program and expand the number of nurses with bachelor’s degrees working in health care in our state.

UNM is also an economic engine for the state, so we will seek support of innovative programs like interdisciplinary energy as well as support for the long-time contributions of our Family Development Program and Manufacturing Engineering.

The University of New Mexico greatly appreciates the work of the New Mexico Legislature and the contribution of lawmakers to the success of higher education in New Mexico. We look forward to the lively debate and careful consideration of lawmakers as we work together for the people of our great state.

Because of UNM’s accelerated activity in Rio Rancho, we have begun a regional search for a vice president for Rio Rancho Operations and Branch Academic Affairs. This person will manage the strategic planning and implementation of the future Rio Rancho campus as well as oversee UNM’s various branch campuses and education centers. In addition to the important functions they serve in their local communities, our branches will play a major role as we redefine the higher education model around the state. Our intent is to have someone in that position by mid-February.

Finally, on behalf of Terry Yates’ family, I want to thank everyone for the outpouring of love and respect for Terry that has been shared with Nancy and their sons. The academic world lost a visionary, but many of us here at UNM lost a dear friend. The UNM community lost a number of its members over the past year – staff, faculty, emeriti and more than a dozen students. We keep them in our prayers and remember them as we head into 2008.

David J. Schmidly
UNM projects win NAIOP awards

Two UNM building projects have won awards from the New Mexico chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP). UNM President David Schmidly sees these awards as emblematic of a campus in transition – one that has made great strides during the past five years in providing space for its academic, research and patient care missions. The NAIOP awards recognize excellence in eight different categories. The first phase of the Domenici Center for Health Sciences Education was recognized in the public category, while the UNM Children’s Hospital was recognized in the medical facility category.

UNM mourns Terry Yates

Vice President for Research and Economic Development Terry Yates died Dec. 11 after a brief illness. He was 57. Yates was best known for his groundbreaking research on the source of Hantavirus, a serious respiratory disease that is frequently fatal. John McIver has been appointed interim vice president for Research and Economic Development. A national search is scheduled to begin this month.

RWJ Foundation grants nursing $4.8 million

UNM has received a five year, $4.8 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to increase the quantity and diversity of nurses with knowledge of health policy. The grant will establish a health policy concentration in the nursing Ph.D. program at UNM and support student scholarships and research.

President David Schmidly with the winners of the Gerald May Award for Outstanding Staff. From left: Mark Manzutto, Jennifer George and Theresa Nevada.

Janet Schmidly greets guests at a holiday reception she and President Schmidly hosted at the Student Union Building.