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### 2020-03-27 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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# HEALTH SCIENCES

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## OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

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## A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

The United States now has more known cases of the novel coronavirus than any other nation – more than 81,000. Here in New Mexico, 191 people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, and 9,300+ tests have been administered statewide. These numbers change daily, however: for the latest updates, please visit the [New Mexico Department of Health website](#).

While these new numbers are a big jump, we need to remember that the testing labs are trying to catch up on a huge back log of samples from the past several days so this large increase may be due to that factor.

I joined President Garnett S. Stokes and other University of New Mexico leaders in a virtual town hall today to answer your questions about how the University is faring – and what the Health Sciences Center is doing to meet this challenge.

Here is some of what we discussed:

- The Health Sciences Center is mapping its response to the COVID-19 outbreak on the template of its tried-and-tested pandemic influenza plan. Leaders from UNM Hospital, UNM Sandoval Regional Medical Center and the UNM Medical Group are collaborating to coordinate the necessary measures.
- Dr. Meghan Brett, the UNMH epidemiologist, is our point person in scanning the latest and most relevant research and providing recommendations on how we ought to adjust our strategy in response to new evidence. She and her colleagues on the Infection Prevention and Control Team are doing a superb job.
- Currently we have sufficient PPE equipment for our clinical employees. We are starting the process to ensure our equipment stays at a sufficient level. We are now

decontaminating PPE equipment following guidance from other groups around the country and world who have done some amazing work in this area. Again, we are not starting this because we are out of equipment, but rather out of an abundance of caution.

- UNM Health is currently not accepting donations of PPE, including surgical masks, from the general public. I certainly understand the public's desire to help and I truly appreciate it. We are in talks with various large businesses, including private and government research facilities and educational entities, starting with our own generous faculty and staff, who are offering to donate or create materials and we appreciate those collaborations.
- With Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's latest public health orders, we are moving toward more closely coordinated and integrated statewide planning to manage the health care resources needed to save lives and attenuate the pandemic here in New Mexico.

Personnel at the Health Sciences Center – and across the University – have been working amid extremely trying circumstances, scrambling to find new ways to teach classes and, in the case of our Health System, doing their utmost to continue providing quality care to everyone in need.

We know that many challenges will continue to confront us for the foreseeable future, but at the moment I think we are doing a good job of playing the hand we have been dealt. Meanwhile, please know that President Stokes and I are awed by your professionalism, dedication and grace under pressure. We owe you our gratitude.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul B. Roth".

Paul B. Roth, MD, MS  
Chancellor for Health Sciences  
CEO, UNM Health System  
Dean, UNM School of Medicine