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# President Schmidly's Inaugural Speech

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Remarks Prepared for Delivery  
David J. Schmidly, Ph.D.  
20<sup>th</sup> President of the University of New Mexico  
Inauguration and Installation Ceremony  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Sunday, October 7, 2007

*The following is a text of remarks prepared for delivery by Dr. David J. Schmidly on the occasion of his installation as 20<sup>th</sup> President of the University of New Mexico.*

“President Koch and Members of the Board of Regents, Members of the Faculty and Staff, students, alumni and honored guests:

Thank you all for coming here today, to share my joy, and Janet’s, and that of our family on this very special day.

Like so many, over many generations -- like many of you – Janet and I chose New Mexico. It’s a place we know well, one that I studied, whose biodiversity has fascinated me and helped propel my academic and scientific pursuits. It’s where our son and his family live, where our newest grandchild will soon be born and raised. It’s a special place, one that’s very important to me and to Janet.

So, to the Regents, to the Faculty and Staff, to the Students, Alumni and to each of you -- as the real owners of this great public University – let me once again express my thanks for this incredible leadership opportunity.

A special ‘thank you,’ as well, to the Organizing Committee, to the sponsors, public and private, and especially to the U-N-M Foundation, the Alumni Association, the volunteers and staff, and to Breda Bova in particular.

The Inauguration and Installation of a new President should be a time of reflection – of symposia at which we discuss our best ideas and share our fondest hopes for the institution we love. That’s happened this week, thanks to the hard work of a lot of dedicated people. I’m grateful.

When Jamie Koch and the Board of Regents brought me here to Albuquerque, they made it clear that they weren’t so much hiring a Chief Executive as they were setting in motion a bold new approach at UNM – an ambitious list of goals, with accountability that begins right at the top.

As we approach the job, our cupboard is full – we have all the ingredients for success. Geographically, we are in one of the most beautiful places in the world – a stunning location, with a future as bright as the New Mexico sun.

Statewide, this University has an enrollment of more than 32,000 students. We have four branch campuses and will soon add a fifth. We offer more than 200 degree programs, including the state’s only professional schools of architecture and planning, of law, of medicine, and of pharmacy.

Our Cancer Hospital is one of the finest in the United States, and the Health Sciences Center ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in the country in producing Physicians whose speciality is

Primary Care, third in Family Medicine, and second in Rural Medicine – all crucial to producing healthy New Mexico communities.

Our faculty -- the highest performing faculty of any institution I have been associated with -- is so well-published that it ranks in the top third in the nation among public institutions for productivity.

In research, too, we stand with the nation's greatest Universities. We are one of the top 50 public research institutions in America, and the only one with a strong element of Hispanic and Native American service. We graduate more Native Americans than any other Research I-designated University in the country, and *U.S. News and World Report* ranks us in the top 10 percent of the nation's Most Diverse Colleges and Universities.

Each year, *Hispanic Business Magazine* examines which schools most encourage a learning environment where Hispanic students can thrive. This year, our Engineering School ranks higher than MIT. Our Medical School is sixth in the nation, and in Law, we are the best in the land. A new generation of Hispanic attorneys, doctors and engineers will be among our proudest legacies.

We have art and museum collections that are unparalleled in the Southwest. We have a strong alumni association with more than 120-thousand members.

Thanks to the Lottery Scholarship, New Mexico offers its young people something their parents could only dream of – the chance to go to college at a price they can afford. They'll do so in facilities that are undergoing modernization at a rate unprecedented for this University – upwards of \$400 million in construction now underway, and in design and planning for work that's already in the pipeline.

These projects will ensure that our dedicated pioneers in medical research will continue their life-saving work in facilities that are state-of-the-art, both at the newly-dedicated Domenici Center and in the new research and clinical center being built as Phase 2 of the project. Our undergraduates will study in clean, modern new classrooms that are equipped with the most up-to-date information technologies to make learning easier. Yes, even the world-famous 'Pit' will undergo its first facelift in 40 years.

For all these things, we owe a debt of gratitude to the leadership and courage of the Board of Regents, the Legislature, and ultimately to the generosity and foresight of the people of this State. Together, they've invested in the future of UNM with \$250 million in Institutional Bonds since 2005 alone.

It's a good investment – probably the best investment the taxpayers of this State can make, because for every dollar that the taxpayers invest in UNM, we leverage an additional five, and that creates economic output whose growth is exponential, with a multiplier effect that generates jobs in every field, in every corner of this state. Already, we are the fifth largest employer in New Mexico, the third largest in the City of Albuquerque.

So let's begin thinking of the University of New Mexico in a new way, and then let's join together to shape its reputation, rather than letting others do it for us. Let those of us who love the University of New Mexico be the ones who speak loudest about her. Let our pride in her show, because we have a lot to be proud of. I'm here to tell you, ladies and gentlemen: we're good, we're darn good. You know it, I know it, so now, let's go out and tell the rest of the world!

I invite you to join me today in achieving a vision – a vision that is as bold as our future is bright. A University, after all, is a place of countless dreams – and dreams don't have limits.

The men and women who graduate from here will go on to careers in fields that, today, we can't even imagine. Our promise to them and to their families, is that they will go forward, prepared: prepared to explore the frontiers of microscopic, or even atomic space, in the new science of nanotechnology; prepared to reach for the stars in developing peaceful and lucrative commercial applications for aerospace and nuclear science at the spacelab and the National Laboratories – national scientific treasures that are right here at our fingertips; prepared to treat the sick, and to teach the children, and to restore the environment; prepared to open the doors of new businesses that'll create jobs for untold thousands of New Mexico families; prepared, as graduates of one of America's most diverse centers of learning, to show the rest of the nation, and the world, just how magnificent life can be, how much we can accomplish, when we all work together. That's how great our responsibility is. That's what a great University is all about.

Yet today we face a formidable challenge: for this bold vision to succeed, we must improve our rates of retention and graduation. Simply put, too many of our students leave us in the first year, and far too many aren't graduating in six. It does little good to make college accessible if we don't make a college degree achievable.

In facing up to the challenge of raising our graduation rate and improving student retention, we must resist the temptation to lower our standards. To do so would be to mock our vision of excellence. Let me make this clear. Lowering standards is something we cannot do, that we must not do, that we simply will not do.

Rather than patronize our students by lowering their horizons, we must challenge those students to excellence. It was Michelangelo who said, *'The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.'*

Instead of expecting less from students who come here less than fully prepared, let us redouble our efforts to provide the extra assistance to those who need it. Let us engage the work of better preparing the students of tomorrow. Let us be willing to take a new and different approach to higher education, one that dares to cross barriers into grades K-through-12 and to work in partnership with our colleagues in the community colleges.

We've already set in motion a Gateway Partnership with Central New Mexico Community College. Our objective is to move students, seamlessly, from C-N-M to U-N-M and from an Associates' toward a University degree.

If the children of New Mexico are to fulfill their parents' dreams and take their rightful place in the challenging world ahead, we must do whatever it takes to prepare them, and we must begin early. We must begin NOW.

Solid preparation for a happy, healthy and successful life also includes physical training and athletics. What's more, athletics is a University's 'front door' – the thing that many of our prospective students and supporters see first, that attracts them to us in the first place.

But this University, like all of higher education, must somehow better integrate athletics with academics. Here at the University of New Mexico, we've put mechanisms in

place that'll achieve that goal. They'll be a model for other schools to follow. It's just one part of a commitment to excellence, one that will pervade everything we will do here.

Yes, there'll be changes. As we strive toward excellence, change will be inevitable. It's been said, 'If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.' Of course we all know that the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing and expecting a different result! Yet change is part of life. It can be liberating, and it should always be seen as a challenge, not an obstacle.

The Zuni say, '*Hon i:yan satdena: wa.*' 'We will help one another.' We will help one another through this time of change. We will reach out to one another, realizing that we share only a brief time together, and that the best use of that time is to engage in something bigger than any one of us – bigger, even, than all of us, together.

Our efforts will require a singular unity of purpose -- not unanimity, mind you, but unity. Not unquestioning regimentation, but, rather, mutual respect; not universal concurrence with each of the decisions we'll make from time to time, but, instead, a willingness to hear one another out in an atmosphere of shared governance. Let us begin by appreciating that none of us has a monopoly on good ideas or of love for this institution.

The Navajo, who also lived and thrived in this place for millennia, likewise had a phrase: '*da' ahi' tso' tsa'a*,' meaning, listen to one another.

A great University should never be a quiet and peaceful place. It should be alive with the vigorous exchange of ideas strongly held and passionately debated. But it should – it must – be a place where we listen to one another.

I'd like you to think, as well, about a word from the Spanish – another great culture that has enriched this place, and each of our lives here. That word is, '*adelante*,' or 'forward.' 'Ahead.' 'Onward.' Let us go forward. '*Mas adelante*,' or 'further forward.' Let us do so with courage and confidence. '*Mirar hacia adelante*,' or 'to look ahead.'

Let us look toward the bright future that lies just ahead, over the horizon of the Sandia Mountains on a bright New Mexico dawn. Let this Presidency be guided by those three principles: to listen to one another, to help one another, and to go forward.

I pledge to you my dedication toward reaching that horizon, toward the fulfillment of the fondest hopes of all of us who love this institution: each of us, our students, the faculty, our staff, our alumni, our supporters, the Regents and, most importantly, the citizens we serve.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and God bless you all. Go Lobos !!"

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**The University of New Mexico** is the state's largest university, serving more than 32,000 students. UNM is home to the state's only schools of law, medicine, pharmacy and architecture and operates New Mexico's only academic health center. UNM is noted for comprehensive undergraduate programs and research that benefits the state and the nation.

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