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## Tom Farer - Biography

William E. Davis

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# TOM FARER

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## **13th University President**

Served 1985 - 1986

Born **Coshocton, Ohio**

**July 28, 1935**



## **Education**

Tom Farer, a professor of law at Rutgers University, held a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University and a law degree from Harvard Law School. He was a 1983 fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and had been a senior research fellow of the Carnegie Foundation and the Council on Foreign Relations.

## **Career**

Farer served on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights from 1976 to 1983, and in 1975, he was a special assistant to the assistant secretary of state for Inter-American affairs. He was also special assistant to the general counsel of the Department of Defense. Farer also served as a member of the Congressional Presen-

**Tom Farer**

tation Staff, the Agency for International Development, and Delta Capital Corporation and as an advisor to the commanding general of the police force of the Somali Republic.

## **University Activities**

On September 18, 1984, the regents approved hiring Farer. His appointment would not become official until contract details were worked out, and he would not assume the office until early January 1985. He viewed his job as helping to push UNM forward and identified his first task as setting goals and orienting faculty and staff to the future.

Early in the spring of 1985, Farer created the Strategic Planning Committee, which included eighty-six faculty, staff, and community leaders and was charged with the examination of almost every major department of the university.

In the spring of 1985, Marvin Johnson resigned as vice president for student affairs, alumni relations, and development. Farer appointed Mari-Luci Jaramillo as interim vice president for student affairs on March 6, 1985. He also appointed Robert Desiderio, dean of the School of Law, as vice president for academic affairs. Desiderio resigned and returned to the school one year later.

Farer announced that Alumni Relations, Development, and KNME-TV would be transferred to the Office of Public Affairs and the evolving Office of Intergovernmental Relations. This reorganization was revised years later.

Farer announced early in his tenure that the highest priority on his requests to the legislature was raising faculty and staff salaries. The House Appropriations and Finance Committee approved a proposed budget with a staggering 16 percent increase in tui-

tion on February 20, 1985. This caused protests and was eventually adjusted to a 9 percent increase.

In April 1985, the Board of Regents approved the removal of seventeen buildings between Las Lomas Road and Roma Avenue to create parking areas. An alternative plan was produced to turn the area into an “ethnic mall,” where departments such as Native American Studies, Afro-American Student Services, and Chicano Student Services would be located, but it was never adopted. Later, most of the buildings were torn down to make room for a new classroom.

In 1985, the Zuni Campus of the Gallup Branch opened, which was a cooperative effort of UNM, the Zunis, and the Zuni School District. Classes were held in an old high school until Gurley Hall was constructed.

In April 1986, Farer took exception to the regents’ order that UNM not show the controversial movie Hail Mary, which had sparked protests from Catholic organizations for its modern portrayal of the Virgin Mary. In an emergency meeting on April 7, 1986, upon legal counsel, the regents rescinded their earlier action and permitted the film to be shown.

Farer appeared on the KNME-TV public affairs program Illustrated Daily on April 22, 1986, and acknowledged he had clashed with repeatedly with the regents. He alleged there had been a number of cases of cronyism but did not identify any specific instances. The television interview was being taped at the same time the regents were meeting in a closed session to discuss his contract. Farer publicly accused three regents of various derelictions, including gross policy meddling, hiring pressure, and commercial self-favoritism.

Board of Regents President Jerry Apodaca learned that Farer had been interviewed in April 1986 as one of the finalists for the job of chancellor of the University of New Hampshire. Unconfirmed reports in the media also alleged that Farer was being considered for posts at Rutgers University, Cornell University, the University of Minnesota, and the University of North Carolina. Apodaca charged that Farer was seldom on campus, cared little about the university, and was trying to boost his career at the expense of UNM. On May 1, 1986, Farer announced that he would not accept a new contract from the regents in December, regardless of terms.

Four of the regents stated that they were not interested in conducting a presidential search until Farer's contract expire on December 31, 1986, when the board might have three new members. The voters approved a constitutional amendment in November, increasing the five-member Board of Regents to seven.

On May 23, 1986, Farer left Albuquerque for a three-week trip to Europe and was expected to return June 16, a day before the regents' next scheduled meeting. On June 4, Apodaca announced that Farer and the regents had reached an agreement on buying out his contract. The agreement stipulated that he would be offered a position at the UNM School of Law, but wouldn't be able to begin until the spring 1987 semester and that he would be granted a leave of absence.

Meanwhile, Gerald W. May, dean of UNM's College of Engineering, accepted the position of interim president without a search.

Excerpt from William E. Davis' [Miracle on the Mesa](#).

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