

2006

William Gordon - Biography

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Davis, William E.. "William Gordon - Biography." (2006). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/president_bios/20

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WILLIAM GORDON

16th University President

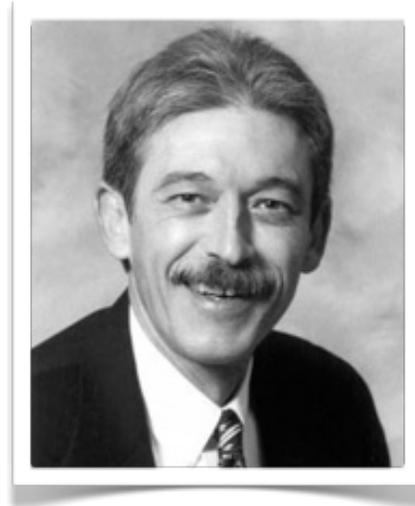
Served 1998 - 2002

On March 9, 1998, the regents named three presidential finalists, one of whom was the UNM provost, William Gordon. The search came to a halt when the Bernalillo County District Court judge issued a preliminary injunction that prevented UNM from hiring a president until it complied with a 1991 consent decree, which required the university to disclose a candidate's name when he or she was interviewed by two or more regents or members of the search committee. Two of the three final candidates subsequently withdrew, including Gordon. This led to an emergency meeting of the regents on April 13, 1998, at which time the members of the board unanimously agreed to abandon the search. Finally, in June 1998, the regents named Gordon as interim president, which gave them another year to look for a permanent president.

The regents wasted no time in implementing a new presidential search, approving a preliminary time line at their September 8, 1998 meeting. By February 1999, they announced the names of five finalists, and a month later, by a unanimous vote, selected Gordon for the permanent post.

Education

William Gordon



University of New Mexico Presidents

Before coming to UNM, Gordon earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Wake Forest University and his PhD in experimental psychology from Rutgers University. He began his academic career in 1973 as an assistant professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Binghamton. While there he received the SUNY System Chancellor's Award for excellence in teaching.

Career

Gordon joined UNM's Psychology Department in 1978. In 1990, he was appointed chair of the department. In the fall of 1992, he became interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and in 1993, dean, following a national search. In 1996, Gordon assumed the posts of provost and vice president for academic affairs at UNM.

University Activities

In the fall of 1998, the regents approved two new academic majors, African American Studies and Women Studies.

Governor Johnson signed a bill to repeal the sunset clause and save the lottery scholarship program. His signature meant that 1,468 students on UNM's main campus would continue to receive full-tuition scholarships, which amounted to more than \$1 million.

In October 1999, the regents authorized \$61.5 million in revenue bonds, some back by student fees, to finance nearly a dozen capital improvement projects, including \$25 million to renovate the Student Union Building, \$12.6 million for a new residence hall complex, and \$3.5 million for unspecified parking improvements.

Spotlighted in Gordon's tenure as president was the new freshman learning communities, which put first-year students in seminar-style classes with experienced

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professors. About 350 freshmen in a class of 2,400 participated in the two-year old program in the fall of 2001.

UNM introduced its first online classes in January 2000. The Internet classes allowed students living in rural communities to take classes without having to commute to the Albuquerque campus.

The spring of 1999 saw the renewal of the Institute of Medieval Studies' popular spring lecture series.

In June 2000, the Wall Street Journal reported that the university was far above the norm for the number of women receiving MBA, with women comprising 43 percent of the enrollment in the Anderson Schools of Management. The national average for women in business schools was 30 percent.

The 2001 fall semester saw the debut of a new biomedical sciences graduate program. After seven or eight years of study, candidates would receive both PhD and MD degrees.

UNM's emphasis on Hispanic programs began paying off as the university twice ranked among the leaders in the nation in attracting Hispanic students during Gordon's years. In September 2001, the UNM School of Law and the Anderson School of Management were ranked fourth and eight, respectively, for Hispanic students by Hispanic Business magazine. The recognition was based on enrollment, faculty, student services, retention rate, and reputation. Hispanic students comprised nearly one-fourth of the student population in the UNM School of Law, and 35 of the 110 law degrees that year went to Hispanic students.

One significant development was regent approval on December 8, 1998 of a policy requiring all buildings to adhere to the Pueblo Style and creating a committee to inventory and maintain the campus's architectural treasures.

In the spring of 1998, a rusty bolt securing a thirty-year old underground water line failed and more than a hundred thousand gallons of water poured into a utility tunnel, shorting out electrical cables and steam lines. It was only one of many infrastructure problems on the campus, and in April 2001, revenue bonds totaling \$52.7 million were issued to renovate Ford Utility Center and replace a fifty-year old chilling plant. The new chiller, across from the Anderson Schools of Management, was dedicated in June 2003.

In December 1998, plans for a new apartment-style dormitory complex were approved. The \$12.6 million complex was to be at the southeast edge of the Central Campus, replacing some tennis courts. Twenty-eight two- and three-story structures would include studio, two-, and four-bedroom apartments with bathrooms and kitchens as well as a large commons area. The complex, named Redondo Village Apartments, was completed in August 2001 and accommodates four hundred students.

Another major undertaking was the renovation of the New Mexico Union, or Student Union Building. In July 1998, the regents' Facility and Finance Committee approved a \$25 million plan to add 8,000 square feet to the northwest corner of the building and renovate 147,000 square feet. UNM system revenue bond proceeds and a 2 percent increase in student fees funded the project. The renovation included an expanded theater and computer lab and new space for food franchises. New entrances were added facing Smith Plaza and the Cornell Mall. The second floor housed an enlarged ballroom and a banquet facility as well as offices, and there were more offices and

conference rooms on the third floor. The forty-year old facility received a new coat of stucco, energy-efficient windows and doors, and all-new infrastructure, including wiring for the university computer network. A new atrium brought in natural light and connected the three levels.

After more than three decades in makeshift quarters on the south side of Central Avenue at Stanford, the School of Architecture and Planning would move across the street. A year later came the announcement that Antoine Predock, a UNM alumnus, would design the building and that it would include a new home for the Fine Arts Library. The next news was that the facility would be named for George C. Pearl, a prominent Albuquerque architect and historic preservationist whose campus projects included Ortega Hall, the first addition to Zimmerman Library, and additions to the Chemistry Building and Bratton Hall. By late 2003, fund raising for the \$12 million project was under way.

In 1999, the regents also approved the plan for a \$4 million facility just south of the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. The thirty-five-thousand-square-foot Frank C. Hibben Center for Archaeological Research would include classrooms, a lecture hall, and storage space.

By mid-2001, the university was preparing a new parking lot at University and Lomas on land formerly leased to a car dealer. Plans were also being made for a three-level parking structure east of Popejoy Hall. Other projects under way or recently completed were an expansion of University Stadium, an addition to Bratton Hall for the School of Law, and a new childcare facility on University Boulevard.

In Tome, a new student/community center was dedicated at the Valencia Branch in the fall of 2000. A new sixty-five-hundred-square-foot library was built at the Gallup

Branch and the Zuni Campus, which included a health careers building, was dedicated in 2002.

In early 2002, Lobo place-kicker Katie Hnida became the first woman to play in an NCAA Division I game at the Las Vegas Bowl.

In August 1998, Gordon signed the official letters withdrawing the university from the Western Athletic Conference. UNM joined several other universities, including Colorado State University, to create the Mountain West Conference.

Friends and colleagues of Gordon who had worked with him were stunned and saddened to hear on March 14, 2002 that he was leaving to accept the post of provost at Wake Forest University.

Excerpt from William E. Davis' Miracle on the Mesa.

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