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President's Weekly Perspective, 3/4/2013

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 **President's Weekly Perspective**

Good morning.

Earlier this year, Moody's released a report, titled U.S. Higher Education Outlook Negative in 2013, in which it is stated that the senior leadership teams of universities need to be able to "produce competitive strategies, transparent policies, and effective oversight as well as decisive action on important subjects or in times of crisis." Competitive, transparent, effective, decisive...a powerful combination of variables that drive success in an administration tuned to the processes they must routinely monitor to lead a complex university. This week I would like to focus on the latter, being decisive, as being critical to changing that outlook on higher education to being more positive. Decision-making at a public research university, especially one as distinctive as UNM, is a direct reflection of what we value as an institution. The ways in which we approach those decisions, from beginning to end, have lasting effects on our future. Albert Einstein sagely expressed that we cannot solve our problems by "using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." I believe that at UNM we can make decisions, from the fundamental to the complex, through bridging innovative ideas into action.

Decisions Made Through a Diversity of Ideas

On one of my first visits to UNM last spring, I was invited to a student-hosted forum where I was asked some tough questions regarding the lines that the UNM administration might draw under my leadership in upholding freedom of expression, while ensuring that both institutional and constitutional values are upheld. At the time, I neither had enough knowledge regarding what had led up to these concerns, nor enough experience here to understand how UNM had approached campus issues fed by social, political and emotional dialogue and action.

A year later, I can say that I have been able to observe our campus community – and the students in particular - engaging in spirited debates and defining their positions on issues affecting all of us both as citizens of the U.S. as well as of this campus. After all, part of our mission to educate and prepare students for the ever-evolving "real world," is affording them opportunities to think critically, collaborate and innovate to shape that world. Their ability to do so in an aware, compassionate and educated way is important to both their personal and professional successes.

Representative bodies such as the Student Fee Review Board, Student Union Building Board and student government all exemplify ways in which UNM institutionalizes the student voice in decision-making processes. I am impressed with the civility necessary to these processes that has been exercised, even when issues seem polarizing. Continuing to maintain this atmosphere of civil discourse is essential to the professional education our students receive. We all have great responsibility and great power. If we exercise that power through the conversations and interactions we have with one another, we will be able to approach our decisions and solve our problems and with new thoughts and actions.

Campus Safety Still Top of Mind

Something that I know is on the minds of many of our faculty, staff, students and parents continues to be campus safety. I can tell you that the safety of our community is and will continue to be top of mind for me and for those who share that responsibility. Last week's campus safety walk was very well attended, and our local media were great partners in announcing and covering the event in order

to build further awareness. Nearly 100 people signed up to walk through our beautiful campus in an effort to identify potential safety issues. These efforts are by no means confined to organized walks, so if you identify a safety concern on campus please notify the [Dean of Students Office](#). I believe that many of the decisions about how to maintain a safe environment are best initiated on a local level — by you, the UNM campus community. I have posted this topic under my blog site, which I will be utilizing more frequently to generate two-way dialogue. If you would like to offer constructive comments or suggestions, I welcome you to join the conversation at [President's Blog](#).

Remembering a UNM Student Who Never Wasted a Moment

Loss of a precious life at an early age affects us all. Last week sophomore Jennifer Bobrick's time ended far too soon. As a parent of two, such a tragic event is something that I always have a great deal of trouble comprehending and my sincerest condolences go out to her family and friends. Although I never had the pleasure of meeting Jennifer, I understand that she sought to combine her passions for psychology and art in order to make a difference in the lives of children through the healing power of art. In memory of Jennifer and what she hoped to accomplish, I would like to offer the words of the artist Pablo Picasso: "The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls." Please take a moment in your day to appreciate the power of a creative moment.

Have a great week and Go Lobos!

Bob