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President's Weekly Perspective, 6/11/2012

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 **UNM President's Weekly Perspective**

Good morning.

As I was writing this week's Perspective, I realized that one word was becoming significantly prominent – and that word is “future.” So what is it about the future that makes it so important today? Simply put, the future doesn't just happen. People create it through their action – or inaction – today. I encourage you to think about what kind of future we can create at UNM.

Inspired by Innovation and Optimism

A heartfelt thank you to the almost 600 people who have participated in the [President's Questionnaire](#). In reviewing some of the responses to date, I am deeply moved and encouraged by your passion, commitment and optimism. I feel fortunate to be receiving so much valuable insight, as well as discovering the multidimensional ways in which people connect to UNM. If you have had not a chance to participate, please make time to share your ideas and perspectives. The questionnaire will be available through the end of June.

As I mentioned last week, this is just the beginning of the UNM 2020 process. Over the next several months, you will be given varied opportunities to think big – bigger than the here and now – and contribute to creating the desired destination to which we will navigate the University. Components of this future picture will touch upon areas such as institutional culture, discovery and innovation, education, and strategic partnerships, to name a few. I am committed to building this shared vision and keeping the lines of communication open so that your input is part of our success.

Higher Education Funding Formula Critical to UNM

The presidents of New Mexico's universities met with NM Secretary of Higher Education, José Garcia, last week to discuss the next phase of the funding formula for higher education. There is a great deal at stake for UNM as we move to the second phase of the formula that will fund higher education. The good news, as I see it, is that having tangible outputs such as student course completion and degrees awarded will reflect the excellence and productivity at UNM while upholding and focusing on our institutional mission.

Introduction to the Mountain West Conference

I attended the Mountain West Conference President's Meeting at the beginning of last week, where I met with other conference presidents and athletic directors. As a newcomer, what impressed me most was the overall strength of UNM's athletic programs within the conference. It is clear that we are strong competitors, both as athletes and as scholars.

Examining the Future of Higher Education

Holly Barnet-Sanchez, associate dean in the College of Fine Arts, passed along a book to me titled, *Financing American Higher Education in the Era of Globalization*.^{*} What really caught my attention is the assertion that “groups with high rates of educational attainment are shrinking as a proportion of the U.S. population, while the proportions of those groups with low and relatively stagnant attainment are increasing (p.13).”

Potential college students in coming decades will increasingly be minority, low-income, and first-generation students. At UNM, the future is already here. We have the opportunity to lead, accepting the challenge of broadly increasing educational attainment and emphasizing the importance of improving graduation rates for minority students. As we approach new horizons in the world of higher education, and in our own history, we must work together in a focused and determined fashion. Our students are depending on it.

Celebrating Popejoy

The long and rich history of Popejoy Hall, the critically acclaimed performers it draws from around the world, and its loyal patrons make it a special landmark in the history of UNM and the city of Albuquerque. On Sunday, I attended the 9th annual Popejoy Gala, where I had the pleasure of presenting a posthumous award honoring UNM President Tom Popejoy to his son, Tom Popejoy, Jr. Having attended performances as student, it was truly moving to pay tribute to a man who has been regarded as a champion for the University during his tenure from 1948-1968, and for whom our distinguished PopejoyHall is named.

A “Humble” Man

I'd like to conclude this week's Perspective by telling you a bit about a remarkable and inspiring young man who is a graduate of UNM, and whom I had the pleasure of meeting. His name is Lameck “Humble” Lukanga and he loves UNM.

Humble, as many of his friends call him, was born in a hut in Uganda, where he spent the first 11 years of his life enduring a poverty-stricken environment rife with civil discord. His family was forced to leave Uganda and came to the United States for political asylum. He earned an academic scholarship to UNM, receiving a bachelor's degree in Business Management and then a graduate degree in business. With his love for people, passion for business, and a relentless work ethic, he has become a highly successful entrepreneur with a successful business in Beverly Hills, California.

This young man overcame so much, yet as his name implies, he is unpretentious and giving in nature. This self-described “super Lobo” got married this weekend to another UNM graduate, Heidi Oliver, so let us wish them much happiness. Meeting Humble reminded me of the power of a UNM degree.

Have a great week and Go Lobos!

Bob

^{*}Zumeta, W., Breneman, D.W., Callan, P.M. & Finney, J.E. (2012). *Financing American Higher Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.