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Spring 5-19-2020

2020-05-19 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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Recommended Citation

Roth, Paul B.. "2020-05-19 A Message from Chancellor Roth." (2020). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_chancellor/47

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HEALTH SCIENCES

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

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A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

I'm pleased to tell you that earlier today the State Board of Finance approved a capital expenditure covering the first phase of construction for the new tower at The University of New Mexico Hospital. When completed, this project will add 96 beds – including 24 intensive care unit beds – a new adult emergency department and a new imaging center.

This first phase will involve street relocation and reconstruction on Yale, Tucker, and Camino de Salud, preparing us for the next phase, construction of the new parking garage. We look forward to starting work on this long-awaited project, and I'm grateful to the Board and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham for their support.

The delay in launching this project has had tragic consequences for our state. Each year we must decline hundreds of critical transfers from all over our state due to a lack of beds – and this was certainly the case many years ago when we brought our original request to the Board of Finance.

Had we received approval then, not only would it have been far less expensive, but we would now be ready to request an additional expansion to further meet the needs of our communities. More importantly, we would have likely prevented unnecessary suffering among many of our friends, neighbors and loved ones.

UNM Hospital, Sandoval Regional Medical Center and our entire Health System, are precious resources for the people of New Mexico, as the COVID-19 pandemic has made very clear. The health care industry is one of the most heavily regulated and controlled in the world. Each day, everything we say, write and do is driven by rules, protocols and policies.

In responding to the pandemic, our Health System leaders have, in the course of just a few weeks, completely re-engineered our inpatient and outpatient operations and practices. To have done so successfully is a little like redesigning and rebuilding an airliner midflight.

To have rescheduled more than a thousand elective surgeries, to have closed down and then begun providing remote outpatient care, to have developed plans for our critical care beds and modified our pediatrics areas for adults while converting a huge outpatient unit to a temporary inpatient unit, is nothing short of amazing. To have done so with zero patients becoming infected at the hospitals with the novel coronavirus is miraculous.

All of this speaks not only to the resiliency of our leaders, faculty and staff, but to their ingenuity, flexibility and – more importantly – their absolute commitment to mission. They are truly heroes.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul B. Roth".

Paul B. Roth, MD, MS
Chancellor for Health Sciences
CEO, UNM Health System
Dean, UNM School of Medicine

Please visit the [New Mexico Department of Health website](#) for the latest COVID-19 updates.