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2020-05-20 A Message from Chancellor Roth

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HEALTH SCIENCES

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A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

This May has looked different as the graduations that we look forward to each year transitioned from in person to online. That being said I am so proud of the work by both the [College of Pharmacy](#) and [College of Nursing](#) on their digital ceremonies. College of Population Health will celebrate on June 19th. I also participated in videos to commemorate the [School of Medicine convocation](#), the college graduation of the Combined BA/MD Degree Program cohort and the University's Spring 2020 Commencement.

These videos were well crafted, and while they were no substitute for the experience we normally provide graduating students on these occasions, they were a welcome reminder that education is central to our mission as an academic health center.

The true significance of that education was brought home by Dr. Arthur Kaufman, Vice Chancellor for Community Health, who shared the inspiring account of how one of our School of Medicine graduates persisted in her medical education in the face of substantial obstacles.

Dr. Lilia Pedrego is now an assistant professor in the Department of Family & Community Medicine working at UNM Sandoval Regional Medical Center. However, as a medical student at UNM, the Silver City native passed her courses but failed her board exams three times.

“There was a ‘three-strikes’ policy, so we almost lost her,” Arthur writes. “However, her score on the last exam came close and there were extenuating circumstances – she had recently lost her grandmother, who helped raise her, and so was unable to study for the exam as she had planned.”

Lilia reflected back on the experience and says, "Medical school looks and feels like a giant mountain and as students we are standing at the base of that mountain. Without the proper tools, it feels like an impossible climb. We do not need anyone to carry us, just walk with us."

Thanks to advocacy from her mentors, our medical faculty as a whole voted to allow her a fourth crack at the exam.

"Lilia passed the exam, did well clinically, graduated and finished her training at the Southern New Mexico Family Medicine Residency in Las Cruces," Arthur writes. "Since returning to Albuquerque and joining the UNM faculty, she has occasionally been recruited to mentor other students who, like herself years before, are now struggling."

He adds, "UNM School of Medicine educators should know some of these success stories . . . especially about those students who struggled in medical school but in whom the school made an investment and took a chance."

"Thank you to the faculty for allowing me the opportunity to move forward and especially to those that walked the journey with me. We continue to pay it forward," Lilia says.

This student's story of grit and determination to succeed resonates now, more than ever. It's a great example of what makes our physicians and health care providers special.

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.