

7-7-2008

President's Weekly Perspective, 2008_07_07

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Recommended Citation

Schmidly, David. "President's Weekly Perspective, 2008_07_07." (2008). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/schmidly_papers/100

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Monday Morning Message - July 7, 2008

Good morning.

I hope you had a fine 4th of July holiday weekend. We're back in full stride and anticipating some major initiatives for the remainder of the summer.

With gasoline hitting \$4 a gallon in New Mexico, our main priority will be addressing the immediate transportation challenges our students, faculty and staff are facing. As you know, we launched the four-day compressed work week so that UNM employees could save 20 percent on their commute costs. We'll be evaluating this energy-saving tactic to determine if it worked well enough to extend through the fall.

Now we have to expand our thinking and actually re-think how all of you get to campus each day. With gas prices continuing to rise, there is a real threat that some of our students will have to put off their education. There is real hardship for faculty and staff who are paying a great deal more just to get to work.

We'll do this in two steps. First, we've scheduled a fast-track solution assessment on July 24. Its goal will be to identify transportation and other solutions that can be quickly implemented and evaluated through the fall semester, and it will involve representatives from city and regional transit. This assessment will be looking at tactics like streamlined bus service and expanded use of the Rail Runner.

Later this fall, the second phase of this initiative will feature a "rapid redesign" of processes, systems and infrastructures that will address UNM's energy challenges with an eye toward long-term sustainability. Along with transportation, we'll be looking at issues pertaining to work and class schedules, distance education, housing and telecommuting.

Just as we're being asked to change our behavior when it comes to using energy at work, we'll have to consider changing the ways we get to campus. There will be a number of options from which to choose in order to make this a successful endeavor.

I'm pleased with the excellent attention UNM is giving one of its most important constituencies – parents. Our Parent Association and Parent Relations Office are providing wonderful services - keeping parents informed and involved. Now we're hosting a boot camp of sorts for parents of high school students, immersing them in the college experience during a two-day, one night program July 18 – 19. This will give them the information they need to support their student's goal of going to college.

Finally, some great news about the continued success of our student-athletes. UNM placed 94 individuals on the Spring 2008 All-Mountain West Conference team, second only to BYU. These student-athletes maintain a 3.0 GPA or better and contribute significantly to their teams. Also, special congratulations go to the Lobo women's tennis team and their head coach, Kathy Kolankiewicz, for winning the NCAA Public Recognition Award. Their academic progress report placed in the top 10 percent of all NCAA women's tennis teams, which is a credit to their dedication to the classroom as well as the court.

Some of you have asked how to reply to my messages. Simply e-mail me at unmpres@unm.edu. I welcome all feedback.

Have a good week.

David J. Schmidly