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President's Weekly Perspective, 2008_09_02

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Tuesday Morning Message -- September 2, 2008

The three-day Labor Day weekend always marks the end of summer in my mind. I hope each of you had an absolutely wonderful time and that we're all now ready to face the inevitable and buckle down to work!

A Great Orientation

The first few days on a new campus can be an emotional and stressful time, and so I want to thank everybody who helped make the Freshman Family Day and Welcome Back Days such tremendous successes. From the free pizza and green chile stew to the poetry slam and marching band's stunning performances at the Freshman Convocation at Popejoy, all the volunteers and participants made it a week to remember. On behalf of the entire UNM community, a hearty Thank You!

Honoring Our New Scholars

I was delighted last Thursday to host our incoming 15 National Merit Scholars and 24 National Hispanic Scholars at a Reception at University House. We're mighty proud that we've seen a 275 percent jump in the number of National Merit Scholars this year, and a 140 percent increase in the number of National Hispanic Scholars.

Since these gifted students can declare their majors even as freshmen, we invited the Department Chairs in their declared majors, as well as their Deans, to join us. It gave the Scholars a chance to meet and form relationships with the academics that will be having a profound influence on their educational careers, and I want to thank everyone who attended.

OOPS!

In last week's message, I asked folks to mark their calendars for the upcoming Faculty Town Hall Meeting, which will be on Tuesday, September 16 at 4 p.m. at Woodward Hall. I mentioned that the meeting would give me a chance to introduce our new Provost and Vice Presidents as well as the new President of the UNM Foundation. But I neglected to mention another critical member of our Executive Team - our new Chief Information Officer, Gil Gonzales. It is Gil's responsibility to keep our massive and complex computer systems running. You'll enjoy meeting him on September 16.

Response to Faculty Resolutions

At last spring's faculty meeting, we were asked to provide information and data on two faculty resolutions. The product of a lot of hard work by several dedicated people is now ready for your review. Please go to: <http://facgov.unm.edu/specialmtg/adminresp.html> for our responses.

The Most Seamless Public Education in the Southwest

Last Friday, I joined CNM President Kathie Winograd and APS School Superintendent Winston Brooks – along with 25 future CNM/UNM students now attending kindergarten at the Sombra del Monte Elementary School - to announce a ground-breaking new educational partnership between APS, CNM and UNM.

Last year, we launched a bold new partnership with CNM to help students move seamlessly from New Mexico's largest community college into the state's flagship University. Friday, we took the next logical step, extending the partnership to include Albuquerque Public Schools.

To me, it all comes down to breaking down artificial barriers so we can all work together to improve the lives of every child in this community. Ultimately, this historic agreement will create the most seamless, easy-to-navigate system of public education in the Southwest, from kindergarten all the way through graduate school.

Helping Prevent Substance Abuse

College is a wonderful time for academic discovery and personal enrichment. It can also be a stressful time, so it's important that we each strike a balance between our social activities and our academic pursuits – and that we avoid situations where we put our health and safety at risk with alcohol or drugs.

Just a reminder: UNM is a “dry” campus. Violations of the “No-Alcohol, No-Drugs” policy are dealt with severely. So keep your eye on the ball - graduation is the ultimate goal of attending a university - and don't risk that on alcohol or other drug abuse.

And if you or someone you know is facing a problem with alcohol or drugs, this University is here to help you. Just call the Student Health and Counseling Center at 277-4537 or visit the Campus Office of Substance Abuse website at: <http://www.unm.edu/~cosap>. Remember, anybody can develop a problem with alcohol or drugs, but it takes a big person to tackle the problem head-on. We're always here to help.

See you around campus. Talk to you next week.

David J. Schmidly