Greetings:

Staff at UNM were recently dismayed at comments made at a recent Board of Regents meeting and the assertion by one of our Regents that UNM “[doesn’t] have a good product.” This claim is false. The university experience isn't a widget you either sell or don't sell or that works or doesn't work. Learning in higher education is challenging and success levels are complex. Degrees are not the only ‘product’ that UNM offers. Great teaching, mentoring, research, and programming take place here to engage our students before, during, and after they earn any degree.

Staff (alongside faculty and students) participate in meaningful endeavors across our campuses, many are world-class and one-of-a-kind. We have thousands of years of experience that we use to keep our university running and its priorities in line — including helping students to achieve their educational goals and our faculty with fulfilling their research and instructional roles.

This message is focused on Staff contributions, and we encourage our Student and Faculty counterparts (ASUNM, GPSA, and Faculty Senate) to make similar statements highlighting their contributions to UNM.

After hearing these comments, we heard from a number of Staff about the amazing things that are going on here at UNM. Some staff wrote eloquently for pages and pages about the work that their departments are doing to ensure that UNM can be The University for New Mexico.

Here are just a few of the things in which UNM Staff are engaged (often in partnership with our faculty and students) which make UNM’s various ‘products’ worthy of pride and distinction:

- Over the last year, the staff-supported UNM ROTC programs (Air Force, Army, & Naval ROTC) graduated and commission 42 new military officers to serve our country. In addition, UNM Air Force ROTC students also earned the highest Detachment GPA across all of AFROTC nationwide.
- Relatedly, staff support current and returning veteran students to ensure access to their federal benefits and to assist them in the transition to university life.
- Staff in our libraries aid students in their studies, and help to inform our students about the historical perspective of taking courses and living in the Land of Enchantment. As an R1 Hispanic-Serving Institution, this is a critical perspective in higher education.
- Recruitment Staff work thoroughly to connect current and future students with crucial services and departments. This helps students navigate admissions, financial aid, scholarships, important deadlines, and provides valuable assistance throughout the college admission process.
- Student-support Staff administer programming that highlights inclusion and diversity as well as the extracurricular activities in which our students are engaged.
- UNM Career Services' Staff helps make careers happen! They support thousands of Lobos every year including students, staff, alumni, faculty, and community members in career development. This includes: finding internships, full time positions, or careers, our career counseling team provides the bridge between academic life and a thriving career for every Lobo. In addition, the employer relations team brings hundreds of employers on campus for career fairs and information sessions each semester. Candidates get interviews with top employers ultimately providing thousands of career opportunities for our Lobos.
- Staff at the School of Management organize and are instrumental in providing courses for staff, faculty, students, community members and Albuquerque businesses, which leads to advancement for our entire region.
Staff across campus are actively engaged in conducting research ranging from Early Childhood Education to Data Management, and from Pediatric medicine and cancer to Rural Medicine.

Facilities Management staff maintain the environment here at UNM and are recognized as using cutting edge methods to lessen our energy footprint as well as making our campus a beautiful place to live and work.

Staff in Enrollment Management also work diligently to ensure that students who choose to study abroad or who are transferring to UNM get accurate translations of their coursework as it will apply here at UNM, ensuring that their outside experiences are rewarded and valued, increasing the diversity of perspectives on campus.

Still other staff are committed to the development of innovative educational alternatives for those who love to teach and learn here in New Mexico, and grow in response to the needs of our people and to changes in the economy, technology and business, including our online degree offerings, which constitute nearly 15% of the scheduled credit hours on campus.

Staff on our North Campus work to cure diseases, giving the community hope and comfort, and support students to become the next great researchers who will change the world for the better

Staff in our Hospital Services save lives. They work tirelessly to ensure that everything is working smoothly so Patients can be seen, surgeries scheduled, ensure Faculty licenses and maintain certification.

Staff are an integral part in maintaining one of UNM’s most unique programs, the BA/MD program. By statute, two-thirds of BA/MD students are admitted from rural New Mexico. The BA/MD program provides a holistic view of medicine at the undergraduate level, including strong content in the humanities and economics. In the medical school itself, students spend six weeks in a either a rural New Mexico location or, less often, an urban clinic for underserved populations, for their first clinical experience. About 20 students each year are selected to participate in the Rural and Urban Underserved program, which provides monthly seminars, trips to rural clinics, mentorship, and an annual conference to familiarize students with the needs of patients from underserved populations. Finally, SOM ensures all students understand the particular social determinants of health in New Mexico with the ‘bookend’ courses ‘Health in New Mexico,’ at the beginning, and ‘Medicine in New Mexico’ at the end.

The Dept. of Surgery with its 9 Divisions (Surgery, Gen Surgery, Ophthalmology, ENT Pediatrics, Cardio Thoracic, Vascular, Plastics and Burn and Oncology) at HSC, the entire staff works hard with their Faculty to ensure that everything is working smoothly so Patients can be seen, surgeries scheduled, ensure Faculty licenses and certifications are current, the Staff clinical coordinators in the divisions make sure the patients are reminded/rescheduled about their appointments, the resident coordinators work with the various levels of medical residents, schedule their educational meetings and much more. The research coordinator in the Dept. of Surgery works with Faculty and their various ongoing research grants. Staff is necessary to keep the Dept. of Surgery, their Faculty Researchers and educators running.

More Staff in the medical field are on the forefront of unique programs that empower patients in their preventative care options through access to electronic health records, increase access to care and provider knowledge on LGBTQ healthcare, and sponsor community clinics that allow medical residents and students from multiple disciplines to provide access to care for homeless, refugee, and underserved populations.

Staff at Student Health & Counseling are among the top 30%, nationwide, and provide quality service as represented by maintaining AAAHC accreditation (4 consecutive years) without any deficiencies.
Nation-wide surveys list patient satisfaction as good as or better than our peer institutions in multiple dimensions.

- For over 90 years, Staff at UNM Continuing Education have served hundreds of thousands of people in our community by offering valuable learning opportunities and certification programs that invest in our local workforce and economy while also providing a means for lifelong education and personal improvement.
- Our staff provide outreach to communities where consideration of higher education may not be a part of their background and this work helps these young people to see themselves on campus and instills a value in continuing their education.
- Staff administer the Student Employment office, which provides students with jobs while they are at UNM while also providing skills and experience that help them advance their careers, independent of their degree.
- Staff support the full range of nationally ranked programs from Engineering to Management and Fine Arts to the Medical School.
- Staff at our bookstore are actively working on the issue of textbook affordability – Through “Inclusive Access” programs, UNM is supporting electronic textbook delivery at a substantially reduced price. Individual departments (in conjunction with faculty) are also experimenting with the use of “Open Educational Resources” that replace textbooks and class materials with cost free content available in the library or offered under Creative Commons licenses.
- UNM is working on using data and analytics to identify students that need extra support and provide them with needed resources to be successful.

Certainly this is not an all-inclusive list, and many more staff and departments are engaged in work that goes unheralded, but is certainly no less valuable. This is representative of the responses we received in just a few days, and we will continue to collect and share the amazing things in which our Staff are engaged.

The University of New Mexico can, and should, always strive to be better. We welcome and encourage efforts by President Stokes to ensure that the university is on the right track. If anything, we have all the right components but lack the full support of certain Regents to accomplish these goals. We welcome the fresh perspective that new leadership has and will continue to bring.

Respectfully,

Rob Burford, President
Ryan E. Gregg, President-elect
Mary Clark, Speaker
Tracy Wenzl, Treasurer
Autumn Collins, At-large Representative
Aracely Chapa, At-large Representative
Mark Reynolds, At-large Representative
Scott Sanchez, At-large Representative
Danelle Callan, Past-president