



2025 Staff Council Grade Candidates Election Guide

As stated in the Staff Council Constitution, the Council is composed of 60 elected representatives, with 30 from the various precincts (elected in even numbered years) and 30 from the various job grades (elected in odd numbered years). Ballot order was determined by random draw. See below for candidate statements. Names are listed in the order in which they will appear on the voting ballot, which will be sent to your UNM email address. **Election period begins Monday, March 24, 2025 and ends Friday, March 28, 2025 at 5:00PM.**

Grades 5-6 (2 seats)

Wendy Gaytan Marin

My name is Wendy Gaytan Marin, and I am a Latina born and raised in Denver, Colorado. I graduated from The University of New Mexico with a BFA in Film Production and an associate degree in Sociology. I plan to continue my studies to earn a Master's in Sociology. During my time at UNM, I contributed to the Refugee and Immigrant Well-being Project, assisting refugee families in Albuquerque. I also worked with The Institute for American Indian Education, where I filmed and created a series of videos aimed at recruiting more Native teachers and principals. In the last two years at UNM, I served as an Instructional Assistant for the senior capstone class. My role included coordinating meetings, creating shooting schedules, securing locations, assembling crews and casts, and planning a two-day film festival screening. Now, I am the Equipment Cage Manager & Production Manager for the Film & Digital Arts Department in CFA.

Grades 7 (1 seats)

No candidates.

If this is your grade, please consider a write-in nomination on the voting ballot.

Grades 8-9 (3 seats)

Shantel Anaya

Hello, my name is Shantel Anaya. I am the Administrative Assistant III for the Anderson School of Management Undergraduate Advisement area. I have been with UNM since November of 2022 and since have been involved in a wide range of networking opportunities. I strive daily to ensure that staff, faculty and students have clear communication about events, classes and or resources available. I am always ready to learn and share knowledge. I know the importance of being an informed audience and am a great advocate for myself and others when faced with changes, positive or negative. I look forward to the opportunity to serve our staff through this Council.

Precious Allen

Precious Allen serves as a Hall Coordinator at the University of New Mexico's Department of Residence Life & Student Housing. In this role, I oversee the daily operations of the Laguna DeVargas residential community. We prioritize fostering an inclusive and engaging living environment for students. Some of my responsibilities include supervising Resident Advisors, implementing residential programming, managing student conduct, and providing support for residents' academic and personal development. With a passion for student affairs and community building, I work to enhance the on-campus living experience by promoting leadership, diversity, and well-being among residents. I collaborate with university partners to ensure a safe and supportive atmosphere that encourages student success.

Sarah Caswell

I am a disability and accessibility advocate. I am part of multiple community serving committees both on and off campus. I am currently a UNM staff and student, working at Project ECHO and in the OILS MA program.

Paul Carbajal

Worked for UNM/SOM/OMI for the last 16 years in administration. Earned my executive MBA from UNM Anderson in 2015.

Grade 10 (3 seats)

Araceli G Ramirez

My name is Araceli Ramirez. I came to UNM in 2019 and worked as a student employee at the SUB for four years. After graduating with my bachelor's degree in 2023, I transitioned into a full-time but temporary role as a Professional Intern in the Provost's Office, where I worked for about one year and ten months. During that time, I gained valuable experience and had the opportunity to contribute to one of the largest projects I've worked on—the relocation of Staff/Faculty at the Humanities Building. Recently, I was promoted to a permanent position as an Administrative Coordinator, continuing my work in the Provost's Office. Amid everything, I also began pursuing my Master's degree in Project Management at the Anderson School of Management in Spring 2024. Having tuition remission has been incredibly encouraging, allowing me to further my education. I want to become more engaged at UNM, expand my knowledge of the university, and connect with more people!

Angel J.J. Baca

Angel Baca is a dedicated staff member at the University of New Mexico, who is also pursuing a Master's in Business, with a current Bachelor's from UNM in HR and Operations Management with diverse experience across HR, campus relations, and leadership roles. He has contributed to various departments at UNM, including serving as an HR Tech for Dental Medicine and as a Campus Relations Intern in UNM Food. In these roles, he has managed recruitment, employee training, policy implementation, and event coordination. He was also a member of several organizations, including ALPFA, SHRM, and Mortar Board Honors Society. He has received multiple honors, including the UNM Citizenship Award and the Lobo Leader Award. Through internships and volunteer work, he has demonstrated a commitment to professional growth and community service. Angel has striven for impact within UNM for staff and has a unique perspective for growth and impact for UNM.

Grade 11 (3 seats)

Joseph M. Lane

Hi, my name is Joe Lane, and I'm seeking another term on Staff Council as a Grade 11 representative. As a long-time staff member at UNM University Libraries, I bring a deep understanding of UNM's history and the challenges we face. I co-chair the new Compensation, Retention, and Promotion Committee, addressing critical issues like food and housing security for staff. I also serve on the DEI Committee, advocating for the preservation of DEI programs, as well as the Rewards & Recognition and Government Relations Committees. Additionally, I organize Brown Bag sessions on topics relevant to staff. My commitment remains strong, and I hope to continue representing and advocating for you over the next two years. Thank you for your support!

Mitchell Tappen

I have been working at UNM for 2 years now. I was born and raised in Buhl, Idaho. I did my undergrad at Idaho State University where I received a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. At Idaho State I was a Resident Assistant with their on-campus housing where I decided to pursue a career in Higher Education. Shortly after I received my B.A. in December 2001, I joined the Peace Corps and was an education volunteer for 2 years in Thailand. There I worked in elementary schools helping teachers improve their instruction skills. After that I managed a dormitory at Georgia Tech in Atlanta. Then I went to grad school at Clemson University where I received a master's degree in Higher Education Administration. After graduation I worked at New Mexico Tech for their housing department. I worked there for 14 years and needed a change so now I work here for UNM's Online department as their Curriculum Development Coordinator.

Vanessa Chavez

Vanessa Chavez (She/They/Ella) is a dedicated professional from Centennial, CO, now living in Albuquerque, NM. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a Minor in Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado (2022).

Vanessa has experience as an Admissions Counselor at UNC, organizing recruitment events, managing logistics, and building relationships with stakeholders. She also worked as an Outdoor Leader, leading trips and fostering teamwork. In June 2024, she became an Events Planner at the UNM Cancer Research Administration, earning Employee of the Month in December 2024 for her outstanding performance. Vanessa is proficient in Slate Admissions Platform, Microsoft Office, and event planning. She is fluent in Spanish, holds certifications in Wilderness First Responder and CPR, and was nominated for Staff of the Year at UNC for her contributions.

Mollie Hayden

I joined the UNM community as an Area Coordinator in Residence Life & Student Housing in June 2024. Before becoming a Lobo, I worked in residence life at Colorado College in Colorado Springs and earned my master's degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education from the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. At UNM, I lead our department's programming and leadership initiatives, supervise three outstanding live-on staff members, and advise two student organizations. While my responsibilities are diverse, my primary goal is to foster a strong sense of belonging for both students and staff. Beyond UNM, I serve as the Entry Member-at-Large for the Association of Intermountain Housing Officers (AIMHO), where I advocate for and support entry-level housing professionals across the region. I am excited to bring this experience to my role as your Grade Representative and look forward to working together to enhance the staff experience at UNM.

Grade 12 (4 seats)

Janae Martinez

I am a dedicated professional with over 17 years of experience at UNM, serving in roles across research administration, financial coordination, and program leadership. With an Executive MBA and a BA in Communication and Journalism, I bring strategic insight and a collaborative approach to my work supporting complex projects and driving meaningful outcomes. I'm running to represent Grade 12 on Staff Council to advocate for staff voices, promote professional development, and help create an inclusive, supportive workplace. With nearly two decades of service, I'm committed to ensuring staff contributions are recognized and valued as part of UNM's ongoing success.

Quinton Wes Valencia

As a lifelong New Mexican and proud Lobo, I am committed to all things UNM and UNMH. I got my degree, BS Biology, from UNM in 2021 and started working for the University by '22. I started my UNM employee journey as a Math Department Admin. Now, I am a Clinical Research Coordinator at UNMCCC, part of the Hematology team. I grew up on the westside and went to school in Rio Rancho. My family is located primarily in Northern New Mexico and has lived there for generations, in the Pojoaque/Po'ísu wae geh area. I have already served on Staff Council as a Grade 10 Representative. I serve on various committees: DEI, Sustainability, and recently, Rewards and Recognition. What I work on is directly informed by constituent (your) feedback. I have volunteered, at events like the Burrito Breakfast. I have helped draft policy change proposals, such as the upcoming Bereavement Policy. I have advocated for my constituents relentlessly, and I am hoping to continue that vital work as a Grade 12 Rep.

Grace Valenzuela

Dear Staff Council Committee, As a proud UNM graduate and dedicated employee of six years, I have spent much of my adult life committed to both UNM and our broader community. Throughout my time here, I have worked my way up through various roles, each providing me with valuable experience and insight into the university's policies, procedures, and culture. I take great pride in my work, and because of the exceptional leadership at UNM, I have grown both professionally and personally. Now, I hope to give back by joining the Staff Council. Building on my experiences, I am eager to contribute ideas, collaborate with others, and help enhance the staff experience at UNM. I look forward to the opportunity to build meaningful relationships, advocate for staff interests, and participate in initiatives that make a positive impact. Thank you for your consideration. Kindly, Grace Valenzuela

Sarah Treviso

I have been at UNM for over 10 years. Currently I am a Program Supervisor overseeing professional development in health, holistic health, and various business programs at UNM Continuing Education (since 2018). Prior to this, I was at

the UNM HSC Institute for Ethics managing educational programs. I started serving on the Staff Council in March 2024 due to an opening for my grade level. I currently serve on the policy committee, which I believe is an important committee due to how this may impact staff and advocating for staff. I would like to continue serving and it is an honor to be a part of the staff council. I have my BA and MA in political science and international affairs. I am from NM and enjoy fitness and our great outdoors!

Jennifer Payne

I have been a staff at UNM since 2016, but previously earned my Master of Architecture degree from UNM in 2003. I have always worked in student support at UNM and currently work to promote and support our undergraduate students in taking full advantage of their educations by getting involved in research. Serving on staff council since 2023, I am pleased to be part of a group that advocates and serves our valuable staff community on campus.

Natalie Rowe

Hi, I'm Natalie Rowe, and I'm running for re-election as your UNM Grade 12 Staff Representative. I currently work as a Sr. Academic Advisor for Graduate Students in the School of Architecture and Planning. If re-elected, I'll focus on supporting our staff by promoting growth, well-being, and better work-life balance. Thanks so much for your consideration!

Victoria Lobato

My name is Victoria. I am a senior academic advisor. I hold a BA in Journalism and an MA in Family & Child Studies. I have been with University College March 2022. I have enjoyed the opportunity to be a NACADA member and taking part in their conferences. Since the Spring of 2024 I have had the opportunity of teaching for our Liberal Arts & Integrative Studies team, with LAIS 301: Customized Curriculum. Our students are diverse in their academic journeys; some brand new, some later in their life achievements, some returning students and some of our fellow staff members. Beyond working with our students, I enjoy creating things with Adobe Creative Suite, networking with fellow advisors to keep lines of communication open to better serve our students, or simply a good walk around campus. I have interest in being an advocate for the variety of university services students and staff utilize. When I am not working, I enjoy playing billiards, eating good food, and listening to good tunes.

Charlotte Saavedra

I have been with UNM for 16 years and have worked in higher education for 26 years. I received my BFA from UNM and my MFA from Temple University. I have served UNM in many differed capacities from student worked to my current job in International Admissions. I am from Albuquerque NM, but have been fortunate enough to have traveled a bit. I am a firm believer in UNM and what UNM has to offer students, employees and the community on a whole.

Grade 13 (5 seats)

Jessica Serna

Greetings, I would appreciate your support for role of Staff Council Grade 13 representative. I have enjoyed being a part of Staff Council for the last 9 years. In my time with Staff Council, I have been a part of the HSC Committee, Parking and Transportation committee, and the FSBC committee. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of various committees and represent staff. I would love to continue my role on these committees. Thank you in advance for your vote.

Sierra Kowalski

Hello Fellow Grade 13s! I am running for a fourth term as a grade Staff Councilor, second as one if your Grade 13 reps. I have been a Lobo since 2010, full-time staff since 2016, and a Staff Councilor since 2019. From organizing HSC staff recognition events to authoring resolutions (recent ones include: 2024: Addition of Mental and Emotional Wellbeing to Policy 3410 Sick Leave and 2025: Naloxone Accessibility and Training for UNM Staff) and advocating for constituent concerns, it has been a privilege to serve on Staff Council. I currently sit on the Executive Committee as a Grade-At-Large representative and the Health Sciences Staff Committee and hope to stay equally or more involved in Staff Council

because I believe in the work we do. I would be honored to receive your vote to continue to represent you on Staff Council.

Colton A. Newman

My name is Colton Newman, and I am proud to say I'm a Lobo through and through. I earned my BA in Communications and MS in Project Management from UNM and have had the privilege of contributing to the university in many ways. I've served as Photo Editor for the New Mexico Daily Lobo, worked with the UNM Sustainability Studies Program, The Office for Research Integrity and Compliance, and am now honored to serve as the Business Manager at the Center on Alcohol, Substance Use, and Addictions (CASAA). I'm passionate about supporting my fellow staff members across all campuses, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. If elected to the UNM Staff Council, I would advocate for transparency, clear communication, and representation with dignity. Outside of work, I love reading (favorites include Slaughterhouse-Five) and exploring New Mexico with my energetic border collie, Nyla.

Laura Obregon

Operations Manager, HSC Rio Rancho Campus Jan 2023 - Present Administrative Assistant 3 College of Nursing, HSC Rio Rancho Campus Jul 2022 - Jan 2023 Administrative Coordinator to the Dean - UNM College of Nursing Nov 2021 - Jul 2022

Li Chen

I hold a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with over a decade of biomedical research experience. After five years of postdoctoral training at the College of Pharmacy, I became Associate Technical Director of the AIM Core in the School of Medicine, where I troubleshoot instrumentation, develop SOPs, train staff, and improve experimental efficiency. Through my coworker in Staff Council, I discovered many exciting campus initiatives. I am passionate about fostering a supportive workplace and believe strong communication, collaboration, and mentorship are key to a thriving university. I hope to advocate for staff, strengthen connections across departments, and help make UNM a better place for all.

Jairo E. Marshall

Hello, I'm Jairo Marshall, and I am the Student Success Supervisor at Graduate Support, a division of the Center for Teaching and Learning. I started at UNM as a graduate student in 2012, received my doctorate in History here in 2019, and have been working as a staff member over the past 5 years. Service and advocacy are part of who I am here at UNM: I serve on the Institutional Review Board, I am part of the Grad Studies Council, read applicants for the President's and Regent's Scholarships, and I volunteer each year for both the Shared Knowledge Conference and Undergraduate Research Opportunity Conference, among many other projects. I care deeply about student and staff success as two sides of the same coin, and I want to create more resources for staff who are also graduate students, or are thinking about returning to school. I will be a dedicated and active member of Staff Council.

Yadéeh Sawyer

Yadéeh has been a staff member here at UNM since 2014 and a Staff Council Rep since 2020. Although her academic background is in Biology, she has an underlying motivation to make a positive impact on the world we live in. She brings that into her current roll as a 1st & 2nd Year Experience Manager for the School of Engineering. She joined the council to carry that undercurrent into her roll as a fellow staff member. Yadéeh wants to facilitate each staff member having a sense of belonging and appreciation. On a more personal note, she is a native New Mexico who left for a bit and came back because of the outdoor adventure opportunities the state has to offer. She enjoys spending as much time with her family in that realm as possible through anything from Stand Up Paddle Boarding to skiing, rock climbing to backpacking, mountain biking to hiking, and more. She enjoys good conversations, new and unique experiences, and thinking outside of the box.

Jacquelyn L Chasteen

Jacquelyn Chasteen, MBAED, IMH-E, is a Program Manager on Project ECHO's Education Team, where she works on early childhood initiatives. Jacquelyn's professional roots are in early childhood education, having worked in many early

childhood roles. Jacquelyn joined UNM at the Early Childhood Services Center in 2018 where she served as an Education Consultant before joining Project ECHO in 2022. Through her work, she has the privilege of helping education professionals develop community and engage in collaborative learning. Jacquelyn holds a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Multicultural Education, with a birth-4 concentration, an Infant Mental Health Endorsement, and an MBA in Educational Leadership from Anderson; she participates in ECHO's Service to the Community Committee and joined Staff Council in November 2024. Outside of work, Jacquelyn advocates on child-centered issues, volunteers at an animal shelter, spends time exploring with her pets, and enjoys supporting local coffee shops.

Grade 14 (4 seats)

Audrea N. Winslow

My name is Audrea, I am the Department Administrator (DA) for Cell Biology & Physiology with UNM HSC School of Medicine. I have been a DA for over 9 years. Over this time, I was a DA in two other departments before my current department. I am a UNM alumna, and currently pursuing my master's in public administration. I served on the UNM Staff Council from 2016-2018. In my time with College of Education and Human Sciences, I helped implement and form a college staff council. This experience has given me a solid foundation to serve on the staff council again. I want to be a voice for UNM Staff. As a native New Mexican, born and raised in a small town south of Albuquerque, I am committed to New Mexico. I look forward to making a positive impact on the community starting within UNM. It would be an honor to serve on the UNM Staff Council, to collaborate with others in the UNM community and beyond, and help enhance our workplace. Thank you for your support and consideration!

Jennifer Kavka

Jennifer has proudly served as a grade representative on staff council since 2018. She is an active member of the Rewards and Recognition Committee, is a past chair of the Government Relations Committee, and was staff council's treasurer in 2021. As a representative of the staff council, she is a strong advocate for the welfare of staff and has worked hard to promote staff interests to the UNM community. Jennifer began her career at UNM in 2003 and currently works as a Faculty Research Support Officer in the College of Arts & Sciences as well as the Program Administrator for the Center for Evolutionary & Theoretical Immunology. If re-elected, Jennifer hopes to continue her committee work and supporting staff issues that promote a stronger and happier UNM community.

Anneliese Ward

Anneliese Ward is a Sr. Business Manager at UNM's CARC, applying to Staff Council in order to make a difference in the lives of the staff that serve UNM. She is inspired by the feats of Staff Council members before her and wants to help others in order to maintain the unique work life balance offered at UNM. She hopes to advocate for ways that continue to engage employees and provide them opportunities for growth, whether in their personal or career goals. She wants to provide a voice by which employees can express to leadership their needs to serve the community more effectively. In her free time, Anneliese serves on the board of UNM's Women in Technology where she works to empower other women in their work and growth in UNM's IT landscape. She also volunteers with PACA Cats, a non-profit animal rescue and provides expertise for students participating in the Supercomputing Challenge as a judge and mentor.

Ivan Olay

Ivan joined the Staff Council in 2021 with a vision to make a positive impact on staff. His commitment to advocacy and community-building continues to drive his involvement. Throughout his career, he has embraced a philosophy of continuous improvement believing that small, gradual changes lead to long-term success. As a Staff Councilor, he applies this mindset to his work, always seeking ways to enhance the staff experience. During his time on the council, Ivan has had the privilege of working alongside dedicated, selfless, and tireless colleagues who are deeply committed to supporting staff. Their passion inspires him to collaborate, learn, and strengthen connections across all areas of UNM.

Tina Zuniga

Hi! I'm Tina Zuniga and I work in the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs. I'm interested in joining Staff Council to support, advocate for, and celebrate my colleagues and the dynamic, amazing work they do across the university. I

have previously served as the Staff Association President and Vice President at UNM-Valencia, so I'm excited to get involved and contribute to Staff Council at UNM-Main Campus this year any way I can.

Jessica Hitzman

I am a higher education professional specializing in student success, program development, and equity-focused initiatives. As a University Innovation Alliance Fellow at UNM, I support institutional strategic planning, retention efforts, and collaborative innovation projects. With a background in grant writing, fiscal analysis, and program evaluation, I've worked at the Legislative Finance Committee to secure funding to improve student access during the Covid-19 pandemic. I've helped develop the new UNM Transfer & Transition Student Center and expanded support for the Ubuntu Undergraduate Research Program. I have experience in policy analysis, community engagement, and data-driven decision-making, and I am passionate about creating inclusive working environments for my fellow staff and supporting initiatives to expand professional development and wellness opportunities. I am excited for the opportunity to advocate for my fellow staff and further support my UNM community.

Grade 15 (2 seats)

Grace Faustino

I have served on the Staff Council for five years, representing Precinct 6, and had the honor of serving as Staff Council President. Representing the voices of our constituents has been both a responsibility and a privilege. Grade 15 staff hold a unique and often overlooked position, balancing the demands of management while filling critical workload gaps. They are at a crossroads rising into middle management or aspiring to move beyond it yet often lack the time and resources for professional development and career growth. I am committed to advocating for solutions to these challenges. Together, we can explore creative ways to balance work, operations, and professional growth. Through initiatives like panel conversations and collaborative discussions, we can ensure Grade 15 staff have the support they need to thrive. I ask for your support to continue this important work and to be your voice in shaping a better future for all of us.

Nicole Smith

My passion is to be a resource for others while evaluating other resources to ensure that EVERYONE has the same opportunities that they should have as a staff member at UNM. All of us have strengths that I long to learn from to ensure the best possible outcomes for our University while using mine to advocate for you. Biases destroy collaboration and my goal will be to ensure to minimize the toxic irrational misunderstandings between colleges and cultures so that the whole organization can flourish through respect for our Diverse organization. Every day, each of us plays a major role in the education of our students by ensuring through direct and indirect interactions every student has all the resources available to them so that they can succeed. Let me be this resource for you so you can continue to provide this irreplaceable role for YOUR College and OUR University! Vote for me! Nikki Nicole Smith BSN, RN, CCRN Nurse Educator and PhD student UNM College of Nursing

Marco Lopez

I have been a nurse for 12 years, with the last six months spent at the Cancer Center. Prior to my nursing career, I served as a firefighter for the City of Albuquerque for 20 years. During that time, I was twice elected as a Union Steward for Local 244, advocating for my colleagues in matters of discipline, salary negotiations, and policy development. My leadership extended to participation in key committees, including Dispatch, Uniform, and Standard Operating Guidelines, where I worked to refine policies that better served both the fire service and the community. Throughout my professional journey, I have thrived in team-based environments, collaborating with individuals of diverse backgrounds and skill sets.

Grades 16-17 (2 seats)

Robinson Worley

Hello, I have been at UNM as a Core IT Svcs Splst for the last 8 years. I have served as a Grade 16 rep for the last 2 years and am on the Staff IT council. I would like to continue as a grade rep. Thank you! Lewis Worley

Grades 18-99 (1 seats)

No candidates.

If this is your grade, please consider a write-in nomination on the voting ballot.