

# ***“A Framework for Our Future”***

**President’s Live Webcast  
Tuesday, April 8, 2008 - 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.**

**Remarks Delivered by David J. Schmidly, President of the University of New Mexico**

Good afternoon to all of you, and thank you all for joining me.

I’d like to spend the next hour with you reflecting on our future. As I do so, I am very deliberately going to use words like “our,” “us,” and “we” as I talk about the vision for that future, and the framework we will build on to help us to get there. By the end of this hour, my goal is to have issued an irresistible invitation to each of you to work with me to bring alive our hopes and dreams for the University of New Mexico.

Last Monday, I posted on my website two documents. The first is a Strategic Framework for 2008 and Beyond. The second is an Environmental Assessment that attempts to honestly identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats we must address if we are to be successful. Today I want to talk a little about both.

As I was preparing to assume the role of President of this university nearly a year ago, I began writing a document that I ultimately titled “UNM in the 21st Century: A New President’s Vision.” I then spent much of last summer meeting with and learning from students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Thanks to you, I grew an even deeper appreciation for UNM’s history, culture, successes and challenges. It was then that I began to formulate a plan to merge the best of UNM as it exists today with a new set of aspirations for the future. It was at the conclusion of my first 125 days as President that the concept of a Strategic Framework was born: A framework upon which to build for our future. And perhaps more importantly, to provide us with some essential guiding ideas and principles that will help us all to see how our work here contributes to that future.

If you have had the opportunity to read the Strategic Framework document, you already know that it contains descriptions of UNM’s mission, vision, and core values. It also outlines some institution-wide strategies to help us achieve the vision, and what I call the four strands of priority that will focus our activities. The Regents’ Goals for the President are also included, as these provide a roadmap for our success.

I believe that these elements, when taken together, create a unifying theme that can move us from being a good institution to a great one. This is a framework which can serve to unify us, even given our complexity.

I would like to talk a little about some of the elements in the Strategic Framework, and then reflect on what they mean for all of us: For us as individual contributors, as well as for us together, as a university community.

Our mission tells the world why the University of New Mexico exists. We are here for teaching, research, patient care, and community service. These are the four cornerstones of our purpose. These are the ways in which we serve our students, our community, our state, our nation, and the world. This is why we exist. And, every single one of us has the opportunity to contribute in some way toward carrying forth that mission. Some of us teach our students and conduct research that adds to the world's knowledge. Others of us take care of the buildings in which that teaching and research occurs. Some of us help to take care of people when they are sick. Still others of us keep offices running smoothly, books on our library shelves, and the grounds of our campuses beautiful and inviting. Everyone has a contribution to make in carrying forth UNM's mission. Every one of you is already important to this university, and can become even more so as, together, we begin to explore new ways to leverage the incredible talent that already exists here, and attract new talent that will sustain us into the future.

When I talk about "Vision," I'm really talking about our greatest aspirations for the future. In putting forth any vision publicly, we are saying to the world that this is what we are working together to become.

We are saying that we want to be known for our diversity, and the strength that it gives us. We want others to look to us as a model, with an environment that provides our students with opportunities to learn together, explore and embrace differing worldviews, and celebrate the value of difference.

We want to be known as strong collaborators, partnering with others to make it possible for our citizens, both children and adults, to have the confidence and skills to aspire to higher learning and to be successful once they reach us as students. Access and success must go hand-in-hand.

And, we want to become a university of choice for the brightest students. We will be a magnet for the best because of UNM's overall excellent reputation, and because of individual programs that we are constantly improving to remain relevant throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

We want our academic climate to be exciting, dynamic, and passionate, known far and wide as a university that steadfastly upholds the virtue of academic freedom. We want to be known for attracting and furthering the most innovative research programs that create new knowledge, inspire artistic creativity, develop our economies, and improve the quality of life. We want to be known as a catalyst and hub for international initiatives that draw students, faculty, and collaborators from all parts of the globe.

We want to be unmatched as a health and wellness resource in New Mexico. Others will look to us as models for providing the best accessibility, the best care, and the best research to prevent, treat, and cure disease.

So, as a result of achieving this vision, we will simply be known as one of the best. Others will want to learn from us, emulate us, and partner with us. This is our future, if we are courageous enough to commit to and travel this journey together.

And as we travel that journey, we will need a strong set of core values to guide us all. Principles that inform not just what we do, but how we do it. Our core values will hold us accountable to our students, the community, and to each other. We will use these values to make decisions, and we will use them to evaluate our own behavior.

As I look around this university, I already know that we care about and uphold the value of excellence. I am proposing that we take excellence to a new level. The way to do this is to first look around. Where are the shining examples of excellence? How can those best practices be spread to other areas? How can we ensure that the rising tide lifts all boats?

In our values, I talk about access *with* support to succeed. I mean this on two levels. Yes, this is about our students, and making sure that our doors remain open to all, and that those who come through those doors have the help they need to thrive and graduate. But this is also about our faculty and staff. We want to attract and retain the best. To do that, we must ensure that the message of excellence is clear from the outset, and that everyone has the help they need to rise to that expectation.

This brings me to the value that I call respectful relationships. Treating each other with respect becomes a powerful glue that bonds us together and forms a productive and inspired culture. The way we treat each other, every single day, is critical to building the trust and team spirit that will move us toward our vision. Add to that a strong dose of integrity. Now we have the elements of a promise: The promise that we make to live up to the trust placed in us by students, parents, the community, and each other.

As part of integrity, we need to talk about “openness and “transparency.” We haven’t done enough of that in the past. We have been overwhelmed with open records requests, and I have been told that UNM is seen as one of the worst examples of open government in the state. Our policies are seen as attempting to “wall us off” from public scrutiny. This must change if we are to develop trust and confidence with the citizens of the state.

Another value that is critical to supporting a unified culture of excellence is freedom. For each of us to fully engage, we must have the freedom to ask honest questions, offer thoughtful opinions, and explore creative ideas. And, we must uphold the academic freedom that is a hallmark of all the world’s great universities.

Also as part of freedom, we need to talk about “shared governance” and the need to bring clarity to how it will work on our campus. Without that clarity, we will be slower to make progress in developing trust and good communications.

And as we work together to create a unifying culture of greatness and excellence at UNM, we must think about what it will take to sustain and renew our efforts. That is why we have added sustainability as one of our values. Everything we do today must take into account the well-being of the future. And I’m talking about a value that goes well beyond recycling. I’m talking about what some Native Americans refer to as 7<sup>th</sup> generation thinking, where every important decision is made with the consideration of the effect it will have, seven generations into the

future. So we must be asking ourselves, what impact will decisions about the way we educate our students, conduct our research, and build our buildings today have for a future that we cannot see and will not be a part of?

So, we have a mission that describes our highest purposes for existing, a vision for our future, and core values to guide our behaviors along the journey. Now I would like to talk about a few institution-wide strategies that will form part of the “how” – how we carry forth that mission, will reach that vision, and live our values.

The first strategy I want to highlight is “connectivity to purpose.” I want every single one of you who is a member of the UNM community to get excited about the direction this university is going in and the potential contributions you can make to move us along the road. I want you to unleash your passion and creativity to align us and move us toward the greatness that I believe is this university’s destiny.

And as we become connected, we will unleash the power of six additional strategies that I believe are critical to our success. We will actively deepen our understanding of the diverse cultures that come together at UNM, and we will demonstrate the value they add to society. We will develop partnerships with institutions and individuals whose missions complement our own, with the end result being that we are stronger and more successful together than we ever could have become individually.

We will keep our students at the center of every major decision. We will continuously ask, “Does this decision, action, or investment enhance the well-being of our students, and their ability to be successful?” We will inspire each other to contribute to the vitality of this university. I want our leaders across campus to think about ways to support grass roots innovative thinking that gets us closer to our vision.

We will take steps to create the conditions under which the brightest and best innovative research will be conducted, right here at the University of New Mexico, and then applied for the benefit of the world. One step in that direction will be to convene a group of our brightest young faculty members to brainstorm together about what those conditions are, and to begin the process of removing barriers to research excellence.

And we will commit to practices that will ensure that all investments we make, whether of precious time, energy, or resources, are aligned with our mission, vision, and values.

I would like to make just a few comments on the SWOT analysis that is currently posted on my website. I believe that if we are to make real progress toward our vision, we must have authentic conversations about what it will take to get there. While it is really energizing to talk about our strengths and opportunities, I know that it takes courage to talk honestly about our weaknesses and threats, especially when we have created some of them, ourselves. Sometimes we become the unsuspecting victims of our past successes. Sometimes what worked yesterday is just not relevant for the future. Let me tell you that I am not here to criticize where we are today, but I am here to make sure that we thoroughly understand where we are

today. Together, we will determine what changes we need to make and what we must do to be successful tomorrow.

The Environmental Assessment is part of an ongoing dynamic process to help us keep an eye on all the conditions, both internal and external to us, that could have an impact on our future success. We will be updating this as conditions change, and will be asking for your help to do so.

The theme of my inauguration was “connect,” and I intend to continue that theme as we continue this journey toward our future. One way that I asked you to connect to this process was by submitting any questions you have about the Strategic Framework or the Environmental Assessment. Many of you took the time to ask very thoughtful questions, and I’d like to address some of them now.

(Unscripted Q&A with Carolyn Thompson occurred here)

At the beginning of this hour, I told you that I wanted to issue an invitation to all of you to work together with me and to connect to each other to bring these aspirations alive. And, I want to provide some next steps to encourage you to do so.

First of all, I’d like for you to read and think about the strategic framework and the challenging direction I have outlined today. Then, I ask you to think seriously about some ways you can connect and contribute, both as individuals and as members of teams. What ideas do you have for improving this university, through the work that you do? How can your efforts complement those of others? And, how can we move closer to the future we desire, together?

Then, to further explore these questions and to begin to share ideas, I am asking that every department leader across campus set aside one hour, sometime during the weeks of April 14<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>, to meet with their teams. I also ask department leaders inform my Strategy Office of the dates, times, and locations of these meetings. My intention is to select a few to attend personally, so that I can learn about your aspirations, hopes, and ideas for the future. How can you connect?

I have also scheduled a Town Hall meeting for Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 1:30 to 3:30 in the SUB Ballrooms. During that time, I will ask some of the departments to share their innovative ideas and activities for connecting and contributing to the future of UNM.

The specifics of how we will continue to engage each other over the next few weeks can be found on my web page and through several upcoming campus announcements.

Today only marks the beginning of our dialogue about our future. The next step is to begin thinking together about how we will make that future a reality. And when I say we, I am talking about all of us – students, faculty, staff, alums, supporters, patients, and fans. But the beginning has to be right here on the campus. We must lay out the framework for success and the strategy needed to get there. And then we must get the buy-in from our constituents.

When I addressed the Regents about tuition last week, I spoke about the need to develop a budget and tuition plan that would link to our strategic framework and for a time horizon longer than one year. I also spoke about evaluating new tuition models to incentivize student performance and success. I emphasized the need to strengthen private fund-raising so that we have access to more discretionary resources to support our elevation to national excellence.

So, in finalizing our strategic framework over the next few weeks and months, we must ensure that it is linked with the new campus master plan, a realistic budget and resource development plan, and a tuition model coupled with state resources that will allow real progress on our most important priorities. We need to work off a five-year budget horizon, in which we carefully estimate resources needed from the state, tuition, and private sources to move us forward. Remember the Spanish word, “adelante” that I used in my inaugural address!!

The key component in this five year plan must be a successful effort to “Restore, Reward, and Grow” the faculty. We should not use vacant faculty positions to run our departmental operations. We should fill those positions and put those faculty in the classroom to benefit our students. We are below our peer group in faculty salaries, and we must make up this ground if we are to recruit the best and retain the best. Finally, we need to grow our faculty and reduce the faculty-student ratio. This will help with graduation rates and with growing our research and graduate programs.

Another important step is to develop an admissions approach that will maximize student success. In our state, we cannot afford to take an elitist approach based on test scores that favors the more affluent. Rather, we must take a more holistic approach to evaluating student applicants, stressing factors such as high school performance, college preparation classes taken in high school, and leadership activities. We need to engage our new partnership with CNM so that students who have “lagged” a little in high school can still enter the university, but in a way that is more likely to maximize their chances for success. The community college route can provide just such an opportunity. It is time to move forward with our new endeavors in this important area.

Nothing is more important to us than a new and different approach to setting tuition. Our current year-to-year approach is simply not working. In combination with the practice of “tuition credit,” used by the state to charge students for aspects of their education for which they receive no benefit, we have created a system that actually deters student success.

In looking to the future, I want us to lead the way in developing new approaches. For example, we should evaluate the possibility of implementing “guaranteed” and “block” tuition as ways of incentivizing our students to stay on track and graduate in four years. This will provide great savings to our students, their parents, and to the state. Our current year-to-year “haggling” approach is a recipe for mediocrity, and the proof is right in front of our eyes – The low graduation rates in our state and at UNM. Obviously, the combination of cheap tuition, fought over every year, combined with a regular policy of imposing tuition credit, has been a failure. And yet it has been tried over and over again. The definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. It is time for a change and UNM should lead the way.

But, if we are to ask for more, and get more, from our students and the state, we must be in a position to give more. We must provide better advising to our students. We must offer more class sections that are not canceled at the last minute. Classes must be taught over the full span of the day and throughout the year, as opposed to times selected for our own convenience. And, we must correct problems, like the late submission of grades, which have serious negative consequences for our students. In short, we must become more accountable to our students and more performance driven.

Above all, we must work to improve K-16 education in New Mexico. We can no longer sit back and complain about how it is not working. We are the flagship university in the state, and we must take some ownership in solving the problem. Determining how best to do this, and finding the resources that will be required, must be a high priority over the next five years. I have some definite ideas, and I will look forward to discussing them with you in the near future.

Shortly, I hope to announce some major changes in our approach to fund-raising – changes that will make us more accountable, more successful, and more incentive-based. These changes will empower the UNM Foundation to be even more successful in raising private dollars for student scholarships and fellowships, faculty chairs and professorships, and for new facilities.

I am pleased that we will have a solid leadership team to assist in our efforts in moving forward. I am proud of the talent, experience, and diversity of this team. It includes a mixture of “old hands” who have been here for a while, and of new members recruited from inside and outside the state. Our new Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Suzanne Ortega, has worked at three AAU institutions. Our new Vice President for Rio Rancho and Branch Operations, Dr. Marc Nigliazzo, has served as President of two community colleges prior to joining us. Our New Vice presidents of Enrollment Management and Equity and Inclusion, who will be named shortly, have equally impressive backgrounds.

It is crucial that over the next few months we fill the leadership void created by the death of our colleague Terry Yates. We are known for our success and excellence in research and we must not lose our momentum. We must begin the process of gradually eliminating our operating deficit in the research office, and we must create a new business model going forward that maximizes the impact of F&A resources to achieve our goals.

And as we travel this journey, we will find even better ways to communicate our progress throughout the university and beyond. We will improve our ability to work with and through the media to tell our stories, report on our forward motion, and share our successes with the broader community.

There is no reason why we cannot succeed. It's up to us to work hard, work together, and stay focused. We have all the ingredients – great people, our diversity, and our wonderful geography – to be the first minority/majority institution invited into the AAU. It won't happen overnight. It won't be easy. And, it won't just fall into our laps. It will require a good plan, a more student-centered focus, and a singularity of purpose and teamwork. Or, as Jim Collins states in his book “Good to Great,” it's about getting the right people on the bus and in the right seats, and

headed in the right direction. As for me, I am excited about driving that bus. I'm rolling up my sleeves and ready to work harder than ever to make UNM the best it can be. It all starts with our attitude, our strategic framework, and our willingness to work together.

Thanks for your participation today, and I will look forward to receiving your feedback, attending some of your meetings, and reading about how you will be following up with your own plans. I am excited about our direction, and I hope you are, too. Our success on this journey will take all of us, and I look forward to the progress we will make together.

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