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**ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
ESTABLISH NEW PROGRAM TO INCREASE DIVERSITY OF LEADERSHIP IN
HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Albuquerque, New Mexico – Robert Wood Johnson Foundation President and CEO Risa Lavizzo-Mourey joined with Acting UNM President David Harris and other university leaders today to announce the establishment of a national center for health policy at the University of New Mexico (UNM). Started with an initial commitment of \$18.5 million, the interdisciplinary center will have dedicated leadership and staffing as well as its own physical location on UNM’s main campus. Through its students and programs, the Center will contribute to the development and implementation of national health policies by increasing the number of Hispanic and Native American scholars who can engage in the debate as leaders.

The creation of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico comes at a time when the nation’s ethnic and racial diversity is rapidly increasing, and will be guided by the principle that development of health policy should be grounded in the experience of the people it represents. Currently, few Hispanics and Native Americans are bringing their perspectives to health policy discussions. Minority groups disproportionately face barriers to good health. Many lack access to quality health care, are faced with unhealthy living environments, and suffer from poor health, disability and earlier death. The Center will be a physical, educational and cultural home for promising minority leaders and others, providing them with the training, research and opportunities they need to inform discussions and debates about health policy.

“To create the best health care services for all Americans, the country needs a diverse group of leaders in Washington and in academic circles who represent the interests, cultures, and needs of this incredibly diverse nation,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “When it comes to health, one size does not fit all. We need to nurture and support a new generation of health policy leaders with diverse perspectives.”

As a leading Hispanic-serving institution with a medical school, colleges of nursing and pharmacy public health program and doctoral-level programs in economics, political science and sociology, the University of New Mexico is uniquely positioned to house the new center. Almost half of its 32,300 students are minorities, including 30.5 percent Hispanic and 12 percent Native American.

“We are delighted to be given the opportunity by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create a center that will one day strongly influence health policy in this country,” said Acting UNM President David Harris.

“Expanding access to health care and providing health coverage for all New Mexicans are priorities for my administration and this center will help turn these policies into reality,” said New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. “As New Mexicans, we are very proud of our diversity and our role as national leaders on health policy. This center will ensure minority, Hispanic and Native American voices are included in the national health care policy discussion.”

To achieve national impact, and in the process improve health outcomes, the Center will focus on several areas:

- **Recruitment.** The Center will increase the pool of minorities interested in Ph.D. programs in the social sciences. Most minority students who pursue graduate degrees select professional programs because they appear to offer more tangible career rewards than a Ph.D., and can be completed in less time, with less debt, and with less mathematical or statistical preparation. The Center will provide incentives for students to pursue doctoral degrees.
- **Readiness.** The Center will work with academic departments to offer a rigorous and interdisciplinary educational program that prepares students for leadership in the policy arena.
- **Retention.** To retain Hispanic and Native American students, the Center will offer financial, social and cultural support, along with research and educational opportunities that allow students to stay connected with their communities.
- **Research.** The Center will conduct independent research and develop and support a national research agenda that promotes a better understanding of health issues, including access, cost, and health care quality to inform the policy debate.
- **Raising Awareness.** A core component of the Center will be interdisciplinary research workshops on specialized health topics, as well as a regular series of national conferences and workshops focusing on health policy issues of greatest concern to Hispanics and Native Americans.

The RWJF Health Policy Center will be fully established in the fall of 2007 and expects to train approximately 100 students within five years of opening.

The University of New Mexico is the state’s largest university, serving more than 32,000 students. UNM is home to the state’s only schools of law, medicine, pharmacy and architecture and operates New Mexico’s only academic health center. UNM is noted for comprehensive undergraduate programs and research that benefits the state and the nation.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For 35 years RWJF has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems affecting the health of those it serves. To learn more, visit the Foundation's website, www.rwjf.org.

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