

Welcome, Lobos, to the 2nd Regular Session of the 55th Legislature,

The 2022 State Legislative Session kicked off on Tuesday, Jan. 18, with UNM Senior Leadership being hosted by Representatives Liz Thomson, Representative Meredith Dixon, and Representative Day Hochman Vigil on the floor of the House of Representatives for the joint House-Senate to hear Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s State of the State address. We thank these elected leaders for their strong interest in public policy that supports the UNM mission.

The UNM Senior Leadership team is active this year in all aspects of our Government Relations initiatives. In support of the University, the [Office of Government and Community Relations](#) is working under the direction of a new team this year, led by me, Nathan Bush, as Interim Chief Government Relations Officer, with Bridgette Noonan and Stevie Olson serving as Associate Directors, and Vanessa Garcia as Unit Administrator.

In early December, we inventoried our year-long funding initiatives that endured review by both the Legislative and Executive branches, and those are currently serving as [UNM State Legislative Priorities](#) for consideration during this year’s “short” legislative session. In addition to this abbreviated snapshot of UNM budgetary priorities, Lobo leaders are engaged in a number of Main Campus, Branch Campus, and Health Sciences Center initiatives to sustain and grow UNM’s education, research, and community service offerings.

On a more general note, some of the hot-button issues at the legislature currently include public safety, a range of “green economy” initiatives, workforce development, public and private wage compensation, and myriad opinions on how the State of New Mexico should allocate one-time federal funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

UNM Priorities Update

Topping the list of our [state legislative priorities](#) are our two General Obligation requests, including a \$65,000,000 request for the **College of Fine Arts Center for Collaborative Arts & Technology** and also a \$40,000,000 request for a completely new **Children’s Psychiatric Center**. If adopted by the legislature, these proposals would appear on the November, 2022 general election ballot. Both of these new facilities requests have been many years in the making, alongside a number of other capital improvement projects. We are also supportive of ASUNM and GPSA and student-led initiatives regarding the expansion of available student scholarships. On the workforce front, UNM is also demonstrating leadership with several initiatives that are designed to address statewide shortages of pre-K through 12 teachers and nurses. UNM is also supporting a 7% increase for recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. Significant inflationary pressures are affecting state budgets in virtually every sector, and UNM will continue pushing for full funding of a 7% compensation increase and a 10% Instruction & General (I&G) increase to help sustain the Lobo mission. We particularly want to thank our UNM Regents, Lobo alumni, retirees, and other supporters for their ongoing advocacy on various opportunities this session.

Emerging Opportunities

Much of UNM's success at the legislature hinges on our ability to be nimble and responsive to emergent opportunities, both favorable and unfavorable. UNM is proudly supporting a proposal to launch a School of Public Health to be housed at the University of New Mexico in partnership with New Mexico State University. UNM has long sought transformation of our College of Population Health into a high-impact, accredited School of Public Health. If the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taught the state one thing, it is that proactive investments in population health and public health initiatives are critical, particularly in regard to disease prevention, data collection, health equity, and pandemic preparedness.

Upcoming Legislative Activity

In the coming week, we expect to see the first release of House Bill 2 which will be reflective of the priorities of the House of Representatives, also incorporating a number of recommendations of the interim Legislative Finance Committee. When viewed through the lens of many of our higher education priorities, the Legislative Finance Committee is demonstrating strong support for many of our priority funding requests, and we thank them for their leadership in this regard. Where current funding recommendations are below the increases we originally requested, our Government Relations Team is working in concert with Senior Leadership and affected units on campus to make the case for additional taxpayer dollars, with much of our focus soon pivoting to the Senate's consideration of HB 2.

Stay Updated

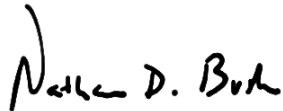
A comparison of initial legislative and executive-branch funding recommendations that kicked off the 2022 session may be found on the [Office of Government and Community Relations website](#). We are also providing daily updates to a [UNM Bill Tracker](#) that lists those bills of greatest interest to UNM, and we encourage you to follow along. Links to the state web page for each of these bills may be found in the tracker.

Lobos at the Roundhouse

In response to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, some of you have inquired "Is the legislature open this year?" and "Are we able to host a "UNM Day" at the capitol as in years past?" The short answer is yes and no. The recent wave of omicron-variant COVID-19 cases in the state has solidified the legislature's November decision to prohibit all large gatherings, performances, and Rotunda events at the Capitol. House committees are meeting virtually, and Senate committees are occurring as an in-person and remote hybrid endeavor. We urge you to remain safe and avoid unnecessary exposure. Travel to the Roundhouse should be limited to urgent needs and requires proof of full vaccination, photo ID, and new metal detector screenings to enter the building. The halls of the Roundhouse remain relatively vacant as the pandemic wears on. While it's not the experience we would like, we as Lobos need to do also our part and not convene our normal UNM Day as a responsible partner with the state in our joint efforts to stem the tide of the latest COVID-19 surge.

You may notice that our communications from the State Capitol this year will not be a daily affair. For this session, we are without the expert services of Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey who previously authored our team's daily updates from the Roundhouse for many years (we miss you, Susan!). Nonetheless, we aim to provide updates at critical junctures throughout the session to help keep you informed and provide opportunities for further engagement. In the meantime, please do follow along on the Government Relations team website. If you have questions about particular legislation, please don't hesitate to reach out to Nathan Bush at nathan12@unm.edu and Vanessa Garcia, Unit Administrator at vgkline@unm.edu.

With many thanks to all our Lobo supporters,



Nathan Bush
Interim Chief Government Relations Officer
University of New Mexico