



April 2025

FROM THE DESK OF THE **Vice President for Research**

Lobo Researchers,

As we find ourselves in the final stretch of this academic semester, let us take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've undertaken together. With just over a month remaining, we have demonstrated remarkable resilience, navigating through uncertainty with unwavering determination. Our commitment to our goals has not only kept us on track but has also illuminated the path toward a brighter future. As pioneering researchers, we are shaping the landscape of knowledge and innovation, and I am truly inspired by each of you.

Let me remind you of a common theme reiterated in last month's 2025 State of Research – UNM Lobos will be around for generations to come – as we continue to push forward with optimism and enthusiasm, celebrating our achievements and looking ahead to the possibilities that await us. I hope everyone makes it through the whirlwind that is April and finds some time to celebrate!

I'm excited to share with you the video that will live on UNM's main research page – showcasing the incredible work of our faculty, staff, and student researchers as they tackle the simple yet profound question, 'What is Research?' The insights shared in this video are not only inspiring but serve as a beautiful reminder of the vibrant, inquisitive spirit that defines our wonderful community of Lobos. It's a celebration of curiosity, collaboration, and innovation that highlights the remarkable contributions we all make in the pursuit of knowledge. Hope you love it as much as I do.



*Ellen Fisher, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research
Professor of Chemistry*

April Safety Spotlight

A recent Laboratory Safety Institute newsletter [article](#) highlighted a new-ish trend in STEM experiential learning classrooms (i.e., laboratories). Although inquiry-based learning is not really new, it has become required by many states as part of Next Generation Science Standards. In STEM laboratories, this means the relatively scripted lab exercises of the past are being replaced by more of a “name-your-own-adventure” approach to engage students. The upside of this shift in approach is that the classroom environment much more closely resembles that of the “real world” where scientists are not always sure of outcomes, have to formulate their own questions, design the appropriate experiments to test their questions and hypotheses, and engage in creative problem solving to address the inevitable obstacles that arise. Students have a much more authentic and engaging experience that potentially captures their imagination to the point where they continue to explore STEM career choices.

One potential downside to inquiry-based approaches lies in the possible risks associated with unknown safety issues and any accompanying liability. The article recommends incorporating safety into the guidelines for how students approach their inquiries. Not to limit the inquiry, but to ensure students have the tools they need to explore their ideas safely and with an understanding of why safety is important. This can be done very simply starting in elementary school, with increasing complexity and personal responsibility as students progress through middle and high school into college and beyond. Curriculum integration is a key principle behind building a culture of safety and was an important recommendation identified by last year’s safety culture assessment at UNM. Essentially, safety is a “foundational skill” required of all scientists, engineers, and creators. Moreover, it is an empowering tool that will allow our students to lead the next generation of creative innovators and explorers.

Research News

UNM ranks in top 100 Worldwide Universities Granted Utility Patents in 2024

UNM has ranked No. 93 on the [Top 100 Worldwide Universities](#) Granted Utility Patents in 2024, a list published by the National Academy of Inventors (NAI).

The Top 100 Worldwide Universities ranking highlights the critical role patents play in [translating university research and innovation](#), as well as the important role academic institutions play in the innovation ecosystem at large.

Summer 2025 Creative and Scholarly Research

The College of Fine Arts Creative and Scholarly Research summer program provides up to \$2,000 per faculty member for summer research and creative works, including residencies, investigative trips, participation in an exhibition or performance, or the purchase of equipment or supplies to carry out projects.

Only full-time, tenure-track or tenured faculty and lecturers from CFA can apply. Submissions are due this Friday, April 4. For more information and to apply, [click here](#).

Research Events

‘Old and Nu’ Conference

More than 500 university students, scientists, and job recruiters from around the country are expected to visit UNM at the end of this week to attend “Old and Nu,” the 2025 American Nuclear Society (ANS) Student Conference.

The conference, scheduled to take place April 3-5, has a packed schedule, including an extensive career fair, student podium, and poster presentations on nuclear engineering research, panels on topics ranging from nuclear policy to graduate school, tours, and more.

Research & Innovation Webinar Series

Join Associate Professor Steven Bradfute and Professor José Cerrato tomorrow Wednesday, April 2 from 1-2 p.m. for the ongoing Research & Innovation Webinar Series.

The series is held on the first Wednesday of the month bringing together research organizations from across New Mexico to share and explore groundbreaking research happening within the state. Participating institutions include:

- UNM Main Campus and Health Sciences
- New Mexico State University
- New Mexico Tech
- Sandia National Laboratories
- Los Alamos National Laboratories

[Zoom Link](#) | Passcode: Innovation

2025 Innovation Awards

On Tuesday, April 29, UNM will proudly honor the remarkable achievements of its faculty, staff, and students who have secured patents or registered trademarks over the past year.

This celebration stands out as one of my favorite events at UNM, as it not only showcases the incredible creativity within our community but also highlights the fruitful collaboration between various departments and the research and clinical inventors from both main and health sciences campuses. It is the spirit of innovation that thrives at UNM, inspiring all of us to continue pushing the boundaries of knowledge and creativity in our respective fields.

Research Celebrations

2025 State of Research

Last month, we celebrated the fourth annual UNM State of Research with more than 220 Lobos from across both main and HSC campuses. The event was truly a testament to the vibrant spirit of collaboration within our research community. Thank you, Lobo faculty, staff, and students who attended in person and virtually.

I was recently reminded by Linnea Ista (shout out to the ORIC team) that UNM Professor Richard Antoine White had written a memoir a few years back. I hunted down a copy of *I'm Possible. A Story of Survival, A Tuba, and the Small Miracle of a Big Dream*. It's this month's Research Reads and it could not be more timely. White recalls a tough upbringing in Baltimore, his developing passion for the tuba, and his deep affection for all those who helped him along his journey.

His path to becoming the first African American to receive a Doctor of Music in tuba performance and his current positions as principle tubist of the Santa Fe Symphony, and of the New Mexico Philharmonic, and professor of tuba/euphonium at UNM was anything but easy. Within the pages of his memoir, there are numerous messages of hope and resilience – messages that have enhanced meaning in our current time of uncertainty in higher education. White's four pillars of hope are likely to become my new mantra: "H for holding on; O for being an opportunist, being ready to take advantage of any opportunity when one presents itself; P for persistence; E for excellence". His powerful message (that you can also hear in our What is Research video) sings from the pages of *I'm Possible* – we can make the impossible possible.