



Lobo Researchers,

We are already off to a bustling semester, and we have a few celebrations this month that I want to make sure we take the time to recognize. National Research Administrator Day is Sept. 25, and National Postdoc Appreciation Week is Sept. 21-25. These two groups on campus are vital to the UNM research enterprise.

Research administrators often work behind the scenes to help move research forward. From proposal development and grant management to compliance and budgeting, their expertise and dedication support Lobos at every stage of the research process. Their efforts help ensure our projects remain successful, compliant, and aligned with our passions. Now is a perfect opportunity to nominate one or more research administrators for the [University's Outstanding Research Staff Award](#).

Our postdoctoral scholars bring new ideas, specialized expertise, and a strong commitment to discovery that advances research across disciplines and for so many New Mexicans. In addition to their scholarly and scientific contributions, many serve as mentors, collaborators, and role models for students and early-career researchers.

I encourage you to take a moment this month to thank the research administrators and postdocs you work with. A note of appreciation, a conversation, or a simple acknowledgment of their contributions can go a long way.

Ellen R. Fisher
UNM Vice President for Research
Professor of Chemistry

Safety Spotlight & Compliance Corner

This month we're chatting with Assistant Professor Georgios Koutsakis from UNM's Department of Mechanical Engineering. Koutsakis worked with UNM's Environmental Health & Safety to install a rotating detonating engine test bed. This highly hazardous project required finding an appropriate location outside central campus, a hazard analysis, and full fire code review.

I believe safety is built into how we operate, not added as an afterthought.

Every student completes safety training before entering the lab and helps develop our process hazard analysis and standard operating procedures. I believe everyone should *understand* why each control exists, not just follow the rules. Testing on our rotating detonation engine testbed follows written procedures with pre-test checklists, remote operation, and automated interlocks.

We work with detonations, high-pressure gases, and extreme temperatures, so our discipline must match the hazards. I've found that safety rigor and research rigor are the same habit: a carefully reviewed, repeatable test process that protects people and produces better data. The reviews with EHS and the fire code process genuinely strengthened our facility and helped make this kind of experimental work possible at UNM.

Research Events

UNM AI Launch

The UNM AI launch event is happening this week, **Thursday, Sept. 3.**

The event, hosted by the UNM [AI Steering Committee](#), will be **11 a.m. to 4 p.m.** in the Student Union Building ballrooms. This event is open to students, faculty, and staff with an interest in the future of AI at UNM and those who wish to learn more about or influence the standards, policy, and guiding ethical principles around the University's use of AI. Stay tuned for more at ai.unm.edu.

The committee is also inviting faculty to share impressions, opinions, sentiments, and experiences regarding AI and Generative AI tools by participating in a [quick survey](#). Thank you for helping shape the future of AI at UNM.

SHRI Research Fiestas

Help us celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute (SHRI) and learn more about the research happening throughout our communities for the inaugural SHRI Fall Fiestas.

The fiestas will be celebrated Friday, Oct. 2. Stay tuned for event details.

Save the Date: 2026 Research and Discovery Week

This year, R&D Week will kick off Nov. 2. Events will take place in the Student Union Building and other spaces around campus. The week is open to everyone including undergraduates, graduates, postdocs, faculty, and staff. We are currently [accepting proposals](#) for speakers, workshops, and Hands ON My Research tables.

Proposals are due by Sept. 15.

Research News

State of New Mexico, UNM partner to strengthen quantum ecosystem

New Mexico is investing \$3 million in The University of New Mexico's Quantum New Mexico Institute (QNM-I) to strengthen the state's quantum workforce and accelerate research and commercialization.

Economic Development New Mexico and QNM-I recently signed an Intergovernmental Agreement aiming to build on the institute's research excellence, attract top talent, and grow New Mexico's position as a national leader in quantum innovation.

The investment will support three key priorities:

- Research capacity: Increase support for university-based quantum research.
- Workforce development: Expand quantum education and outreach programs.
- Commercialization: Help move quantum discoveries from the lab to the marketplace through a host of university-industry partnerships and programs.

The agreement is part of New Mexico's broader strategy to invest more than \$450 million in building a world-leading quantum ecosystem spanning research, workforce development, infrastructure, and commercialization.

CHTM Internal Funding

We are pleased to announce the first recipients of an internal funding opportunity within the Center for High Technology Materials (CHTM), Victor Acosta and Gunny Balakrishnan. The multidisciplinary team-building program aims to increase collaboration and synergy among CHTM faculty, engage external partners, and lay the groundwork for future collaborative grants.

The two proposals selected include:

- Professor Acosta's proposal focuses on creation and characterization of spin polarized materials that play a central role in a range of applications in emerging photonic and magnetic technologies, including quantum sensing and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).
- Professor Balakrishnan's proposal centers on refractory high-entropy alloys designed for high-temperature, radiation-intensive, and chemically aggressive environments as important components in microelectronic and quantum-device platforms.

Congratulations to these two teams and we look forward to adding additional multidisciplinary CHTM teams soon.

OSP Proposal Review Expectations

UNM's Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) is reminding researchers about [proposal review appointment expectations](#).

All sponsored project proposals submitted on behalf of UNM Central and Branch campuses must be reviewed by OSP prior to the sponsor-imposed submission deadline to ensure compliance with federal regulations, University policies, and sponsor requirements. To support timely and successful proposal submissions, OSP expectations of PIs include:

- Scheduling reviews early
- Being prepared for review appointments
- Completing all required trainings
- Being ready to submit

Failure to comply with these expectations may result in a proposal review appointment being rescheduled. Depending on appointment availability, a rescheduled review may prevent submission by the sponsor deadline. OSP is currently organized by departmental assignments. [Find your OSP contact](#) by either department name (as written in Banner) or by departmental org code.

Grand Challenges

The UNM Grand Challenges Program seeks nominations for individuals interested in serving on the GC Steering Committee. The program's steering committee makes recommendations and provides feedback on current and future grand challenges. If you are interested or know someone who would make a great addition to the committee, please [nominate them](#). The deadline for nominations is Friday, Sept. 18.

We have 4 open positions:

- 1 seat: undergraduate or graduate student (1-year term)
- 1 seat: community member (including but not limited to alumni or affiliates)
- 1 seat: HSC faculty member
- 1 seat: open to faculty from any UNM campus, staff, or a community member

The next term begins in October. The student member term is one year; all other member terms are three years.

Stay tuned for more information regarding Grand Challenges Day set for Oct. 2.

For more information email grandchallenges@unm.edu.

Zancada Graduate Fellowship

We're currently accepting proposals for the 2026-2027 cohort of [Zancada Graduate Fellows](#). Applications are due Tuesday, Sept. 8.

[The fellowship](#) helps provide valuable mentorship, training, networking, and career development opportunities. Each fellow will receive \$2,500 in scholarship funds. Fellows will also be eligible to apply for up to \$1,000 in travel support to participate in a professional conference or training program during the fellowship.

Outstanding Staff Awards

We are also accepting nominations for the [2026 Outstanding Research Staff Awards](#). Nominations are due Wednesday, Sept. 30.

We recognize that the expertise, dedication, and professionalism of our diverse research support staff contribute essentially to the success of UNM's research mission.

ASA Meeting in Albuquerque

Researchers, scientists, state leaders, and other space enthusiasts gathered in Albuquerque last month for the 34th Aerospace States Association (ASA) Annual Meeting and 7th State Aerospace Policy Summit.

UNM space expertise was on full display throughout the week that included panel discussions, networking events, and laboratory tours across the state. I'm so proud of the Lobo researchers who are contributing and innovating in this field.

Huron Research Suite Update

The Huron Employee Compensation and Compliance (ECC) system is now available for pre-review and certification of the January-June 2026 effort certification statements. If information on your statement is not accurate, please click the reset button (refresh) on the left-hand side of the screen.

If your statement remains incorrect after refreshing, please contact your core office:

- Central Campus: maineffortrptng@unm.edu
- Health Science Center: HSC-Effort-Reporting@salud.unm.edu

Due to the recent system delay, Contract & Grant Accounting Offices are extending the certification deadline to Oct. 10, prior to the start of the quarterly July-September 2026 effort certification. Pre-reviewers should finalize their review by Sept. 10.

The Huron COI and Grants & Agreements implementation teams continue to work on implementing their respective modules. Keep an eye out for future updates regarding go live dates and training opportunities.

Research Radiates

This month, I'm highlighting UNM Assistant Professor Johannes Barfield who creates and inspires out of Honors College. Barfield is a visual and sound artist whose interdisciplinary practice spans installation, video, photography, sculpture, spatial audio, music, and speculative storytelling. His work explores memory, wonder, and imagined futures through narratives that unfold across multiple mediums, including his current science fiction project, *Pilot Coaltrain*, which spans graphic novel, sound, sculpture, and installation. I've been intrigued to learn about his research, and I hope you are too!

I create stories and immersive experiences using sound, music, images, sculpture, and technology. My work brings these different forms together to explore history, memory, place, and the ways people make meaning from the world around them.

My research would do, not what they do. I wanted to flip that rhetoric and gather real data about how people behave and use that to reshape transportation in ways that improve their lives and health. That's been my mission ever since.

Here in New Mexico, rural communities and non-motorized cyclists often have no voice in the planning rooms where transportation decisions get made. I aim for my work to provide human-centered data, real evidence about behavior, infrastructure needs, and health outcomes so they can advocate for solutions that work for them. Beyond New Mexico, this approach reminds transportation planners everywhere that you can't separate how people move from community health. That's when

transportation solutions work, when they're grounded in how people really behave and what communities need.