

*April 2026*

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

Lobos,

Is it just me or does every semester seem to fly by faster than the one before? Last month, I had more than a few speaking engagements and I'd like to share a little from two of those events.

I had the privilege of kicking off the fourth annual Postdoc Association Symposium and I stood in front of a room with nearly 50 postdocs from around the state. I shared with them something I think all researchers need to remember every time things simply are not going right in our world of innovation and discovery, and that is that research is hard. Perhaps more importantly, for trainees at any stage, it's important to remember you belong here, your work matters, and your contributions matter. You are changing the future of New Mexico and because of that your future is full of possibility.

The second event was the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE) meeting. Leaders from R1 and R2 institutions across 15 western states and 6 U.S. Pacific territories gather for this meeting. UNM continues to play an important role as a convening hub for events like this, fostering collaboration and connection.

Assistant VPR Melissa Emery Thompson and I gave an interactive presentation on UNM's WeR1 Faculty Success program. We described the impact our collaborative program has had over the last 5 years. Putting together the metrics showed us that this multi-faceted program has impacted nearly 400 faculty with a total investment of nearly \$5 million. We continue to be open to new ideas for the next WeR1 program, and we continue to be grateful for our partners, including UNM Advance, Academic Affairs, and the Faculty Research Development Office (FRDO). Look for our latest collaborative program, SPARK, to be announced soon.



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

# Safety Spotlight & Compliance Corner

Often in this feature space, we focus on safety within the realm of STEM research. This month, we're going to focus on safety in the arts. New Mexico is known for its artists and here at UNM, we seek to foster young artists who will add to the rich history of the desert southwest.

Working in the visual arts, however, can pose significant risks to the health and safety of artists. It turns out, some of the most common concerns for artists are the same as those for researchers in the STEM disciplines, including hazardous chemicals, compressed gases, electrical hazards, and machines (e.g., mills and lathes). One thing you might not know is that most of the "waste" from artistic endeavors (e.g., paper, rags, and other pigment and solvent-contaminated debris, paint thinners) is considered hazardous waste by the EPA and must be disposed of following the [proper disposal procedures](#). As for anyone who works with chemicals, artists should be sure to understand what materials are being used (e.g., acids, oils, solvents) and obtain copies of the material safety data sheets for all products employed. They should also seek to minimize the use of toxins, wear appropriate PPE, and work in spaces with good ventilation. UNM's chemical safety committee, which has long had representation from our College of Fine Arts, is a great place to start for additional information on the potential hazards associated with creating great art!

## Research News

### 2026 State of Research Cancellation

This year, we made the tough decision to cancel our annual State of Research, that was originally scheduled for the end of last month. We know many of you, as we do, look forward to this event, and we sincerely apologize for the disappointment and disruption this may have caused.

I will, however, be an upcoming guest on The University's podcast, It's (Probably) Not Rocket Science, where we will discuss everything from having to cancel the State of Research to the ups-and-downs of last year's federal funding changes and so much more. I hope you will give it a listen.

If you have any questions concerning the cancellation of the 2026 State of Research, feel free to reach out to [vpr@unm.edu](mailto:vpr@unm.edu). We would love to hear from you, especially as the UNM Office of the Vice President for Research is looking for opportunities to refresh and update our research strategic plan for the next five years.

### GROWL

Last month, many Lobo researchers resubmitted funding proposals after completing UNM's WeR1 Grant Revision for Outstanding Wins to Level-up (GROWL) pilot program. Faculty who participated in GROWL work alongside our Faculty Research Development Office on the resubmission of grant proposals to increase extramural funding success rates.

Through a series of workshops, GROWL strengthens participants' grant revision skills and understanding of the changing funding landscape and provides strategies for finding alternative funding sources when necessary.

Have you had a grant declined or a program terminated? Are you interested in participating in GROWL? The application portal for the Fall 2026 cohort is open now through May 4. For more information on GROWL or other research-focused programs, contact FRDO ([frdo@unm.edu](mailto:frdo@unm.edu)).

### SCCORE Mentors

UNM's ARID Institute is in need of mentors for this year's **Summer Community College Opportunity Research Experience (SCCORE)** which brings community college students to R1 universities for an 8-week hands-on research experience during the summer.

The program runs May 26 through July 17. The student is paired with a research mentor to work directly with them in their lab/in the field for half the time. The other half of the time, the student is in cohort programming, which includes lab tours, field experiences, field trips, and workshops/trainings.

Email ARID Sr. Program Manager Debbie Lee ([debbieylee@unm.edu](mailto:debbieylee@unm.edu)) if interested.

## Research Events

### Annual Research Lectureship Awardee

Please join us for the Annual Research Lecture (ARL) with longtime UNM Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Edl Schamiloglu. This year's ARL is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22 at 4 p.m., in the Larrañaga Engineering Auditorium.

With more than three decades of dedication to the Lobo community, Schamiloglu's contributions to the field include co-authoring more than 170 journal papers and serving as a PI on more than \$50M in contracts and grants at UNM. His commitment to excellence truly exemplifies the spirit of UNM research innovation and scholarship.

## Research Technology

### iLabs

UNM is officially transitioning to iLab Core Facility Management Software, an online system designed to simplify how you request services, reserve equipment, and manage billing across our campus core research facilities.

This initiative represents a continued partnership between Central Campus and UNM's Health Sciences Center (HSC). The path to this launch was paved by the success of our WeR1 pilot program, Scholarly Advancement Via Enterprise Research Software (SAVERS) that supports acquisition of shared enterprise software licenses.

Last month, iLab went live with multiple cores from both HSC and Central Campus. The platform is integrated with Banner and utilizes single sign-on (SSO), allowing researchers to [register seamlessly](#) using UNM credentials.

The following central core facilities currently utilize iLab:

1) Molecular Biology Core (MBC)

- 2) Center for Stable Isotopes (CSI)
- 3) Center for Advancement of Spatial Informatics Research & Education (ASPIRE-Lab)
- 4) PAIS Multiscale Microscopy Center (PAIS-MMC)
- 5) Center for Micro-Engineered Materials (CMEM)
- 6) Center for Advanced Research Computing (CARC)
- 7) Nanomaterials Characterization Facility - Micro CT Lab

We look forward to seeing how this streamlined access helps accelerate your discoveries, while fostering greater collaboration across our campuses.

### Huron Suite Update

Last month, we went live with the Huron Employee Compensation and Compliance (ECC) module that's replacing our current Banner Effort Certification process.

In the first 24 hours, we had 125 projects go through the pre-review process and in the first week 197 projects were pre-reviewed and 70 certified. Thanks to all the pre-reviewers and faculty certifiers who have embraced this change.

We continue to host "certifier" and "pre-reviewer" training sessions. Please continue to read our weekly updates and visit our Huron webpage that has an up-to-date ECC training schedule, training videos, and other resources.

For questions, please contact:

- Central/Branch Campuses: [maineffortrptng@unm.edu](mailto:maineffortrptng@unm.edu)
- HSC: [HSC-Effort-Reporting@salud.unm.edu](mailto:HSC-Effort-Reporting@salud.unm.edu)

## Research Resources

### VentureWell

Lobos, this month we're talking about VentureWell, previously the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance. The nonprofit organization funds and trains **faculty and student innovators and entrepreneurs** who want to address important problems in the world through new technology-based ventures. VentureWell works to create experiential learning opportunities for students and to catalyze student-led ventures that create **positive social and environmental impact**.

The organization offers [course and program grants](#) to promote socially-conscious student entrepreneurship. Log into your VentureWell account [here](#), get established in VentureWell [here](#), and sign up for email updates [here](#).

## Research Radiates

This month we are talking with UNM Assistant Professor and Research and Data Services Librarian Margo Gustina. Margo is fundamentally a curious person, which leads her to ask amazing questions. Another quality I deeply admire about Margo is the distinct pride she displays in being part of a library, a place where I have spent countless hours. I come from a military family, so we moved around a lot when I was a kid. Every time we moved, one of the first things we did was find the public library in our new neighborhood. It was one of the ways we knew we now belonged to the new place we were living. To me, libraries represent comfort and stability as well as being grounded in a place – even if that place has not previously been part of your history. Libraries feel like home.

---

Lobos, my name is Margo Gustina and I'm a librarian at The University of New Mexico. What's great about libraries is that I can walk up to almost anyone and ask them, "What is your earliest memory of a library?" and they have one! Even if it's about getting kicked out of one as a teenager, a library is a familiar and unique place.

I study the ways in which these familiar places support people in making their own life better, while buffering communities from harm. I became interested in formalized nationwide research when I attended a meeting where **how** we defined a public library meant some places would continue to receive state funding, while others would not. The two prevailing opinions in the room included 1) a library isn't a library if the director doesn't have a degree in library science and 2) a town is **always** better with a local library. It irritated me that there wasn't a body of evidence we could use to affirm either view, only a lot of hot air from hot heads.

I chose to come to UNM to pursue a doctorate in economics because I saw the ways in which research is actively used in changing and creating public policy that impacts all our lives. My current research uses the skills gained in that program to show the ways in which libraries are valuable, while modeling how they can be strategically employed to reduce harm from climate driven disasters. I've also had the privilege of working with public libraries across New Mexico to gather insights, build resources, and implement tools built by rural and tribal librarians in the hopes of increasing library capacity to improve community level outcomes.