



Department of Special Education  
College of Education  
MSC05 3045  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

November 18, 2022

Dear Provost Holloway:

I am pleased to submit my letter of interest for the position of Interim Dean of UNM's College of Education and Human Sciences. I have attached my CV to this communication.

In terms of priorities for my possible leadership of the college, I suggest the following four overall themes: 1) effectively managing change, 2) shaping a strong academic environment that assures our college will meet its critical societal mandate and also attract an excellent future permanent dean, 3) building and strengthening positive relationships with and among students, faculty, staff, UNM community, alumni, NM Public Education Department, and NM communities and schools, and 4) aligning the college's efforts with UNM 2040 and NM's economic development plan.

In my opinion, a first step in managing change will be to develop and communicate a COEHS vision for moving forward. Part of this effort will be to acknowledge that some changes are ongoing and currently underway in the college (and the wider context), some changes will need to be planned and implemented, and some past changes will need to be continuously monitored for quality and improvement. A first step in shaping a strong academic environment will be to work with the faculty and the state to support ongoing curricular planning and effective delivery. And regarding building positive relationships (and sometimes attempting to heal disrupted relationships), I can pledge to engage in deep attention, listening, and responsiveness.

Although I believe that finalizing more specific priorities should occur only after further discussions with you, and with faculty, staff, students, and communities, I tentatively offer the following priorities for the immediate future to be led by the Interim Dean:

- 1) Establish and communicate a vision and plan for moving forward within the COEHS, consistent with UNM 2040 and two critical state mandates: the *Martinez and Yazzie v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit and the 2021 NM economic development plan.
- 2) Assure that staff and college resources are aligned with the vision and plan.
- 3) Address faculty morale, including the recruitment and retention of our excellent faculty, continuous support for faculty teaching and scholarship, and support for the ongoing faculty searches.

- 4) Address, plan for, and communicate regarding improved student recruitment and student progress toward completion.
- 5) Help heal relationships with communities, alumni, and supporters, and develop new supportive relationships.
- 6) Review and manage the college's finances and budget to assure that funds match priorities.
- 7) Establish a clear vision, systematic communication, a plan, and agreements for moving forward externally and assuring a healthy partnership with the Public Education Department regarding UNM's contributions to teacher preparation in New Mexico, and the ways we might be able to partner more effectively with schools across the state.

In my professional leadership, I am guided by Michael Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001). Fullan's framework for leadership includes the components of: 1) moral purpose, 2) understanding change, 3) relationship building, 4) knowledge creation and sharing, and 5) coherence making. These components are surrounded by enthusiasm, energy, and hope! This should lead to commitment by internal and external constituents and result in "more good things" happening (p. 4). I have found Fullan's leadership framework to be very helpful during my 18 years as the chair of UNM's Department of Special Education as well as in other aspects of my decades of leadership experience including, for example, serving as president of a national organization, as chair and member of national boards of directors, and leading the creation of cutting edge national and international positions.

As a department chair, I worked diligently to be an effective, highly communicative leader for the good of the organization. I recruited and supported faculty in their collaborative work of achieving strong teaching and scholarship, instituted predictable and efficient processes for the essential management tasks of the department, recruited competent hardworking staff to assist in the implementation of our goals, collaborated with colleagues across the college for the good of the college, established relationships with constituents, actively participated in raising over \$2 million in new endowments and scholarships, guided the unit toward a coherent social justice vision of education for ALL, and helped resolve problems raised by faculty, students, and community members that emerged during our work.

In addition, my years as a department chair gave me the opportunity to work on behalf of the college as a whole. I was able to collaborate effectively across departments, spanning teacher education programs, other professional preparation programs, and critical health sciences programs. My years of Leadership Team collaboration allowed me to develop a deep understanding of the needs and priorities across the college, gain greater perspective about the faculty strengths and unique contributions of each department, and join forces with other college leaders to be an advocate for the good of the entire college.

I am grateful for my career at UNM, and the tremendous support I have received over the years from leaders and colleagues. I would be honored to be considered for the role of Interim Dean, to have the opportunity to serve the university and my colleagues in a different way. I believe that my past experiences demonstrate my commitment to helping create a better world

and show some success toward that end. I want to add that I am especially humbled by the trust and support of UNM colleagues who encouraged me to consider the role of Interim Dean, and by my state and national colleagues who are familiar with my leadership skills.

We all share the goal of a healthy, visionary, vital College of Education and Human Sciences at UNM. The sharing of that goal by so many is a strong place to begin the collaborative work for the next stage of COEHS. I look forward to further discussion about these important matters.

Sincerely,

*Ruth Luckasson*

Ruth Luckasson, J.D.  
Distinguished Professor