



## Opportunity and Challenge Profile

*Search for the Vice President for Student Affairs*

*University of New Mexico*

*Albuquerque, New Mexico*

The University of New Mexico (UNM), the state's flagship institution, seeks a strategic and collaborative leader to serve as the next Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). The VPSA will be joining the university at a pivotal time to have a transformational impact on UNM students across their multiple campuses while also assisting the leadership team in fulfilling UNM's many aspirations as they embark on a new strategic plan. As UNM has one of the most diverse student bodies of any flagship university in the nation, and is one of only a handful of Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the U.S. that has a Carnegie Classification of Highest Research Activity ("R1"), it aspires to be a model for how a university can fulfill its missions of academic excellence, research, student success, and access given the changing demographics of the U.S. The successful candidate for this position will be experienced in student affairs and show demonstrated success in supporting and retaining a diverse student body by ensuring a welcoming and robust student life experience.

UNM provides education to approximately 25,000 enrolled students, more than 80% of whom are New Mexico residents. The university also includes a Health Sciences Center with an enrollment of over 3,000 students, branch campuses that enroll over 3,800 students in Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos, and Valencia, technology incubators, and multiple education, clinical, and research sites throughout the state. The student population reflects the ethnically diverse population of New Mexico and includes historically underrepresented groups, including a Hispanic student population of over 40%, some of whom are descendants of Spanish colonists with deep roots in the region while others are recent immigrants from a variety of Latin American nations, Native American students from the state's many indigenous tribes, and other underrepresented minority backgrounds. It is a point of pride that the university is composed of a cross-section of cultures and backgrounds. UNM has a decades-long commitment to the state's residents, maintaining low tuition and providing significant scholarship and financial aid to about 80% of undergraduate students and 70% of graduate students, with more than 7,800 UNM students receiving nearly \$33.5 million in Pell Grants in the 2020-2021 school year. The University also has a significant impact on the state, serving as one of the state's largest employers, the largest producer of skilled labor, and operating the state's largest healthcare system. About 58% of UNM alumni remain in the state and provide valuable contributions to the state's intellectual life, economy, cultural community, legal and educational systems, healthcare industry, and every other aspect of life in New Mexico.

UNM seeks a collaborative, forward-thinking, and strategic VPSA who can work effectively across the complex university to provide more seamless support for all students while celebrating their unique life experiences and paths to UNM. The VPSA will have the assistance of the entire university community in these efforts, as the VPSA will be joining an environment with an unwavering passion for student access and success, a record of growth and innovation, incredibly dedicated faculty and staff, and the ultimate goal of significantly impacting the State of New Mexico and beyond by promoting academic excellence and ensuring an educated workforce. The next VPSA will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

- Develop a new vision and strategy for the success and wellbeing of a diverse student body
- Build stronger partnerships with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management to ensure a transformational and inclusive student experience for all students
- Serve as a highly visible advocate and champion for all students
- Inspire a team of passionate student affairs professionals
- Creatively augment and steward financial resources

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the VPSA can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to provide background information and detail the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

### **About the University of New Mexico**

Founded by an act of the New Mexico Territorial Legislature in 1889, UNM opened in June 1892, twenty years before its namesake would become a state. UNM now offers over 215 degree and certificate programs, including approximately 94 baccalaureate, 71 masters, and 37 doctoral degrees through the College of Education and Human Sciences, Anderson School of Management, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Fine Arts, Graduate Studies, Honors College, College of Nursing, College of Pharmacy, College of Population Health, College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences, School of Architecture and Planning, School of Engineering, School of Law, School of Medicine, and University College.

UNM's four branch two-year college campuses, in Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos, and Valencia County, offer community access and regionally-specific education. UNM-Gallup is a minority-majority campus, with 94% of students identifying as multiethnic or a racial minority; the Taos campus is one of the newest and smallest of the UNM branches, with a focus on the arts and natural resource management; the Los Alamos campus collaborates with the Los Alamos National Laboratory; and the Valencia campus is in a growing area south of Albuquerque. Each of the branch campuses is overseen by a Chancellor and has an elected Advisory Board from their communities. Branch campuses are funded separately by the State of New Mexico and receive local mill levy funding from their communities. Student affairs at these campuses is managed locally by each campus but calls on the main campus student affairs for support and services. In New Mexico, per state statute, branch campuses offer only lower-division courses. Historically, UNM's Albuquerque campus has also offered upper-division and graduate-level classes in areas such as teacher education and nursing on the branch campuses. Some branch campus transfers move physically to the Albuquerque campus, but many who go on to four-year programs either complete their degrees locally or online.

UNM also delivers bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree programs via UNM Online programming. UNM Online facilitates distance education with a range of delivery modes, from traditional on-line courses and curricula to the creation of wholly online degree programs.

Students on the Albuquerque campus can participate in over 300 campus organizations to gain the essential skills that enhance the academic mission and provide opportunities for leadership, engagement, development, and future employment opportunities. The campus provides a culturally rich and rewarding atmosphere for students, staff, faculty, and the general public, through multiple campus museums and art installations that highlight New Mexico's cultural diversity and presenting Broadway shows, dance

companies, and other national acts at the renowned Popejoy Hall performing arts center. UNM athletics, home to the Lobos, is a major attraction for students, alumni, and the broader community, drawing fans from all over the state. All teams compete at the NCAA Division I level in the Mountain West Conference.

### **Current Context**

UNM returned to in-person instruction for the Fall 2021 semester after a year of largely remote learning and they are feeling the absence of the long-time Vice President for Student Affairs, Eliseo “Cheo” Torres, who retired in August 2021 after serving UNM for 25 years. Torres was a beloved member of the UNM community and a highly regarded figure in the Albuquerque and the broader New Mexico community. While the UNM community will miss Torres, they look forward to welcoming a new VPSA and are optimistic as they embark on a new strategic plan and have a renewed sense of energy and enthusiasm for the future. The new VPSA will join a committed UNM community who are poised for an even greater impact on the student experience.

In Fall 2020, the UNM President and EVP/Provost began the process of developing a new Strategic Plan, *UNM-2040: Opportunity Defined*, to look toward the future. The *UNM-2040* process launched in Spring 2021, with a plan expected to be released in early 2022. More information about the plan is available at the following site: <https://opportunity.unm.edu/>. The university recently completed their UNM 2020 Strategic Plan, where they achieved some remarkable things – record high graduation rates, increased third semester retention rates, better prepared freshman classes, record-breaking fundraising, and many new academic endeavors. The final report is available at <http://strategy.unm.edu/>.

As the university embarks on many new ambitions, the UNM community will be looking to the VPSA to ensure the Student Affairs infrastructure and collaborations needed to help fulfill those goals. The Division of Student Affairs has evolved over many years, with the addition of many services to respond to new student wants and needs. Student Affairs staff, and the university community, are eager for a fresh perspective on organizing their units to proactively, efficiently, and more seamlessly respond to student needs while fostering deeper partnerships with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management on student success efforts. The VPSA will not be starting from scratch upon arrival. The EVP/Provost has launched an internal Reimagining Student Affairs project to evaluate the current organizational structure and provide recommendations to the new VPSA. While the university awaits the selection of the VPSA, the Dean of Students is reporting to the EVP/Provost to ensure smooth support of student wellness during COVID. The Dean of Students reporting line will return to the VPSA’s portfolio with the new VPSA. The current organizational chart is available at <http://studentaffairs.unm.edu/who-we-are/org-chart-21-22.pdf>.

Though UNM has experienced enrollment decline over the last five years, there has been recent stabilization and upturn, with two years of over 7% annual growth in new first year student classes and over 19% growth in new graduate students at the Albuquerque campus, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. Retention rates have also been improving. UNM currently has a six-year graduation rate of 51%, a four-year graduation rate of 35%, and, during COVID a retention rate of 65% from freshman to sophomore year. There is still work to be done to increase these numbers as a function of the high level of access afforded by UNM admission standards. There is especially a need to build out services for transfer and commuter students, working adults, and students with families, as Student Affairs services have primarily focused on supporting traditionally-aged, full-time students, though there are exceptions.

UNM has a decades-long deep and abiding commitment to make education accessible and affordable to both the state’s urban and rural residents. The university maintains relatively low tuition and provides

significant scholarships and financial aid. UNM is one of the top three universities in the country for accepting dual credit from high school students. Extending the reach of UNM across the state and ensuring access to education will continue to be priorities for the university. This includes the many opportunities for working more closely with the branch campuses for mutual benefit by assisting in each other's student success strategies, including ensuring a more seamless transfer process to the Albuquerque campus.

Similar to many universities across the country, though much more pronounced at UNM compared to other R1 institutions given its high level of accessibility, UNM students are facing housing, food, and basic needs insecurities. These concerns are especially pronounced in student communities of color, with Native American, Black, and Hispanic students disproportionately impacted. Addressing these needs requires a new and different level of professional attention compared with the traditional student success model, and the UNM community will be looking to the VPSA for strategic direction. As the university aspires to address student success from multiple vantage points to fulfill the needs of a highly diverse student body, the VPSA will help determine concerted responses from all members of the UNM community to ensure all students are properly supported in the pursuit of their educational goals.

### **Role of the Vice President for Student Affairs**

Reporting to the EVP/Provost, and serving on the Provost's Leadership team, the VPSA will provide a vision and strategy for the Division of Student Affairs in support of the mission and goals of the university. Serving also as a member of the President's Executive cabinet, the VPSA will be a highly visible, accessible, and approachable member of the university leadership team who will be the university's leading voice on matters related to students. The VPSA will be regarded as a trusted and impactful leader who builds collaborative relationships across the university to proactively engage all students to ensure their physical, mental, and social well-being, and will work across the university to advance the holistic and transformational development of students from pre-recruitment through graduation and beyond. This includes ensuring programming and initiatives are effective in supporting university-wide student success efforts and setting and implementing strategy for Student Affairs and the university in the promotion of student development, learning, and a sense of belonging. The VPSA will assist in the development of university policy and participate in ongoing institutional planning, program review and management, and assessment efforts. As Residence Life & Student Housing reports through the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, the VPSA must ensure a close partnership between Student Affairs units and Residence Life in order to fulfill divisional strategic goals and objectives. The VPSA will be expected to bring a thorough knowledge of best practices in student affairs and adapt these models to find what works best at UNM in order to best respond and prepare for the ever-changing needs of its highly diverse student body.

Units reporting to the VPSA include the Dean of Students Office, the Student Union Building, the UNM Children's Campus, the Accessibility Resource Center, Career Services, the College Enrichment and Outreach Program, the Community Engagement Center, Recreational Services, Student Affairs Assessment, Student Publications, the Women's Resource Center, the Veterans and Military Resource Center, and each of the ethnic centers – African American Student Services, American Indian Student Services and El Centro de la Raza. Currently within the Dean of Students portfolio are the Student Activities Center, Greek Life, Student Rights & Responsibilities, Parent and Family Programs, the National Student Exchange, the Center for Financial Capability, and the LoboRESPECT advocacy center. The future placement of the Mentoring Institute (which provides mostly faculty development work), ROTC units (which are academic programs), as well as the relationship of the Student Health and Counseling center

relative to the UNM Hospital, are currently under review. More information about the Division of Student Affairs is available at <https://studentaffairs.unm.edu/>.

The VPSA manages an annual operating budget of \$32.8 million, which includes \$12.1 million from student fees, \$7 million from state funding, and \$5.4 million in grant funding and other sources. The VPSA oversees 341 full and part-time staff and 413 student employees.

### **Key Opportunities and Challenges for the VPSA**

It is a new era at UNM with many strategic planning efforts underway, and the next VPSA will arrive at a time of tremendous opportunity to have a transformational impact on UNM students, and the State of New Mexico, by building on existing institutional momentum to support the success of an exceedingly diverse university. The VPSA will be a critical member of a university leadership team who is deeply committed to impacting student success through the co-curricular experience to ensure students are ready to contribute to the world and the workforce. The VPSA will need to be committed to inclusion, diversity, and equity efforts so that all students feel welcome and supported. The VPSA will need to understand the lived experiences of all UNM students to address several opportunities and challenges, including:

#### ***Develop a new vision and strategy for the success and wellbeing of a diverse student body***

As UNM embarks on its new strategic plan, the VPSA will be integral to the discussion on how the university will proactively achieve its goals for student success while enhancing the student experience for all students. The VPSA will bring visionary leadership to augment the holistic development and co-curricular experience of students and work closely with university leadership and the Student Affairs team to determine common vision, direction, and priorities to best provide a vibrant and supportive university experience for all. The VPSA will be encouraged to try new and innovative ideas to position UNM as a model for other universities on how to support a highly diverse student population at a top-tier research university. While Student Affairs has a major focus on the undergraduate population, it will be important for the VPSA to work across the university to keep a pulse on all student needs and the services necessary to support and retain the UNM's broad spectrum of student populations, including the branch campuses, online programs, and graduate and professional programs. The VPSA will be expected to consider all UNM students when evaluating and adapting services through the use of data and assessment to support the success and well-being of all students from pre-matriculation through graduation and beyond, ensuring they have the experiences necessary to prepare them for the workforce.

#### ***Build stronger partnerships with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management to ensure a transformational and inclusive student experience for all students***

A new VPSA with fresh ideas around student success and wellbeing also brings new possibilities for collaboration and innovation. The university community will be looking to the new VPSA to help them achieve an even greater impact around their common student success goals through more seamless and holistic student support and breaking down systemic barriers to success across UNM's many entities. The VPSA will be expected to forge even stronger partnerships across Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Enrollment Management to adapt strategies and policies and ensure all students have access to a supportive and compassionate student experience. This will include working closely with the Schools and Colleges, branch campuses, Health System, and UNM Online to ensure all UNM students have access to services. Through partnership, the VPSA will determine how Student Affairs can lead university-wide

student success efforts to creatively establish and revise inclusive support structures and enrich the UNM student experience. This will include finding new ways to create synergies, reduce duplication of efforts, and anticipate and best respond to the various social, academic, and life needs of the incredibly diverse student body from pre-matriculation, enrollment, orientation, and through graduation and beyond.

There is work to be done in communicating and marketing the breadth and depth of the programs and services provided by Student Affairs to the campus community. It will also be important to evaluate how they enhance and/or duplicate operations in other units. The VPSA will continue to foster cross-university partnerships to better communicate the services of Student Affairs and how best to leverage them, but also to brainstorm and facilitate more cohesive efforts around student success for students, faculty, and staff to feel more empowered with information about where to go for assistance and enrichment.

***Serve as a highly visible advocate and champion for all students***

The VPSA will be a visible presence across the university, interacting openly and genuinely with students to solicit their input regularly and to ensure students from all backgrounds and experiences feel welcome at the university. The VPSA will maintain a pulse on student needs, especially those of historically marginalized communities, including lower socioeconomic status, first-generation, students of color, undocumented and immigrant, neurodiverse, working adult, transfer, veteran, and other non-traditional students. The VPSA will be a strong voice for all students on the university leadership team and will serve as a model for a community of care and respect that supports student development for all pathways to a degree. The VPSA will lead Student Affairs in fostering opportunities that empower students to appreciate differences, broaden their worldview, and explore their potential for community impact. By keeping regular contact with students in all academic pathways through a high level of engagement, the VPSA will be able to build trust to help ensure all students feel a sense of belonging and have a voice at UNM. The VPSA will also remain vigilantly aware of other factors impacting the student experience, such as food, housing, family care, and transportation insecurities. The VPSA will work with other UNM units to help ensure the UNM campus and surrounding community continue to be a safe and supportive environment for all students.

***Inspire a team of passionate student affairs professionals***

The VPSA will lead a team of highly dedicated and passionate staff who are eager to continue building the support structures necessary for the success of UNM's highly diverse student body and to provide a vibrant and impactful student experience for all, including students from various backgrounds and lived experiences. The VPSA will leverage the staff's broad expertise and deep knowledge of UNM, as many have spent much of their careers at the institution, to ensure a nimble and responsive organization that can significantly impact student success and outcomes while also strengthening a culture of collaboration, innovation, and inclusive excellence in the division. The VPSA will encourage their participation in creating and executing strategy for Student Affairs while finding new ways to better integrate their services with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management. The VPSA will also be expected to provide a data-informed lens in the ongoing assessment of Student Affairs services and the organizational development and budgetary skills necessary to support the many ambitions of Student Affairs through efficient and cost-effective means to maximize effectiveness and impact and support innovative ideas. The VPSA will also provide mentoring and ongoing professional development around best practices to ensure staff can respond to the changing needs of UNM's diverse student body, stay up-to-date on topics vital to the student experience, provide opportunities for research and publication, and retain talent within the

division. The VPSA will not only be a champion for students, but also for the skilled Student Affairs staff that make the transformational student experience possible at UNM.

### ***Creatively augment and steward financial resources***

UNM prides itself on always being able to do a lot with a little, and the VPSA will also be expected to be simultaneously innovative and judicious with resources. The VPSA will also have the opportunity to explore various avenues for resource generation to help augment university funding, including grant writing, fundraising, government and community engagement, and also advocating for additional resources through the use of data. The university has had recent success in fundraising through the UNM Foundation, and the VPSA will have the opportunity to capitalize on this momentum by sharing the UNM student story with donors, community leaders, and alumni to help ensure robust student services well into the future.

### **Qualifications and Characteristics**

The successful candidate for the VPSA role will be a student-centered, collaborative, and innovative leader. While no one person may embody all, the successful candidate will also bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- A master's degree in higher education, student affairs, education administration, counseling, psychology, or a closely related field; a doctoral degree is preferred.
- Ten years of progressively responsible leadership and management experience in higher education.
- Deep knowledge of current best practices in student affairs work and a strong understanding of student development.
- Experience supporting a highly diverse student body. A proven commitment to the social mobility of all students.
- Proven ability to build and maintain effective partnerships with academic affairs, enrollment management, and other units across a complex college or university.
- Progressive leadership and supervisory responsibilities, including experience/involvement with crisis management, emergency preparation, student conduct situations, assistance with insecurities, and student safety and care.
- Demonstrated commitment to lead with, and practice values of, equity, diversity, and inclusion while working with a range of diverse constituents.
- Proven track record of managing a sizeable team and budget.
- Knowledge and experience working effectively with varied student populations including first-generation students, students from various socio-economic backgrounds, students from diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, veterans, undocumented students, and students pursuing degrees at various stages in their careers and lives.
- Knowledge and experience working with similar services and programs currently falling under the direction of the VPSA.
- A track record of a high level of visibility in the university community.
- Demonstrated executive leadership skills, including visionary leadership, strategic thinking, and an innovative spirit.
- Strategic capacity with an affinity for change and continuous improvement through the use of data, and a willingness to look ahead, think big, and try new approaches.

- Strong personal orientation toward collaboration, teamwork, transparency, accessibility, accountability, and delegation.

## **Location**

New Mexico is known as "The Land of Enchantment" or "Tierra del Encanto," because of its scenic beauty and rich history. New Mexico offers a wide variety of adventures, art, music and dance, breathtaking landscapes, and a multicultural heritage, including Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo cultures that cannot be found in any other state in the U.S. New Mexico has the highest percentage of Hispanics, including descendants of the original Spanish colonists who have lived in the area for more than 400 years, as well as more recent immigrants from a variety of nations in Latin America. It has the second-highest percentage of Native Americans as a proportion of the population, and the fourth-highest total number of Native Americans. The major Native American nations in the state are the 20 Pueblos, Navajo, and three Apache peoples.

Oil and gas production, agriculture, the arts, film and television, tourism, and federal government spending are important drivers of New Mexico's economy. State and local governments have a comprehensive system of tax credits and technical assistance to promote job growth and business investment, especially in new technologies. The state is home to more Ph.D. holders per capita than any other state in the country as it is home to Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Intel, several other research facilities, and land management agencies including the Forest Service and National Park Service. The state's Department of Economic Development has recently launched a comprehensive economic development plan that focuses on biosciences, film and television, intelligent manufacturing, aerospace technology, value added and sustainable agriculture, green and sustainable energy, cybersecurity, global trade, and outdoor recreation as pillars of the 21st century New Mexico economy.

New Mexico has one of the most diverse landscapes in the world, with a range of incredible outdoor adventures to match. The geography ranges from snow-capped 13,000-foot peaks, wildflower fields, thick forests of cottonwoods, white sand dunes, volcanoes and lava fields, to vast expanses of rangeland and desert.

The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. UNM honors the land itself and those who remain stewards of the land throughout the generations and also acknowledges our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples.

The University of New Mexico's main campus is located in Albuquerque, the most populous city in New Mexico with its own rich culture and heritage as one of the oldest cities in the U.S. It has a multicultural heritage and history where diverse influences are a part of everyday life. Averaging 310 days of sunshine a year, it is also a great place for outdoor activities, including hiking, biking, skiing, or golfing on some of the best golf courses in the Southwest. Residents and visitors alike take advantage of the many traditional New Mexican restaurants, enjoy world-class visual and performing arts, and visit the many museums and historical sites around the state. Albuquerque is home to the International Balloon Fiesta, the world's largest gathering of hot-air balloons. The Sandia Mountains run along the eastern side of Albuquerque, and the Rio Grande flows through the city, north to south. More information about Albuquerque can be found at: <http://www.visitalbuquerque.org/> or <https://advance.unm.edu/why-abq/>.



## **Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations**

UNM has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes/CVs with cover letters should be submitted via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/8290>.



*Recruiting exceptional leaders  
for mission-driven organizations*

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