

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024 | Edition #131

Message from the VP



Dear Student Affairs Colleagues,

As we reach the end of the semester, we also reach the end of an era in the Division of Student Affairs. Our two longest serving employees, Natalie Brigance and Ray Renteria (pictured above), will retire at the end of 2024. Both Natalie and Ray have contributed incredible service to the university over the course of their long and storied careers and I hope you will take the time to read the wonderful feature articles about each of them.

This Thursday and Friday we also celebrate another group who are coming to the end of their time at UNM, or said another way, coming to the beginning of the rest of their lives as Lobos. Indeed, the word commencement literally means a beginning or start. We have the opportunity to be stewards of the experience of our students for a few short years and when they depart, we hope that they have learned valuable lessons, become stronger and more reliant, that they have the powers of self-awareness and reflection, and that they have obtained the transferable skills to be successful in the life that they choose. When they finish their time here there is a future for them as

they take all they have learned out into the world to live fulfilling lives. So even as we close a year and wish a heartfelt goodbye to cherished students and longtime colleagues, we celebrate them—the class of 2024, Natalie, Ray, and others, as they commence the next chapter of their lives. There is a future for them, no matter what path they choose, always as Lobos. What an honor to be part of it all.

With appreciation,

Eric

Brigance to Retire After 40 Years of Service



Green. It can symbolize so many things: wealth, envy, trees, the nudge to start moving at a traffic light, and even the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) office in Scholes Hall. That's because, unlike Kermit the Frog, "being green" came easy for Natalie Brigance – plant enthusiast, animal lover, recycle fanatic, and long-time University of New Mexico (UNM) employee.

Brigance, equally known by her VPSA colleagues for her professionalism and dedication to UNM, and for adorning the office with plants tended to by her green thumb, is set to retire at the end of this year after over 40 years of service. Her longest and most recent stint being in the VPSA suite on the second floor of Scholes Hall.

The year was 1984, John Perovich was the president of UNM, and Brigance was a proud, first-generation New Mexico State University graduate with a business degree looking for a job. "My mother-in-law worked at UNM, and one day I was walking with her across campus and she was pointing out buildings and telling me about them," Brigance said. "I remember when we got to Scholes Hall, I told her that it sounded like important

work was done in that building and that I would like to work there one day.”

The seed was planted and Brigance decided to apply for a job at UNM. She laid down her UNM roots in the College of Engineering Special Programs Office as a clerical specialist—a title equivalent to that of an office assistant now. Her time in Engineering was spent working with Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) students, and the Engineering Co-op office under the leadership umbrella of then interim dean, Gerald May (yes, that Gerald May)—who served as both her mentor and professional reference before becoming UNM President in 1986.

In 1990, she moved out of Engineering and took a job as an administrative assistant in the UNM Foundation/Development office, which was in Hodgin Hall—the building that became her favorite campus landmark. It was in that role that she gained another mentor in her boss, Dennis Eloe.

“Working with Dennis, I learned the business of donor stewardship and how our work was important to the future of the UNM campus and students,” she said. “His work ethic and the way he cared for his staff made it easy to work hard for him,” she said.

She enjoyed the variety of tasks assigned to her in the Development office and said that every day was a little different. “I did everything from daily office administrative responsibilities, event planning, golf tournaments, and even staging a donor’s house for sale to ensure their gift wishes were fulfilled,” she said.

In 1997, after seven years, Brigance’s UNM career was starting to blossom, and she decided to take the knowledge she gained from her work in the Development office to a new position as a coordinator of administrative support to Dr. Eliseo

“Cheo” Torres in the VPSA office—which happens to reside in the “important” Scholes Hall.

Her role in Student Affairs would evolve and grow over the years and she would eventually become Torres’s executive assistant. The two would share a mutual personal and professional respect for one another and work together in various capacities for the next twenty-five years until Torres’s retirement in 2021.

[Read full story](#)

Renteria to Retire After 56 Years of Service

Picture The University of New Mexico landscape today—new modernized buildings sprinkled into the historic pueblo-style scenery surrounding the Duck Pond, computers on every desktop, digital signs, robot food deliveries, and everyone wearing headphones staring at their cell phone screens as they make their way through the greenery and trees lining Smith Plaza.

Now envision UNM over a half-century ago. One employee, Ray Renteria, doesn’t have to picture it, because as we say today, he was there “IRL” (in real life). “Smith Plaza was the football field,” Renteria said. “There was no Duck Pond—that area was filled with houses that were turned into offices.” Fifty-six years ago, Renteria began his UNM career—and quite possibly holds the record for longest professional stint at UNM.

Imagine writing paper notes instead of emailing. Using a typewriter instead of a computer. Calling and talking to someone on a desk phone, rather than texting them on a cell



phone. Methods that may seem obsolete to some but have always been effective for Renteria throughout his career. Even today as he finishes out his UNM career, an email to Renteria may be met with the written response, "I'll call you," and an office supply run may include a request for pens, paper, and desk calendars.

Renteria's time at UNM was born out of necessity. He had already graduated from Lordsburg High School in 1963 with New Mexico National Guard experience under his belt, was immediately activated for six months of training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, where he performed administrative duties, and went on to graduate with an accounting degree from Western New Mexico University in Silver City. "In September 1968, I eloped with my girlfriend, Patricia, to Palomas, Mexico," he said. "So, after that, I needed to get a job to be able to support my wife."

Ray headed to Albuquerque and stayed with a cousin in search of employment, and consequently ended up getting a job at UNM in the Contracts and Grants department. "My wife and I relocated to Albuquerque, and I began working at UNM," he said. Renteria would transfer from the New Mexico National Guard to the United States Army Reserve and would rack up 33 years of military service between the two branches, while also working at the university.

His UNM career would span 14 UNM presidents, cover three departments in addition to Contracts and Grants including UNM Medical, UNM Mental Health, and the College Enrichment and Outreach Programs (CEOP), where he is retiring from at the end of the year.

[read full story](#)

Student Affairs Accepting Applications for Accessibility Resource Center Director



The Division of Student Affairs is looking for its next director of the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), with the upcoming retirement of director, Amanda Butrum.

The ARC director provides critical leadership focused on ensuring that students with disabilities receive the accommodations and support services necessary for their academic, cultural, and social success. The director will oversee the development and delivery of a range of services that promote an inclusive and accessible campus environment for all students.

Minimum qualifications include a Bachelor's degree, at least 7 years of experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities specified. Completed degree(s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year for year basis.

Those interested can view the complete description and apply via the [UNM Jobs posting Req31580](#) with a best consideration date of Thursday, Dec. 12.

Student Affairs Accepting Applications Asian American Pacific Islander Resource

The Division of Student Affairs is accepting applications for program manager for the Asian American Pacific Islander Resource Center.

The Asian American Pacific Islander Resource Center mission is centered in fostering an educational climate based upon diversity,

Center Program Manager

inclusiveness, and building a sense of belonging for AAPI students. The program manager position offers a unique opportunity to further develop and shape the future of the AAPI Resource Center, positively impact AAPI student life at UNM, advance strategic planning and program development opportunities, assess program resource needs, collaborate with university stakeholders, and enhance community partnerships.

Minimum qualifications: High school diploma or GED; at least 6 years of experience 2 of which are management level experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities specified.

Completed degree(s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year for year basis.

Those interested can view the complete description and apply via the [UNM Jobs posting Req31617](#) with a best consideration date of Friday, Dec. 13.

Vice President for Student Affairs Accepting Applications for Executive Assistant

The Division of Student Affairs is accepting applications for an executive assistant in the Vice President's office.

This position will offer executive-level support to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA), who serves as UNM's leading voice on matters related to students while advancing the



institution's mission and strategic goals. The successful candidate should be well-organized, have great time management skills and must be able to act independently. This person will serve as the primary point of contact for both internal and external constituencies on all matters pertaining to the OVPSA, and assist and represent the VPSA in communications, including those of a sensitive and/or confidential nature.

High school diploma or GED; at least 2 years of experience managing at least one of the following functional areas: fiscal services, administration and/or human resources AND 3 years of additional experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities specified.

Completed degree(s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year for year basis.

Those interested can view the complete description and apply via the [UNM Jobs posting Req31771](#) with a best consideration date of Monday, Dec. 16.

College Enrichment and Outreach Programs Accepting Applications

The Division of Student Affairs at the University of New Mexico (UNM) is pleased to announce a newly created role within the College Enrichment and Outreach Programs focused on influencing positive student outcomes through comprehensive orientation and access initiatives. The Program Manager

for Program Manager Position

for Orientation & Access position will be pivotal in shaping the strategic direction of New Student Orientation programs and is an exciting opportunity for an innovative leader passionate about shaping student transition programming and advancing the institution's mission centered on equitable academic excellence and student success practices.

The Program Manager for Orientation & Access position is best suited for a student affairs professional whose passion for student success, strong understanding of best practices in orientation and student transition, and ability to implement empirically-based programs to drive student enrollment, retention, and degree attainment is prominent. This position will have primary oversight of the planning, execution, and continuous improvement of orientation programs that serve over 7,000 new students annually, including First-Year, Transfer, Branch Transition, Returning, and Online students.

High school diploma or GED; at least 6 years of experience 2 of which are management level experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities specified.

Completed degree(s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year for year basis.

Those interested can view the complete description and apply via the [UNM Jobs](#)

[posting Req31852](#) with a best consideration date of Friday, Jan. 10.

DSA Staff Can Win at the Staff Appreciation Breakfast

Student Affairs staff are invited to visit the Student Affairs table at the Staff Appreciation Breakfast on Monday, Jan. 6, from 7 to 10 a.m. in the SUB Ballrooms for your chance to WIN an exclusive lunch with Dr. Scott. Hope to see you there!

