

FINALS WEEK.

There is a feeling of hope within our global community as we witnessed the first COVID-19 vaccines finally rollout abroad this week—and with vaccine approvals expected here in the United States in the next few days. This good news comes at a time when we are also seeing our hospitals in New Mexico near their capacity and the virus surge to unforeseen dangerous levels. We are excited in the promise of an eventual return to normal the vaccine will eventually deliver, but we must also remain patient and diligent in our mitigation efforts as this virus continues to impact our friends, neighbors, and family members.

On this last day of finals week, I want to congratulate all of you for your persistence throughout this difficult semester and year. The adjustments and sacrifices you have made to continue teaching and studying at UNM-Gallup during this pandemic have not gone unnoticed. To our students in particular, I join with our faculty and staff in expressing our admiration to each of you for staying the course and successfully completing this semester. You have a well-deserved break now, and I wish you peace, joy, and rest during the upcoming holidays.

To our fall graduates, we have postponed our commencement ceremony until large, in-person gatherings are allowed. But we are celebrating your achievements. After our winter break, we will send our graduates a care package as a token of our congratulations, and we will hold a cap-and-gown photo session with a photographer on January 14th and 15th. We are also celebrating you virtually on our Website and social media. You can go to gallup.unm.edu/students/graduation/ and submit your photo, a short video, and personal statement or words of wisdom from that page. You can also access our graduation application directly from this page as well.

We have some recent changes among our faculty and staff that will profoundly impact our campus. Just a few weeks ago, Dr. Kamala Sharma, who serves as Chair of the Division of Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences, announced her retirement after two-decades of service to UNM-Gallup. And, after seeking some discussion and advice among the faculty, Dr. Dan Primozic—Dean of Academic Affairs—announced the appointment of Alok Dhital, Associate Professor of Mathematics, as Interim Chair. His term will run until May 31, 2021.

And, just this week, we received the news that Mary Lou Mraz, our Accommodations Specialist for the Accessibility Resource Center, will retire on January 1st. In the words of Jayme McMahan, Director of Student Affairs: “Mary Lou has served countless students throughout her time with UNM-Gallup. The support, advocacy, and compassion she demonstrated in each interaction helped form lasting connections with students and colleagues alike.”

We certainly wish Dr. Sharma and Mary Lou all the best as they enter retirement and pursue new adventures. And, I thank Alok for his willingness to serve in a leadership position as interim chair for the benefit of our campus.

Finally, I'd like to encourage all prospective and current students to join us for our spring semester. Registration is open, we are actively taking applications, and we are here to help guide you along the path from scheduling to advising and financial aid.

I'll repeat my ask from last week to our faculty and staff to please reach out, connect, and engage with individual prospects and returning students to welcome them back to our classrooms, studios, workshops, and laboratories for Spring 2021. While we are anticipating a hybrid start to spring, we continue to hope for the eventual safe return to campus soon.

Happy holidays to you all, whether you are celebrating the Advent and Christmas season, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa later this month. Please remember to join us for our virtual holiday celebration and compete for some great prizes from our bookstore. You can still submit your best holiday photos or video greetings at gallup.unm.edu/virtual-holiday-celebration/.

Please stay safe and stay well.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James R. Malm', with some colorful scribbles above it.

Dr. James R. Malm, Chancellor
Professor of Business