

Parents praise Bright Futures

On-campus daycare offers critical service for GMCS employees and UNM-Gallup students

At the end of a cloudy day in early May, 3-year-old Myles Gordon was enjoying playing in the sand box with other kids and riding a scooter around the playground of Bright Futures Childcare Center when his mom Calista Autrey came to pick him up.

As a nursing student at The University of New Mexico-Gallup, Autrey gets access to childcare services provided at Bright Futures. And as a nanny herself, Autrey said it was important for her to find quality childcare for her son.

“At Bright Futures, they value the children and value their growth,” she said. “They’ve supported him (Myles) entirely in these crucial years that he’s gone through, so I’m grateful for them.”

Bright Futures Childcare Center opened in the Fall 2023 semester thanks to a partnership between UNM-Gallup and Gallup-McKinley County Schools. GMCS runs and manages the daycare while UNM-Gallup provides the building on campus to house it.

Two years later, the daycare continues to offer services to GMCS certified employees and administration as well as UNM-Gallup students and administration.



Kent Kayonnie, 3, rides a tricycle around the playground at Bright Futures Childcare Center.



Myles Gordon, 3, rides a scooter on the playground at Bright Futures Childcare Center, which is located on The University of New Mexico-Gallup campus, on May 1, 2025.

PRAISE FROM PARENTS

Gallup Middle School teacher Anastasia Mataya said she’s been impressed with Bright Futures. She said her daughter NikiAnn Hudgeons, who turned 2 in May, has hit many milestones while enrolled at the childcare center.

“The fact that she’s almost 2 and recognizes letters and comes home happy just shows she’s thriving up there,” Mataya said. “I can’t say enough good things. I think the program is one of the most beneficial that we have in town.”

Parent Leah Kayonnie, whose 3-year-old son Kent Kayonnie is enrolled at the daycare, praised the staff and teachers for being amazing.

“They are truly dedicated to our babies,” she said. “They are very passionate. It’s very warm and welcoming, and not a lot of places have that, so I do enjoy talking to all the staff.”

UNM-Gallup student Kandace Alfred said her daughter Zuri Duran, who turns 3 in August, has had a great experience at the daycare and has learned a lot.

“The teachers are very



Teacher Roslind Joe holds 2-year-old NikiAnn Hudgeons’ hand while walking down the steps, as 21-month-old Jace Willie plays in the background, at Bright Futures Childcare Center on May 1, 2025.

nice, and they’re pleasant to engage with every morning,” Alfred said. “The staff is great too.”

Alfred described Bright Futures Director Rebecca Brandt, Co-Director Brittany Gutierrez and administrative clerk Missy Garcia as shining faces in the front office.

IT’S JUST A GOOD PLACE

For Brandt and Gutierrez, every day at the daycare is different.

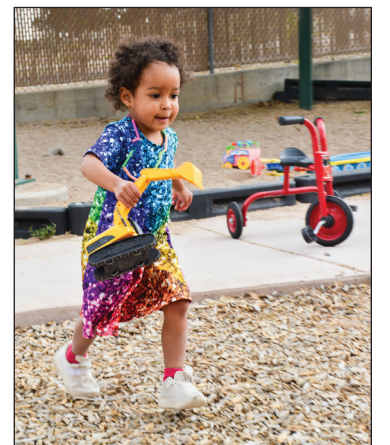
“Some days there’s a lot of kids and a lot of activity,” Gutierrez said. “Other days, the kids are

quiet and calm. It’s a good healthy environment for them to be in. They’re safe, and they’re learning and growing — physically and emotionally. It’s just a good place.”

Gutierrez said the children learn primarily through play. They learn shapes, colors, numbers and hand gestures while singing songs.

The kids are also getting used to being in a classroom setting and adapting to a daily routine of snacks, play time, naps and lunch, which prepares them for school later.

“We’re here to just help



Zuri Duran, 3, runs while playing with a toy excavator on the playground at Bright Futures Childcare Center on May 1, 2025.

out and support and provide for the kids,” Brandt added.

The daycare has an on-site kitchen where snacks and meals are prepared daily. The facility also features an outdoor playground with a large sandbox, a slide and plenty of scooters, tricycles, balls and toys.

Inside, there are three separate classrooms for different age ranges plus an activity room.

The daycare has 42 total spots available for children. As of May 1, there were 21 children enrolled at the daycare, so there are spots available for GMCS and UNM-G parents seeking childcare going into the summer and fall semesters.

Bright Futures accepts enrollment applications for children ages 6 months old to 3 years old. Parents can pick up applications in person at the childcare center, which is located at 700 Lion Hall on the UNM-Gallup campus.

If children will reach the age of 36 months old before Sept. 1, they should enroll in their local preschool.

The hours of the daycare are 7:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The center follows the GMCS school calendar for days in session.

Information:

Missy Garcia, 505-721-4231.

Building stronger together: The indispensable role of UNM-Gallup in economic development

Dear Gallup Community,

In the intricate tapestry of economic growth, The University of New Mexico-Gallup stands as a vital thread, weaving together individuals, businesses, and the broader community into a stronger, more resilient fabric.

As a community college, UNM-Gallup plays an indispensable role in fostering economic development, acting as a catalyst for workforce development, innovation, and social mobility. UNM-Gallup's open access mission and deep-rooted connections within the local ecosystem make the college uniquely positioned to drive prosperity and build stronger communities — together.

At its core, economic development hinges on a skilled and adaptable workforce. UNM-Gallup supports workforce development, providing accessible and affordable pathways to in-demand skills and credentials. The college is agile, tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of local industries.

UNM-Gallup collaborates

closely with businesses to identify skill gaps, designing curricula that directly address these demands. From healthcare and advanced manufacturing to information technology and renewable energy, the college equips individuals with the practical knowledge and technical expertise required to thrive in the regional economy. UNM-Gallup's responsiveness ensures a pipeline of qualified workers, attracting businesses, supporting existing ones, and fostering job creation.



**Chancellor
Dr. Sabrina
Ezzell**

Beyond simply training individuals for existing jobs, UNM-Gallup is also an incubator of innovation and entrepreneurship. The college offers programs and resources that nurture the entrepreneurial spirit, providing aspiring business owners with the foundational knowledge in areas such as business planning, marketing, and finance. UNM-Gallup hosts the Small Business Development Center, offering mentorship and support to nascent ventures. By fostering a culture of innovation and providing the tools for entrepreneurship, the college

contributes to the diversification of the local economy, creating new opportunities and bolstering its long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, UNM-Gallup serves as a crucial anchor within our community, fostering social mobility and equity. Our open access policy and lower tuition costs make higher education attainable for individuals who might otherwise face significant barriers. By providing pathways to further education and career advancement for underserved populations, UNM-Gallup contributes to a more inclusive and equitable economy. This, in turn, strengthens the entire community by reducing inequality, increasing civic engagement, and fostering a more skilled and engaged citizenry.

The impact of UNM-Gallup extends beyond individual students and businesses; the college is a vital connector within the community ecosystem. UNM-Gallup often partners with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and civic groups to address community challenges and promote economic growth. These collaborations can take many forms, such as joint initiatives to attract new businesses and providing training for individ-

uals transitioning out of declining industries. By acting as a convenor and facilitator, UNM-Gallup fosters a spirit of collaboration, breaking down silos and building stronger relationships that benefit the entire region.

In conclusion, the role of UNM-Gallup in economic development is multifaceted and profound. The college is not simply an educational institution; it is a dynamic engine of workforce development, innovation, and social mobility. By forging strong partnerships within the community and remaining agile in our response to evolving economic needs, UNM-Gallup is instrumental in "Building Stronger Together."

Our commitment to accessible education and our deep-rooted local connections makes the college an indispensable partner in creating thriving and resilient economies for the benefit of all. As we look toward a future demanding adaptability and innovation, the continued support and strategic integration of UNM-Gallup within economic development strategies will be more critical than ever.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sabrina Ezzell
UNM-Gallup Chancellor

CEWD now offers solar technician certificate, online courses

By Ashlee Velasquez
Director, Community Education & Workforce Development

The Community Education and Workforce Development (CEWD) program at The University of New Mexico-Gallup is introducing a new solar technician certificate this summer in addition to their offerings of in-person and online courses to provide the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a variety of fields.

CEWD provides career development and personal enrichment opportunities for community members to gain the skills and knowledge for their individual goals. CEWD courses are non-credit and non-degree seeking. Students who take these classes do not need to be enrolled as a credit-earning student at UNM-Gallup and typically do not apply for financial aid. CEWD courses are short-term, specialized and customizable.

Community Education courses are designed to fulfill personal aspirations for self-development and improvement in personal enrichment, creative expression or social interaction. Community Education is aimed at fulfilling lives while contributing to the betterment of the local and surrounding communities.

Workforce Development courses can be for employers who want to upskill, reskill or train their team in a certain field. Workforce Development is also for individuals who want to enhance their professional development skills within their current occupation or be-

come enrolled in a class to immerse themselves in an area that they want to explore professionally.

If employers want to train their team in a certain field or enhance their skills to stay competitive in today's workforce industry, CEWD can create customized trainings and bundle certificates for your business needs.

If a certified, verifiable community member wants to share their passion as a non-credit instructor, CEWD is always looking for dedicated individuals who want to share their knowledge and skills.

CEWD's newest program is the solar technician certificate. The first cohort of this 12-week course is scheduled to start June 2, 2025, and go through Aug. 22, 2025. Another cohort will start near the Fall 2025 semester. Thereafter, there will be three cohorts per year.

The solar technician certificate aims to give back to the community by identifying and working with Navajo Nation chapters to identify three families who are in dire need of electrical services for refrigerated medicine storage, life-giving machines such as oxygen, and any essential services that require electricity. Our students will be gaining hands-on experience doing live installations and becoming the maintenance technicians for these systems they install. In essence, CEWD is training these solar technicians to become entrepreneurs by becoming the on-call person to service these

systems and becoming their own boss.

The curriculum will also teach professional development skills in customer service, communication, financial literacy, basic business skills, career mentoring entrepreneurship and small solar business development. Students will also have all the tool kits and knowledge they need to become a self-starting small business.

CEWD still offers commercial driver's licenses in Class A and B. Class A courses start every month and Class B courses start every few months. These certifications have been instrumental in building the construction, transportation and small business industries within Gallup and tribal communities.

CEWD also offers 19 online certifications — some of which provide students with digital badges upon completion. Some of the courses include Strategic Writing for Leaders, Payroll Management, and Certified Administrative Professional. To see the full offering of online courses, please visit www.gallup.unm.edu/ce.

CEWD is also working to establish new in-person certifications for heavy equipment operator, medical assistant, pharmacy technician, HVAC, residential electrician and other short-term, technical trades.

CEWD is committed to improving and empowering Gallup and surrounding communities with the certifications, skills and tools needed to build stronger together.



**Ashlee
Velasquez**



Building stronger together

UNM-Gallup hosts third annual Job Fair in collaboration with America's Job Center NM

For people like Alex Laweka, of Zuni, New Mexico, a job fair is about more than just finding work. It's about finding the start of a new life that brings a sense of self-worth, dignity and confidence.

Laweka is a resident with Hozho Center for Personal Enhancement in Gamerco, New Mexico. As part of the recovery program, Laweka said he is required to go out into the community to find work, so he came to The University of New Mexico-Gallup's Spring 2025 Job Fair on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, to do just that.

Laweka said many of Hozho Center's clients are recovering from addiction and trying to restart their lives. He said a job can go a long way toward helping a person gain their confidence.

"It helps your self-esteem and you actually feel like a human being," he said. "Because when you're stuck in your addiction, you don't feel like you're worth nothing. So this [Job Fair] is a big help, especially with our community and how much people are unemployed."

"A GOOD OPPORTUNITY"

The Spring 2025 Job Fair, located inside Gurley Hall featured about 40



UNM-Gallup Human Resources administrator 2 Yatisha Yoe, left, and HR tech Wilma Lee talk to two students during the Spring 2025 Job Fair in Gurley Hall on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

local business and organizations seeking applicants for open positions.

The Job Fair is the result of an on-going collaboration between UNM-Gallup as host and America's Job Center New Mexico, formerly known as New Mexico Workforce Connections, as organizer.

The job fair is part of the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation's annual Economic Development Week celebration, which highlights the impact of partnerships that drive innovation, growth and lasting change in the local economy. This year's theme was Building Stronger Together.

"It is crucial for UNM-Gallup to host a job fair and strategically part-

ner with state agencies and local businesses due to the multifaceted benefits these collaborations offer to students, employers, and the wider community," UNM-Gallup Chancellor Dr. Sabrina Ezzell said.

UNM-Gallup Human Resources administrator 2 Yatisha Yoe participated in the Job Fair to let community members know about vacant positions at the branch campus.

"It's a good place and a good opportunity," Yoe said of the Job Fair. "I'm seeing a lot of students, and they have been coming up to our booth looking for summer jobs, and I think that's a new thing that I'm seeing with this Job Fair. I think it's a good opportunity not just for the community but also students who are graduat-

ing from high school and college as well."

DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE

Later in the afternoon, UNM-Gallup also welcomed New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Secretary Sarita Nair and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren to deliver keynote presentations on economic development.

In her address, Secretary Nair shared insights on employment trends and opportunities shaping the state's labor market.

She said that as of March, New Mexico's unemployment rate was 4.3%. She also proudly shared that New Mexico was ahead of other states in the region for year-over-year job growth at 1.7% — driven by growth in the sectors of construction, health care, and government.

Looking toward changes to expect in the future, Nair said 65% of children who are entering primary school today are going to end up in jobs that don't exist currently because of the development of new technology, such as artificial intelligence.

"We're going to continue to see that kind of rapid geometric growth in technology that's going to change what people are doing for work," she said.

"And that is going to result in 1 billion people worldwide needing reskilling by 2030, which is really not that far away."

In his speech, President Nygren stressed the importance of the Navajo Nation and State of New Mexico continuing to work together, supporting one another, and doing what they can to employ people. He also shared his own personal workforce success story.

Nygren said he went through a workforce development program when he was in high school and ended up cleaning restrooms and vacuuming. He joked that he was known as a "Ghostbuster" because of the Shop-Vac he carried behind him.

His early work experience helped him become the person he is today.

"The main thing that I think about is just that sense of pride, of being able to provide for yourself, and to be able to provide for your family," Nygren said. "I think that's why we're here today, on behalf of the state, on behalf of the nation, is how do we make sure that the dollars that we receive, we deploy them. And when we deploy them, we give people an opportunity to help themselves, to give themselves a sense of hope, a sense of dignity, and a sense of how do they empower themselves."

THANK YOU

The University of New Mexico-Gallup and its Local Advisory Board would like to express gratitude to our state legislators for supporting and investing in this institution and higher education across New Mexico.





UNM mascot Lobo Louie showcases the luminarias and colorful string lights that decorate the patio outside the Student Services & Technology Center during Holiday in New Mexico at The University of New Mexico-Gallup on Dec. 5, 2024.

Holiday in New Mexico brings enchantment to UNM-Gallup

Enchantment filled the air during The University of New Mexico-Gallup's annual Holiday in New Mexico event on Dec. 5, 2024.

Holiday in New Mexico serves as an open house for the UNM-Gallup campus as community members are invited to visit and enjoy holiday cheer with a focus on Land of Enchantment traditions, such as luminarias and biscochitos.

"Holiday in New Mexico is a wonderful opportunity for UNM-G to share festive decorations, music, and activities with local families while celebrating cultural traditions," UNM-Gallup Chancellor Dr. Sabrina Ezzell said.

Ezzell, along with other administration members and division chairs, greeted guests at the Gurley Hall entrance and handed out free Holiday in New Mexico commemorative tote bags and programs.

Inside the commons, guests took photos with Santa Claus, who made his grand entrance to the venue in a fire truck with help from the Gallup Fire Department. UNM mascot Lobo Louie also roamed the building to interact with guests and take photos.

A giant Christmas tree glistened in the middle of



A young guest speaks to Santa Claus during Holiday in New Mexico inside the Gurley Hall Commons at The University of New Mexico-Gallup on Dec. 5, 2024.

the commons with new ornaments donated by Home Depot, which has also donated string lights, projector lights and other decorations over the past three years.

Earl's Restaurant owner Ralph Richards, former chairman of the UNM-Gallup Local Advisory Board, donated and handed out free hot chocolate to visitors alongside his employees.

Culinary students and instructors with the UNM-Gallup Center for Career & Technical Education baked and gave out 800 biscochitos.

T&R Market donated bottled water for the event. Food truck vendors The Enchilada Lady and Rosco's parked outside

the venue to provide food sales to the public.

Raymond Calderon, who now serves as chairman of the UNM-Gallup Local Advisory Board, brought his two children to the event for the third year in a row.

"It's become part of the holiday season for them just like the Gallup parade, balloon rally, and other annual Christmas festivities," Calderon said. "The event has gotten better and better with each year as it focuses more on the UNM community. ... The kids really enjoyed all of the arts and crafts tables."

Holiday in New Mexico guests engaged in a variety of games, crafts and activities, such as holiday bookmarks, ring toss game, DIY reindeer candy

canes, face painting, a green screen photo booth, and more.

"From a public relations standpoint, the event allowed us to showcase our space, connect with the public, and enhance our visibility in a positive way," UNM-Gallup Student Activities and Recreation Specialist Shawn Frank said. "It was a fantastic platform for reinforcing our commitment to the community and fostering goodwill, which is invaluable for strengthening relationships with local residents."

Additionally, the event featured live musical performances in the Gurley Hall auditorium by Rehoboth High School students

Irellynn Delgado, Angela Faith Sowers, Lilith Briggs, and Landon Watts along with Hozho Academy student Kabren King.

UNM-Gallup Spanish adjunct Jean Paul Van Derys Vidal headlined the show with his brand of energetic singing and guitar playing.

"Holiday in New Mexico is the best Christmas party in Gallup," Vidal said. "It's always a pleasure to attend and participate. Seeing many families from around the city sharing together brings a lot of joy."

The next Holiday in New Mexico event is scheduled for Dec. 4, 2025.

Information: Richard Reyes, 505-409-2357 or richardreyes12@unm.edu.



Jean Paul Van Derys Vidal performs live inside the Gurley Hall auditorium with help from a young guest at UNM-Gallup during Holiday in New Mexico on Dec. 5, 2024.



Serving Indigenous students

UNM-G opens new Native American Student Success Center

The University of New Mexico-Gallup opened a new Native American Student Success Center and hired a director who wants to turn it into a student-centered space where Lobos can build community together.

Shynowah Bahe was hired as the director of the Native American Student Success Center on Nov. 12, 2024, and has been tasked with building the program from the ground up.

“My hope is just for students to feel a part of the community and part of the space,” Bahe said.

Bahe wants the center to be a place where students can hang out, access computers, grab a snack, get coffee or tea, and more.

Some of her ideas for events include a friendship prayer circle, semester kickoff breakfasts, positive affirmations with elders or alumni, a speaker series, and a Native American graduation ceremony.

UNM-Gallup established the center in the Fall 2024 semester after receiving a five-year, \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution program.

As of the Spring 2025 semester, students who identify as American Indian and Native Hawaiian make up approximately 68% of UNM-Gallup’s student campus headcount.

Bahe said the center will be



Shynowah Bahe, seen in this Feb. 25, 2025, photo, is the new director of the Native American Student Success Center at The University of New Mexico-Gallup.

open and available to any students though.

“I think being present and comfortable and surrounding yourself with people who share the same beliefs is important,” she said. “That’s one of the things I hope for — to bring people from different backgrounds to share their knowledge.”

Bahe herself brings a wealth of knowledge to UNM-Gallup thanks to her experience working in the Office of Indigenous Student Success at Northern Arizona University.

“I tell students, ‘I have a job because of you, so how can I help

you get through this process of college and what services can I provide and what services are you looking for to help you get through, whether it’s self-care or something else?’” Bahe said. “Especially with a place such as this one, I think it’s important to ask those questions to our students.”

Part of the reason why she accepted the director position at UNM-Gallup was to be closer to home in order to help her parents and be more immersed in the Navajo language.

Bahe is Kinyaa’áanii (Towering House Clan), born for Yé’ii Dine’é Kiss’áanii (Kachina Clan

- Hopi). Her maternal grandfather is Deeshchii’nii (Start of the Red Streak People Clan), and her paternal grandfather is Tábaqahá (Water’s Edge Clan).

She served in the U.S. Air Force for 12 years, and she was discharged as a technical sergeant in 2011.

The military is where her sense of service and passion for helping students came from.

“I just want to see them successful,” she said. “I want them to get where they’re trying to go. With what Indigenous people have been through, you just want that for them. That’s what really pushes me.”

Bahe holds an Associate of Applied Science in criminal justice from the Community College of the Airforce and a Bachelor of Science in sociology from the University of Oregon with minors in ethnic studies and Native American studies.

She is currently in the process of applying to graduate school to study data science.

Her educational journey was inspired by her parents, both of whom hold master’s degrees. Having such a strong support system growing up made her want to pay it forward through her work.

“I want to be a good ‘auntie’ who advocates for [students] and talks to them and makes them aware of opportunities that are out there for them,” Bahe said. “That’s why I do what I do.”



UNM-Gallup Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director LD Lovett speaks to the audience during the grand opening of the Legacy Gallery Feb. 13 inside Zollinger Library at The University of New Mexico-Gallup



Andrea Begay views the “African American Pioneers of New Mexico” photo collection during the Legacy Gallery grand opening Feb. 13 inside Zollinger Library at The University of New Mexico-Gallup.

UNM-G debuts Legacy Gallery, celebrates Black History Month

Zollinger Library photo collection showcases African American experience in New Mexico

The University of New Mexico-Gallup unveiled its new Legacy Gallery in February, showcasing a collection of historic photos featuring African Americans in New Mexico.

UNM-Gallup’s Zollinger Library and Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion partnered together to host a grand opening for the Legacy Gallery on Feb. 13. Students, faculty, staff and community members were invited to tour the new space, which spotlights the African American experience in the Land of Enchantment from 1776 to 1976.

“When the time came to make a name for this space, I wanted to make sure that we honored not only these pictures, but that we also honor the mission of our campus,” Zollinger Library Director Markos Chavez said. “This space also represents what libraries seek to do, which is to bridge gaps of information, promote ideas, and promote cultures. So, from this, the Legacy Gallery was created.”

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director LD Lovett said the purpose of the Legacy Gallery is to bring people together to share information as well as to promote conversation and the exchange of ideas among different peoples.

“What I hope would happen at this point is that all during the year, this gallery would be open, and it’s open to anyone,” Lovett said. “What I would also like to see is that as we teach classes and we provide information, we provide it year-round. But it’s not just Black history. It’s for everyone’s history. It’s for America’s history.”

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Earlier the same day, UNM-Gallup’s Ingham Chapman Gallery hosted a Jazz & Vintage Typewriters Experience.

The public was invited to view select photos from the Legacy Gallery collection, reflect on Black history using vintage typewriters from the personal collection of Assistant Professor Andrew McFeaters, and listen to jazz music recordings.

The DEI office also hosted other events in February to celebrate Black History Month, including a presentation by UNM-Valencia Chancellor Dr. Samuel Dosumu on Feb. 26 and a Black History Panel Discussion featuring Marsha Hardeman, Alfred Mathewson and Harun Williams on Feb. 27.



Art students tour UNM Albuquerque campus

Members of the Art Student Collective from The University of New Mexico-Gallup toured UNM's main campus in Albuquerque in April to get a glimpse of college life beyond the branch campus experience.

The Art Student Collective is a student club at UNM-Gallup. Club President Ryanelle Velarde, Vice President Monica Yazzie and Secretary Amber Dennison raised money in February to pay for their trip to Albuquerque with some financial assistance from the Mellon Foundation.

"I think my favorite part was actually seeing the place where I might be studying, the Anderson School of Management," Velarde said. "I hoped that seeing the place in person would help me finalize my decision, and it did in a way. I still got a lot more thinking to do, but it was nice to see the campus again."

Velarde was a Middle College High School student who graduated in May with an associate degree in general studies. She is interested in studying business, marketing or art when she continues



The University of New Mexico-Gallup Art Student Collective members Ryanelle Velarde, left, Monica Yazzie and Amber Dennison check out a building model in George Pearl Hall, which houses the School of Architecture and Planning, at the UNM main campus in Albuquerque on April 4, 2025.

her higher education at a four-year institution. At the time of the trip, she was considering UNM, Northern Arizona University or Whitman College.

'I BELIEVE IN Y'ALL'

Because of Velarde's interest in business, the Art Student Collective toured UNM's McKinnon Center for Management to get a peek inside the classrooms and study areas.

In one of the larger classrooms, art instructor and club advisor Kristi Wilson encouraged the students to sit in the chairs so they could better imagine

themselves taking courses there.

Wilson shared a personal experience from when she was younger and considered joining the U.S. Army. Her friend was attending Texas A&M and wanted Wilson to go to college instead. Wilson's friend convinced her to sit in a poetry class with her.

"After that I was like, 'I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'm going to go to college,'" Wilson said. "That's why this is so important to just let you sit in that chair. I could see you sitting in that chair. I can see you thriving. I can see you doing whatever

it is you're going to do. I believe in y'all."

A MOTIVATING ENVIRONMENT

Yazzie was a full-time UNM-Gallup student who graduated with an associate degree in liberal arts. She wants to study architecture at either UNM or Lubbock Christian University.

The group toured UNM's George Pearl Hall, which houses the School of Architecture and Planning. Yazzie said it was motivating to see the environment where she's actually interested in studying.

"It was nice to see that everybody had their own space to do their own projects and being able to create whatever they want," she said.

She also appreciated seeing the abundance of spaces around campus where students can sit quietly and study.

The students noted that it can sometimes be difficult to find a study space that is not already occupied at the Gallup campus.

Wilson said she appreciated hearing the students' feedback.

"You have no idea how helpful that is for me to

know, so that I could be a voice of advocacy for more space for y'all to have," she said.

'DEMYSTIFY THE BIG CAMPUS'

Dennison was also a Middle College High student who graduated in May with her high school diploma. She already decided her next move, which is to enroll at Fort Lewis College to pursue nursing.

Although UNM is not in her immediate future, Dennison appreciated seeing the area around the dorms as the group made their way to lunch at the dining hall, La Posada. The Mellon Foundation paid for the group's lunch and assigned a couple of graduate students to lead their campus tour.

Dennison also noted the differences in resources between the Gallup branch campus and the larger Albuquerque campus. UNM-Gallup sits on about 80 acres with a student headcount of 1,582 whereas UNM's main campus sits on nearly 800 acres with a student headcount of 21,722.

"The whole point of this is just to demystify the big campus," Wilson said.

**CLASS
OF
2025**

CONGRATULATIONS, LOBO GRADUATES!



NM GALLUP

Honoring culture with art

Lobo's jewelry earns honorable mention in juried exhibit

A student from The University of New Mexico-Gallup earned honorable mention in the Runnels Gallery University Juried Exhibition at Eastern New Mexico University with a piece of jewelry that pays homage to his Navajo culture.

Darrel Watchman, 40, of Tsayatoh, New Mexico, earned honorable mention for a 3-by-3-inch metal brooch in the design of a Navajo ceremonial basket.

"I love the meaning it [the basket] has for our people, for the wedding ceremony and puberty ceremony," Watchman said of the design. "It tells the story of our creation. It starts in the middle and weaves its way out. The middle represents where we come from, our emergence into this world. And the lines that go out represent our path in life. I really wanted to translate that to my artwork."

Watchman, who graduated with an associate degree in human services with a concentration in family studies in May, created the brooch for his Jewelry and Small Metal Construction I class, taught by Lecturer III Kristi Wilson.

He said Wilson informed students about the exhibition and encouraged them to submit their work. Watchman said Wilson helped him come up with an artist statement and



Left: Darrel Watchman poses for a photo at Runnels Gallery at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico, on March 20, 2025. Right: Watchman's art, a metal brooch entitled "Walking in Beauty," is displayed on a rock at The University of New Mexico-Gallup campus on Jan. 24, 2025.



Photos courtesy of Darrel Watchman

mail his piece, which he titled "Walking in Beauty."

HELP FROM FRIENDS

Watchman said he didn't expect a reply from the gallery, but a few days after submitting his brooch he received an email saying his piece was accepted into the show.

He was also invited to a public reception at the gallery, which is located in Portales, New Mexico, on March 20 and learned his brooch earned honorable mention.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity that Eastern New Mexico University provided to our UNM-Gallup students," Wilson said. "I'm incredibly proud of Darrel Watchman for applying, shipping his work,

and winning honorable mention."

Watchman made the trip to Portales thanks to some help from the UNM-Gallup Student Art Collective.

The student club officers raised money during a fundraiser and collected enough extra funds to pay for Watchman's hotel, gas and food for his trip.

"The day they told me, I got emotional and almost started crying in front of them," he said.

Wilson thanked the Art Student Collective officers for their generosity in helping a fellow student attend his art opening.

SPREADING GOODNESS

Watchman said Wilson tasked students in the

jewelry class with creating a brooch in the shape of something significant to them, so he chose a Navajo ceremonial basket, also known as a wedding basket.

Watchman and his wife Telena own three baskets and use them to hold their belongings and manifest blessings into their lives.

"It helps bring that goodness into your life," he said.

The front part of Watchman's brooch is made of nickel silver, and the backing is made of copper. He added a patina to the copper, which turned it to a yellow-ish color and gave it more visual appeal.

Watchman said making the brooch was challenging because of the complexity of his design and because

he was learning new techniques for the first time.

Yet, he was able to create a piece worth honorable mention in his first juried art show, which he credited to his teacher's advice.

NATURAL TALENT

Watchman said he's interested in taking more art classes in the future, but art is more of an outlet for him at this point.

He remains focused on his goal of becoming a social worker and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree at Western New Mexico University after he graduates from UNM-Gallup.

As a U.S. Marine Corp veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder, Watchman uses art as therapy — not to make money.

In his spare time, Watchman works with beads, feathers and threads to make prayer fans and other items for veterans. He often gives away or trades his work. He said creating art helps him to focus his energy on something positive and gives him a sense of balance.

"It's not just a thing I put together," he said. "It's the stories, it's the names, it's the prayers, it's the songs and all these things. Basically, it's like creating life and bringing something into this world. That's how I see it."

FACULTY FEATURE

Professor co-authors paper on environmental decision-making

A professor at The University of New Mexico-Gallup co-authored a paper that calls for a new vision of data-driven environmental decision making, including the need to focus more on equity.

UNM-Gallup Associate Professor Dr. Antoinette Abeyta is one of 23 authors and members of the Ecological Forecasting Initiative (EFI) who collaborated on the paper "Near-Term Ecological Forecasting for Climate Change Action," which was published in the December 2024 issue of the scientific journal "Nature Climate Change."

Ecological forecasts are a tool used to predict changes in ecosystems and how communities may be impacted, according to the EFI.

"These forecasts can then be used to make decisions to mitigate environmental impacts

and build a future that is climate resilient," the EFI stated. "But while many ecological forecasts have focused on predictions for 2100 and beyond, climate change is happening now and there is an urgent need for forecasts in shorter-term decision-making time periods of weeks and months."



Dr. Antoinette Abeyta

Abeyta pointed out that the focus from long-term to near-term forecasting is similar to what happened with meteorology. Weather forecasting moved toward an iterative approach, which provides updates more frequently.

"It's important to understand the broad strokes of how the

planet will change, but humans don't think on those scales, so having short term forecasts is important," Abeyta said.

EQUITY IN SCIENCE

The paper also highlights the need to focus on equity, workforce development, and broad cross-disciplinary and non-academic partnerships.

That's where Abeyta and UNM-Gallup come in. Abeyta said UNM-Gallup, as a minority-serving institution, was invited to be involved in EFI around 2020.

Abeyta said she has been working with EFI to improve access to environmental data science education, which is primarily concentrated at the graduate level or at wealthy, research institutions.

"There's a tremendous lack of training at community colleges and tribal serving colleges," she

said. "If you look at who is most impacted by climate change and environmental issues, it's low income communities and communities of color, so the people who are most impacted are not getting the training into those environmental issues."

Abeyta said she looked at data science training models to figure out what their underlying assumptions are and how that might not apply to students at a rural community college.

For example, the use of powerful computers and high-speed internet may exclude people who live in a rural area where these resources are not readily available for all.

"We want to teach these tools in a way that anyone can access them," Abeyta said. "It might give a sense of empowerment and agency for people to advocate for themselves."

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Start your Lobo legacy today

Registration for Fall 2025 is now open



Fall Admissions
 Application Deadline
Aug. 8, 2025

Fall Semester Begins
Aug. 18, 2025

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The University of New Mexico-Gallup newsletter "Luminaria" is published once a semester by the UNM-Gallup Public Relations Department.

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UNM-Gallup Land Acknowledgement

Founded in 1968, The University of New Mexico-Gallup sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Zuni Nation and Navajo Nation. The original peoples of New Mexico - Pueblo and Navajo - since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples.

We thankfully recognize our history, strive to build robust relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous peoples, and commit to maintain a diverse and inclusive environment with respect, understanding, and appreciation of all.

