



**SMALL SCHOOL. BIG VALUE. REAL NEW MEXICAN PERKS.**

Dear Graduates and Friends,

As our fall semester is just past the midpoint, I thought I would take the opportunity to write to you with some recent law school news. One of my favorite parts of serving as the law school's Dean is staying in touch with and continuing to get to know all of you. I also thoroughly enjoy keeping you informed regarding the many exciting things that are happening at our amazing and unique law school.

We had another wonderful start to this academic year, and I feel very fortunate to be here at UNM. At the beginning of August, the co-deanship officially ended after three years, and I was appointed to continue on as sole Dean for two more years. As I considered the transition and how I wanted to handle my sole deanship, I decided to appoint our Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Camille Carey, to also serve as the law school's first Vice Dean beginning at the start of the fall semester. I am extremely grateful to her for her willingness to step into this important role. Her official title is now Vice Dean & Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. In this role, she generally oversees all academic affairs as well as some significant internal administrative support operations. She also will serve as Acting Dean when I need to be away.

As you may know, law schools nationwide have finally started coming through what some were calling a "crisis" in legal education. What they are referring to is a significant decline in applications to law schools around the country over the past few years. Despite the nationwide trend, we were quite fortunate to be able to keep our application numbers relatively strong over the past several years. I believe this is due in large part to your support and to the continued positive and tightly-knit nature of our law school community. Thank you.

Our law school intentionally remains relatively small, affordable, and well-positioned within the field of legal education. This fall, our total enrollment at the law school is 357 students, including our new class of 106 enthusiastic and engaged first-year law students. In addition to new students, we also are welcoming three new full-time faculty members to our law school this year, Professor Laura Spitz, Professor Sonia Gipson Rankin, and Professor Paul Figueroa. We also are currently in the process of interviewing for several additional faculty positions. These new faculty members are joining a top-notch cohort of faculty members who, with your support and with the hard work of the law school's amazing staff, help us to achieve our goal of educating and training students to become excellent lawyers who will enrich and serve local, state, tribal, national, and international communities following graduation.

As I reflect on the ways that we work to achieve our goal, I would like to share with you just a few recent examples of the outstanding teaching, scholarship, and service that are happening at this law school. With so much good work happening, it's impossible to touch on everything that's being done so a handful of highlights will have to do for now.

Former Dean and Emeritus Professor Ted Parnall recently completed his seventh visit to Afghanistan, continuing his work with the USAID-funded Assistance for the Development of Afghan Legal Access and Transparency Project. His work focused on efforts to improve the quality of and access to legal

education, and it involved supporting law faculties in improving their curricula. You can read the impressive details [here](#). Professor Parnall received some significant insight to bring to the endeavors in Afghanistan from our colleague, Professor Scott England. Professor England, a Principal Lecturer in our Legal Analysis and Communication Program, provided Professor Parnall with a useful overview of how we are teaching legal analysis, writing, and oral advocacy to law students in New Mexico.

At the 2018 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education, which took place in Chicago, Professor Carol Suzuki presented, "Promoting Student Learning and Breastfeeding Behind Bars Through Multi-Faceted Social Justice Advocacy" to legal clinicians from around the country. This included presenting on the collaborative advocacy work that some students in our Clinical Law Program have engaged in. If you would enjoy learning more, our full news article about this work can be found [here](#).

In addition to serving as Interim Chief Legal Counsel for UNM, my former Co-Dean, Professor Alfred Mathewson, was invited to present at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law about contemporary issues in race and sports as well as on the incorporation of race into antitrust and corporate law. Separately, the law firm of Squire Patton Boggs and the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy also called on Professor Mathewson to speak on his experiences with community involvement in New Mexico. Like me, you may enjoy reading more about his recent experiences [here](#).

In just the past few months alone, our law students have enjoyed some notable experiences. For example, six of our students in the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Clinic researched and drafted an amicus brief that was filed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals and signed off by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Students in the Child & Family Justice Clinic and Community Lawyering Clinic partnered with local government and community organizations at a guardian/grandparents resource and legal fair in the South Valley where our students provided attendees with information on how to navigate the *pro se* legal process and eligibility for Kinship Guardianship.

This year, we were very pleased to welcome a total of seventeen new Native American students to our law school, including fifteen J.D. students and two students pursuing a Master of Studies in Law degree. In September, our Law and Indigenous Peoples Program held its annual Welcome Dinner for our new Native students, which I was fortunate to attend. This supportive and engaging event is wonderfully detailed [here](#), and it brought together students, staff, and faculty members, including Vice Dean Camille Carey, Associate Dean Christine Zuni Cruz, Professor John LaVelle, Professor Sonia Gipson Rankin, Professor Laura Spitz, Visiting Professor Kip Bobroff, and others.

We also have had some distinctive initiatives at the law school that may interest you. New Mexico ACTEC members, including the State Chair for New Mexico, Marjorie Rogers, our staff, and I are actively working to develop the ACTEC Foundation-funded *Research Project in Trust and Estate Planning Services for Rural and Underserved Populations*, which will be focused on developing publishable data around the unique trust and estate planning needs of these communities.

Similarly, we continue working to expand and diversify the pool of public interest attorneys who are specially trained to serve children through enhanced legal representation and policy advocacy. This effort, which can be seen across our student body, throughout our curriculum, and with our external partners, was funded with a multi-million dollar Children's Law & Racial Equity Planning Grant that we received from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Our Natural Resources & Environmental Law Program expanded with the relatively recent addition of a clinic section focused on Natural Resources & Environmental Law (NREL). This section is being supervised by Professor Gabe Pacyniak, who came to us from Georgetown University Law Center in 2017. In addition to the NREL Clinic section, our live-client mandatory clinical training offers four additional areas of practice: Economic Justice, Community Lawyering, Southwest Indian Law (SILC),

and Child & Family Justice. Together, these five clinic sections train our students while serving the needs of communities around our state.

Finally, we were honored to have the opportunity this year to confer the name of a beloved and long-serving member of New Mexico's legal community, Daniel A. Sisk, on one of our most visible classrooms, Room 2402, which is adjacent to the Bondurant Lecture Hall and across from the Leo M. Romero Classroom. Mr. Sisk, who was the last-surviving "name" partner of Modrall, Sperling, Roehl, Harris & Sisk, died on August 15, 2017 at the age of 90. Room 2402 was re-named the Sisk Lecture Hall in his honor in a small, private ceremony that was held last month.

Overall, our law school continues to foster a supportive learning and teaching environment, and we enjoy strong employment outcomes and a strong relationship with members of the New Mexico Bar. Our faculty, staff, students, graduates, donors, and friends continue to enjoy the benefits of this close and productive relationship with each other. Most recently, we were wonderfully reminded of this dynamic when over 500 members of our community appeared together as sponsors and attendees at this year's Distinguished Achievement Awards Dinner (DAAD). I would like to take this opportunity to again sincerely thank our [sponsors](#), without whom we could not have raised over \$100,000 from the evening for student scholarships. I also want to once again congratulate our deserving [honorees](#), Justice Ed Chavez (Ret.), Jill Marron, and Steve Scholl, as well as our Alumni Promise awardee, Aja Brooks. Finally, I would like to recognize the [members](#) of our volunteer Alumni Association Board, and its DAAD committee, for their continued service. It is one of my favorite law school events, and it was, once again, a joy to be a part of this year.

In addition to highlighting some of the achievements of members of our community, please consider this letter to be my invitation to you to participate and support our law school in any and all ways that you are interested. Often, very kind graduates and friends of the law school will say to me, "Let me know if there is ever anything I can do to help the law school." Of course, I always welcome anything you can give to help support us financially. We are good shepherds of your donations, and I can assure you that your gifts really make a difference in the lives of students. Apart from that, however, I hope that you will consider letting us know what interests you here and what you might be able to offer in terms of time and expertise shared with students. As I think about shared expertise, I also want to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the work of all of our adjunct faculty, past and present. This is a perfect example of the support and expertise that is so valuable to our students. The law school simply would not be the same without it.

While we have much good news to share and to celebrate, we of course have challenges that we continue to focus on as well. In today's market, for example, we continue to face intense competition, and it can be hard to convince New Mexico students to stay here in New Mexico for law school. As other law schools recruit greater populations of students in the aftermath of the crisis, they now are offering extremely generous financial aid packages. Even with our low tuition, these financial offers often lure New Mexico students away. A goal of mine is to get our most talented students to stay here, and we are working to find ways to respond to this challenge.

I would be remiss to not mention the bar exam. After a drop in the passage rate a few years ago, our numbers are once again quite strong. This is, in part, due to a concerted effort to support students in ways that will maximize bar passage while continuing to teach students to be deep thinkers and strong advocates for clients. I would like to thank donors, of time and money, who have contributed with the express goal of helping our students pass the bar exam. You have made a difference. These contributions have been, and continue to be, very important because they have allowed us to provide our students with certain types of support that otherwise might be unavailable to us.

I would like to close by again expressing how fortunate I think we all are to be members of this dynamic and diverse academic and professional community. I hope that you share my view. I also hope that you will think about how you can lend your support and guidance to the law school at this or at any time. I encourage you to stay up to date and in touch with us. Please take a look at the law school's [at-a-glance](#) statistics for 2018 and know that you are very welcome to contact me with your resulting questions, thoughts, or ideas. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sergio Pareja". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "S".

Sergio Pareja  
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