

Jose E. Coll (March 17th, 2026) WNMU President Select Statement

Chair Neville, Members of the Board of Regents and the WNMU Community,

I am deeply honored and thrilled to be selected as the next President of Western New Mexico University.

To the Board of Regents: Thank you for your trust and confidence in my leadership. I am eager to partner with you to advance the strategic vision of this remarkable institution and ensure we continue to serve our region with distinction.

To the Presidential Search Committee and the WNMU community: I want to extend my sincere gratitude to Regents Wertheim and Reed, and the search committee for their diligent work, and to all community members who took time from their busy schedules to attend the various candidate forums. Your active participation in selecting your next president during this pivotal time speaks volumes about your dedication to the future of our institution.

I would also like express my deepest thanks to Dr. Chris Maples for your unwavering leadership as interim president. Your steadfast guidance and dedication have been invaluable to WNMU, and I am incredibly grateful for the strong, stable foundation you are passing on.

As we make this transition, I am eager to roll up my sleeves and work alongside our community. I look forward to collaborating closely with the dedicated team of professionals at WNMU as well as our local, regional, state partners who help make our work possible.

To the incredible students, faculty, staff, and alumni: I am so excited to officially join the Mustang family. As I transition into this role, my absolute first priority will be to listen, learn, and collaborate with all of you to build upon our rich history.

When this institution was founded in 1893 as the Normal School of New Mexico, its purpose was singular and profound: to educate the teachers who would, in turn, build the future of a growing territory. From those frontier roots, a distinct philosophy of education was born at WNMU one that views learning not merely as a path to personal advancement, but as a deep civic responsibility and a catalyst for community resilience.

For over 130 years, WNMU has understood that true education must engage the whole person and adapt to the realities of the world around us. My approach to higher education is anchored in this history. I believe that a university must be both a steward of regional identity and a powerful engine for social mobility. Together, we will honor this philosophy by focusing on:

- **A Comprehensive Educational Experience:** We will champion our foundational **liberal arts** programs that cultivate the critical thinkers and adaptable citizens, while equally elevating the essential **trades** and applied sciences that build and sustain our communities. True wisdom requires both the mind and the hands.

- **Meeting State Workforce Needs:** Staying true to our founding mandate to serve the public good, we will continuously bridge the gap between education and industry, ensuring our graduates are uniquely prepared to lead, innovate, and thrive in the New Mexico and global economy.
- **Supporting Our Students:** To the students who represent our university with such grit across the region, I see your hard work. The discipline and resilience learned in and out of the classroom are vital components of a whole-person education. I am dedicated to supporting your holistic success.
- **Upholding Shared Governance:** A community as diverse and historic as ours requires all voices at the table. I pledge an unwavering commitment to shared governance. I look forward to working hand-in-hand with the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Associated Students, and the Board of Regents in a spirit of transparency, mutual respect, and collaborative leadership.

Looking Ahead to the Transition Over the next few months, I will be making several visits to campus to develop a comprehensive transition plan and to meet with stakeholders across the university and community. If you see me walking across campus or having a coffee at a local shop during these visits, please do not hesitate to stop me. I am genuinely looking forward to speaking with you, hearing your stories, and listening to your hopes for WNMU.

Lastly, I want to thank the Mustang Community for welcoming my family so warmly. Cary and I look forward to making Silver City and the State of New Mexico home!

Go Mustangs!