

Dr. David J. Schmidly
UNM North Golf Course Neighborhood Association Meeting
November 4, 2007

CLOSING COMMENTS

My goal is for UNM to act responsibly, with transparency, and as a good neighbor. And for the record, I don't think your interests -- as our neighbors -- are mutually inconsistent with those of the taxpayers, or those of our alumni, or the students and tuition-paying parents.

I come here with the goals of student success and institutional greatness. I think you share those goals. Certainly, everybody in this room has a stake in achieving them. If that's going to happen, however, we have an obligation to utilize our property to support those core missions.

I want for us to do it in a responsible, socially-conscious way.

I want to protect the green space, and improve it.

I think we all have an obligation to do whatever we can, in all circumstances, to minimize our carbon-footprint and preserve wildlife – and to conserve precious natural resources like trees and water.

And I never doubted the special place this area holds in the hearts of this community.

We face the challenge of balancing two critical responsibilities. The responsibility to taxpayers, our students and tuition-paying parents to keep costs low by utilizing our property to fulfill our core missions. At the same time, we owe it to the greater community to do so in a socially responsible way that benefits everyone.

I've listened to the concerns of the neighborhood. I want you to know that I share your objectives for the environment and continuing the open recreational use of this area.

I'm a newcomer to all this. You don't know me. But I pledge to each of you that I will be open and reasonable and transparent. You deserve nothing less.

Against more than 40 years of discussions about taking the North Golf Course, The Regents used our Request for Information to seek out alternatives that will protect the green space, minimize our carbon-footprint, preserve wildlife, conserve resources, and honor the special history and sense of place that is the north golf course.

What is emerging, I believe, is the possibility of a win-win for students and alumni, UNM, and the community at large.

For UNM and its students it means \$2 M annually – an amount that we'll leverage to provide almost 29-million-dollars to support our core missions of education and research. It'll mean educational opportunities for medical professionals in fields related to aging; exposure of our students and faculty to the wisdom, views, and experiences of seniors; re-connection with alumni; and possible new sources of giving.

For Seniors, it'll mean physical, mental and recreational activities that will extend their lives. It'll provide mental engagement and good health. It'll allow them to re-connect with a special place and with vibrant, engaging young people. Just like it has done at other universities, it'll provide a flexible living arrangement that'll meet changing needs – from independent living to full nursing care, all with the best medical care anywhere.

For the larger Albuquerque Community, it'll mean enhancement of previously-neglected recreational facilities. It can achieve not just protection of a historic and treasured golf course, but improvements to a much-needed green space that provides a buffer from the urban environment. It can mean major improvements to the perimeter running track and new amenities that can make this space even better.

I realize this is a deeply personal and emotional issue, one you feel very strongly about.

After all, this is your neighborhood we're talking about. I'm sensitive to your concerns, and I share many of them.

We've tried to listen to you, and we've followed through. We've condensed the footprint of the facility while preserving vistas.

We've improved the traffic pattern by using University to provide access. And, of course, we've increased the size of the golf course and significantly increased the buffer.

But we're by no means finished – and to conclude our meeting in the spirit of moving forward in a positive manner, I want to propose that we reach out to you by creating a Community Advisory Committee, whose job it would be to help us make revisions to the site plan.

As we move forward, we want the active input of the neighborhood associations' representatives into the redesign of the golf course and the plan for the facility itself. You are the ones best suited to suggest measures and amenities that will minimize the project's impact.

We'll ask the Committee to report back within a reasonable time frame. Hopefully, such a process can help us to develop a plan that'll meet our needs, and yours as well – one that'll reflect all our wishes for this important project.