

ALL UNIVERSITY MESSAGE

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with a mixture of excitement and sadness that I write today to let you know that I have accepted a new leadership position at Mayo Clinic as the Executive Director of Mayo Clinic Cancer Programs and Director of the Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center, beginning in August. As many of you know, Mayo Clinic is the nation's top-ranked academic health care delivery system. In my new role, I will have authority and responsibility for Mayo's cancer missions (clinical care delivery, research, education and training, and community outreach and engagement) and will lead the Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center at all Mayo sites (Rochester, Minnesota; Phoenix/Scottsdale, Arizona; and Jacksonville, Florida), as well as newly developing global cancer programs in London, England and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. I am greatly looking forward to working directly with Mayo Clinic President and CEO [Gianrico Farrugia, M.D.](#) who is leading a visionary transformation to assure that Mayo Clinic continues to have a tremendous national and global impact, and, to address health equity, that Mayo Clinic is accessible to all through partnerships and highly innovative means of direct and virtual patient care.

Yet, the greatest personal and professional experience of my life, particularly over the past 20 years, has been to lead the successful development of the University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center. It has been a transformational and impactful journey for me personally and professionally (sometimes thrilling and sometimes very challenging) and for so many of my colleagues at UNM and from across the country who have worked so hard to achieve this goal for the people of New Mexico. I first came to New Mexico and UNM in 1981 after completing medical school and part of my Pathology residency training at Mayo Clinic. I was blessed to be mentored in those early years by UNM School of Medicine Dean Dr. Leonard Napolitano and Chairs of the Department of Pathology, Drs. Robert Anderson and Cecilia Fenoglio-Preiser. It is unbelievable to me that I have lived in New Mexico for 40 years, but it is why my heart and soul are so deeply rooted in this place, its landscape, and its people. New Mexico has become and will always be my home. To be offered the leadership of the UNM Cancer Center in late 1999 by Dr. Philip Eaton, then Executive Vice President of the newly created UNM Health Sciences Center, was a tremendous opportunity and an act of trust. I am so very proud of our team of faculty and staff - from the UNM School of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Population Health, UNM Hospital, UNM Medical Group, and Lovelace Biomedical - for what we have envisioned and achieved. We started the Cancer Center with a clear purpose in mind and an ethical imperative: *to assure that all New Mexicans would have access to state-of-the-art cancer treatment and the opportunity to participate in cancer research, right here in our home State, surrounded by their family and friends who loved and supported them.* I believe that we have achieved this goal.



Our strategy was to take advantage of New Mexico's unique opportunities and challenges including access to our nation's most advanced science and technology and the challenge of addressing and overcoming the overwhelming health disparities in New Mexico's multiethnic urban and rural communities and Tribal Nations. In our science, we have focused on discovering the causes and developing the cures and means to prevent cancers that disproportionately affect the people of New Mexico. Our clinical mission was to not only develop state-of-the-art cancer diagnosis and treatment facilities at UNM in Albuquerque, but also a statewide collaborative network in partnership with community-based health care systems and cancer practices. In education, we have sought to provide opportunities to educate and train students from all of our communities in cancer medicine, research, and public health, and to particularly create a supportive and culturally-appropriate training pathway. And we have always engaged deeply with the communities we serve, to understand and address their challenges and needs, with an intent to overcome our State's tremendous disparities in cancer incidence and outcome.

When we started in November 1999, the UNM Cancer Center had 12 cancer physicians, \$7 million in cancer research funding, and a \$9 million annual budget. Today, the UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of the nation's 51 pre-eminent Comprehensive Cancer Centers (the top 3%), federally designated and funded by the National Cancer Institute, with 143 board-certified cancer physicians from every medical and surgical specialty, 106 cancer scientists who have garnered over \$50 million annually in cancer research funding, and a \$316 million annual budget. I am transitioning from my leadership role with the center in great shape, as we are just successfully completing the renewal of our federal designation and funding as a Comprehensive Cancer Center from the National Cancer Institute, and, with the support of the State Legislature and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, we have gained a significant increase in recurring program support and funds for facility expansion.

I have every confidence that the UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center will continue to thrive under new leadership and with Dr. Ziedonis's guidance. As Dr. Ziedonis launches a national search for a new Center Director this fall, the Center will be capably led by a transition team consisting of: Alan Tomkinson, Ph.D. (who will serve as Interim Cancer Center Director and Interim PI of the Center's National Cancer Institute Support Grant); Zoneddy Dayao, M.D. (who will continue as Deputy Director of the Cancer Center, Institutional Chief Medical Officer for Oncology with full authority for our clinical operations, and Chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology); Carolyn Muller, M.D. (who will serve as Interim Deputy Director of the Center's National Cancer Institute Support Grant and continue as its Associate Director for Clinical Research and Chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology); Rodney Martinez (Chief of Finance and Administration); Rae Ann Paden, M.S. (Director of Research Administration); and Erin Fitzgerald, M.S. (Administrator of the Cancer Center Support Grant). Together this team will continue critical



recruitments and program building that are so essential for the center's growth by working with the Center's exceptional team of Senior Leaders (Associate Directors Drs. Marianne Berwick, Andrew Sussman, Sarah Adams, Angela Wandinger-Ness, and Scott Ness), Research Program Leaders (Drs. Linda Cook, Shiraz Mishra, Mary Ann Osley, Michelle Ozbun, Steve Belinsky, Sarah Adams, and Eric Prossnitz), Shared Resource Directors (Drs. Scott Ness, Diane Lidke, Mara Steinkamp, Jennifer Gillette, Shane Pankratz, Yan Guo, Tudor Oprea, Jeremy Edwards, Andrew Sussman, Dolores Guest, Sarah Adams, and Dennis McCance), and the outstanding cancer physicians who drive clinical research and cancer clinical trials (including Drs. Ursa Brown-Glaberman, Carolyn Muller, Sarah Adams, Leslie Andritsos, Neda Hashemi, Atul Kumar, and John Kuttesch). All of these accomplished faculty leaders are supported by outstanding teams of staff in Clinical Operations, Research Administration, the Clinical Research Office, and the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement.

As my heart and soul are so intertwined with the people and place of New Mexico, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to retain a faculty position at UNM as I start my new role at Mayo. My husband Ross Zumwalt, M.D., who is assuming a new position at the Mayo Clinic in Forensic Pathology, and I will maintain our primary home and residence here in New Mexico. As I remain so deeply committed to overcoming our State's tremendous cancer disparities and honoring the commitments and partnerships we have developed with New Mexico's Tribal Nations and Hispanic communities, I will continue to collaborate with an outstanding team of UNM faculty to lead a large NCI-funded Center at UNM (The NCI Participant Engagement-Cancer Genome Sequencing Center) focused on discovering the genomic, environmental, and behavioral mechanisms underlying cancers that disproportionately affect American Indians and Hispanics, leading to disparities in incidence and outcome. Through culturally respectful community engagement, continued partnership with Tribal Nations and Tribal-serving organizations, and real-time return of clinical genomic sequencing results to cancer patients, we seek to assure the beneficence of our work, improve patient lives, and enhance the health of our communities.

In closing, I wish to thank all of you for the opportunity to work with you these many years. What a wonderful experience this has been and will continue to be. I thank all of the outstanding physicians, scientists, and staff associated with UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center, as well as the leadership of the UNM Health Sciences Center. I wish to thank Dr. Richard Lauer, our recently retired Chief Medical Officer, for creating such an outstanding cancer care delivery system for the benefit of our patients. For those UNM faculty and staff who I have recruited to New Mexico, you will always have my support and I will always be accessible to you. I wish to thank the many donors who have created endowments and made contributions to assure our success, the community leaders and organizations who have supported us and with whom I have been so proud to be associated, and, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and her leadership team, our State Legislators, and the New Mexico Congressional Delegation who have always provided critical



support for our mission. I want to thank New Mexico's Tribal Nations for their trust and support of our partnerships and our External Scientific, Internal, and Community Advisory Boards who continue to provide critical guidance.

I am particularly grateful for the unwavering support of UNM School of Medicine Dean Martha Cole McGrew, UNM Vice Chancellor for Clinical Affairs Michael Richards, Vice Chancellor Emeritus John Trotter, UNM School of Medicine CFO Kristin Gates, UNM President Garnett Stokes, UNM Executive Vice President/ Health System CEO Douglas Ziedonis, UNM Government Affairs Leader Dr. Barbara Damron, and UNM Regent President Douglas Brown and all past and current UNM Regents.

With deep love, gratitude, and appreciation,

Cheryl Willman, M.D.

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