

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

Office of the Mayor/Chief Administrative Officer



August 16, 2018

Board of Regents
University of New Mexico
PO Box 4895
Albuquerque, NM 87196-4895

Dear Board of Regents,

I have written previously about the importance of the University of New Mexico (UNM) soccer program to the City of Albuquerque. UNM is a source of pride for our city and I believe we should do our best to support all aspects of “our” University. Though I have no formal role in your process, I offer my perspective from a uniquely relevant combination of elected leadership roles. As the Mayor of Albuquerque, voters tasked me to lead with respect to issues we face as a community. As your recent State Auditor, I have been directly involved in efforts to bring financial accountability to UNM athletics, and as former State Senator I am versed in UNM’s appropriations and budget. As you prepare for another vote on the matter this week, I reach out to suggest an alternative course of action that might achieve a better outcome for all involved.

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With any complex decision, it’s important to consider not just the choice at hand, but when the opinion should be made, and who the ultimate decider should be. The recent decision by our Attorney General gives the Board an opportunity to reconsider its actions and forge a different path ahead. It is my hope, that above all your urgent challenges, you can simply defer a final decision and give our state’s leadership a chance to come up with better options. In just a few short months, there will be a new Governor, likely new Regents and a legislative session blessed with millions of expected surplus budget dollars.

While there are many pressing needs throughout our state, there are indications from legislators on relevant committees that they intend to address this issue as soon as they are in session. The months prior to the session give the University ample time to begin work with the Legislature on a solution. Sending the message to UNM athletes that a resolution will be sought at the Legislature also helps student athletes make more

thoughtful decisions about their future at the University. Giving the Legislature the opportunity to act is the prudent course forward.

As State Auditor, I repeatedly called for improving financial accountability at UNM. It was my hope that the special audit we conducted in 2017 would give the University a blueprint of multiple areas in need of reform to achieve better fiscal health and accountability. Nowhere in that audit did we recommend any severe cuts to UNM athletics -- especially to successful programs. In fact, to suggest that cutting a few sports would solve any of the broader issues found regarding financial management is a conflation of problems at best, and at worst it is a distraction to avoid accountability. The type of financial reform needed at UNM, and outlined in the special audit, should address a wide variety of UNM sectors and practices.

Finally, while I personally support saving all of the athletic programs, as Mayor, I must highlight how important the soccer program is to the City. The UNM Men's Soccer Team is the cornerstone to building Albuquerque as a complete soccer community. The City of Albuquerque has already invested to help host a new professional soccer team in Albuquerque at the Isotopes Park. We have also increased funding for our middle school soccer program. While we all love different sports, the reality is that more kids play soccer than any other sport in our city, and its reach is broad and deep across all income groups, genders and ethnicities. We are actively taking the steps that would allow a child growing up in Albuquerque to participate in successful soccer programs from the youth level on to college and professionally. This type of approach will benefit the City's economy, the development of its youth and the growth of our community pride.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Board of Regents consider delaying this decision at the meeting on Friday and give the New Mexico State Legislature the opportunity to help with this issue. If you can permit that, then regardless of the outcome, we can at least be confident every opportunity will be explored, the public will be included fully, and the decisions will be in the best public interest.

In the Spirit of Albuquerque,



Timothy M. Keller
Mayor