

Good afternoon graduates, faculty, families, and friends.

It is truly an honor to stand before you today, not only as a member of the UNM Board of Regents but also as a proud alumna of this university and a fellow Economics graduate. In fact, I first met my husband of 41 years, right here in an Econ class—a reminder that sometimes, your college experience shapes your life in ways you never imagined!

After graduation, my husband and I moved to his tiny hometown to help his dad get the family restaurant on its feet. We planned to stay for maybe 2 years and start a family in 5 years. Spoiler alert - we had 3 children in 5 years and never left.

Eventually, I put my Economics degree to work—first as a community volunteer, helping to keep our rural hospital open, and then as a finance officer at that same hospital. In 2004, I began a 20-year career as the CEO of the hospital, leading the construction of a new facility and working to ensure quality care for our community for years to come.

Along the way, I served—and continue to serve—on numerous boards, from the local community development board to the Board of the American Hospital Association. Today, my husband

and I still own and operate the family restaurant on Route 66, which has been serving the community since 1956—blending business, community, and family in ways that continue to teach me lessons every day.

Economics is often described as the study of choices—how people and societies decide what to value and how to allocate resources, including time and talent. But it is more than numbers and models. It's about understanding people, communities, and the world we share. And that is exactly what you, as this year's graduates, are now prepared to do.

As you step into the next chapter, remember this: your degree gives you tools, but your curiosity, integrity, and courage will determine where and how far you go. Be bold, think critically, and approach problems with both heart and creativity. The world needs economists who can understand complexity and act with purpose.

Congratulations, Class of 2026! Your journey is just beginning, and I have no doubt that you will make a difference—because economics is not just about understanding the world around you; it's about shaping it.

Thank you.