



Public Affairs

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September 21, 2001

Statement from UNM President William C. Gordon

A remark by a University of New Mexico faculty member in his classroom last week has just come to my attention and to the attention of a large segment of our community. Given the events of September 11 and their aftermath, I cannot let the remark stand without a public response by the University and by me personally.

I consider the remark made by Professor Berthold to be irresponsible and deeply offensive. As a faculty member, he has not, in my opinion, exercised the appropriate restraint that we expect and deserve of our faculty. I know that many others – both on campus and in the community – have had the same reaction. While we all know that the First Amendment protects a broad range of speech, the fact that Professor Berthold's speech is protected does not make his comments any less repugnant.

Professor Berthold has communicated to me his deep regret for what he said and his shame for having said it. He has also told me that he has apologized to his students and will issue a public apology to the entire community.

It is very important to me that the citizens of New Mexico know that since September 11, the UNM community has come together in ways that are impressive and reflect in a positive way on our faculty, staff and students. In literally hundreds of classrooms throughout the campus, discussions have taken place in ways that have enabled students to express differing points of view and to look at different issues and their possible ramifications. Our faculty has helped guide these discussions in ways that are open and, at the same time respectful of others. UNM's various counseling programs have reached out to provide expanded counseling services. There have been peace vigils, discussion groups and information forums. These kinds of activities and more are likely to continue in the coming months as the United States responds to recent events.

A university is a place that allows and encourages free discourse and the open exchange of ideas. One consequence of having an environment in which these kinds of discussions can take place is that sometimes people will say things that are outrageous, disrespectful or hateful. We at the University of New Mexico can and should serve as a model of respectful, open and civil discourse. Faculty, staff and

students across our campus are deeply distraught that the remarks by this faculty member have departed so much from that goal.

Please let us know what you thought of this article. Comments to:
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