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April 24, 2023

Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali and Board of Regents  
New Mexico State University  
P.O. Box 30001  
Las Cruces, NM 88003

Dr. Jay Gogue, Interim Chancellor  
New Mexico State University  
P.O. Box 30001  
Las Cruces, NM 88003

Dear Chairwoman Devasthali, Members of the Board of Regents, and Interim Chancellor Gogue,

In light of new information regarding the horrific hazing incident in the New Mexico State University's Men's Basketball Program and multiple students coming forward with serious concerns about a culture of corruption within the university's athletic program, the New Mexico Higher Education Department is directing leadership at New Mexico State University take immediate action to address these mounting concerns.

Two student athletes reported incidents of ongoing hazing and sexual assault to the Men's Basketball coaching staff in February, but state that no action was taken at any level in response to these reports. One of those students has stated that he was asked to leave the program by newly appointed Coach Jason Hooten. If true, this action constitutes retaliation against a local, home-grown athlete and New Mexican for the act of coming forward with legitimate concerns and allegations of abuse and hazing.

All students, including those who decide to stay in their home communities to pursue higher education and compete in college athletics, must be kept safe and welcomed on our college and university campuses. Ensuring the safety and well-being of all students pursuing higher education in New Mexico is a top priority for the State of New Mexico and a critical responsibility of all governing boards and leadership at our colleges and universities. Incidents of violence, abuse, and corruption have been protracted at New Mexico State University, and we have grave concerns about the university's ability to adequately address ongoing corruption related to the Men's Basketball Program and the athletic program as a whole.

New Mexico State University must conduct a thorough independent investigation of all university-sponsored athletic programs, including the current leadership, coaches, and coaching staff, to identify the extent of misconduct and protect any student who comes forward with information or concerns without retaliation. This investigation should include a rigorous review of personnel, policies, documented complaints, and discipline. Additionally, the university should open another independent investigation regarding Coach Hooten's comments recommending that a student continue his basketball career elsewhere, dismissing the legitimate concerns of the student, and potential retaliation.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department requests a written response outlining the specific steps that the University is taking to address violence, abuse, and corruption in the athletics program by May 1, 2023. Below are points that must be addressed:



1. What is the university doing to address and resolve this matter;
2. The results of the new independent investigation of the Men's Basketball Program surrounding the recent alleged comments and decisions made by the new coaching staff that on their face appear to be retaliatory; and
3. A detailed plan for an independent investigation of the university's athletic program, including all university-sponsored athletic programs, current leadership, and personnel, in addition to a rigorous review of personnel at all levels, policies, documented complaints, and discipline within the athletics program.

Irrespective of the results of any independent investigation, the university must inform all students of their rights and processes under Title IX for the reporting of incidents related to hazing, violence, abuse, and corruption, in addition to a new system implemented by New Mexico State University in which all reports are immediately sent to and addressed by the university's leadership in the Office of the Chancellor and athletic program. Within this system, New Mexico State University shall provide written acknowledgment to the student confirming the university has received the report and the student is provided appropriate information about who to contact to report incidents at the federal level. Additionally, incidents must be reported to the New Mexico Higher Education Department and appropriate officials from the State of New Mexico.

The current culture and climate in New Mexico State University's athletics program does not reflect values under which the university was established nor the standard that New Mexico students deserve. We must ensure that all New Mexico students are safe and fully supported at all times. We expect that New Mexico State University will step up to uphold that duty to our students and New Mexicans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie M. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie M. Rodriguez  
Cabinet Secretary