

December 20,2024

Dear Members of the Western New Mexico University Community:

On behalf of the WNMU Board of Regents, I am sadly informing you that the Board has entered into a mutual agreement with President Joseph Shepard to terminate his contract, effective January 15, 2025.

In taking this mutual action, we want to acknowledge our deep gratitude to Dr. Shepard for his excellent leadership of our university over thirteen years. Under his tenure, our programs have grown in so many areas. Town and community relations have flourished. Our now-beautiful campus is approaching carbon neutrality. We are the New Mexico Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. Our programs in social work, business, and nursing have won national awards. We have MOUs with many institutions both in our state and internationally. The list of accomplishments is much longer than this.

We must note that our decision to work out a mutual agreement in no way is meant to reflect negatively on Dr. Shepard and his work as our President. In his own letter, Dr. Shepard explains why he asked to enter into this negotiation with the Board. He is selflessly stepping down for the good of the university in the face of the ongoing issues. We understand his reasons and hope that this action will allow the university community to move ahead with its important mission of educating our current and future students.

Dr. Shepard and his wife, Valerie Plame, deserve our admiration and so many good wishes. Please join us in expressing our appreciation of Dr. Shepard as we make this painful transition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary E. Hotvedt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary E. Hotvedt, PhD

Chair, WNMU Board of Regents