**UNM Responds to DACA with Protests and Solidarity**

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In the heart of downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico, on September 5, hundreds of people held signs with messages like “Undocumented, Unafraid” and “Black Lives Matter” and indigenous groups danced and played music as a sign of solidarity and unity with with every minority group in the city.

That same day, Jeff Sessions announced that the White House would be rescinding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and the New Mexico Dream Team (NMDT), an immigrant rights group, orchestrated a campus-wide peaceful protest. DACA is an Obama-era policy that protects an estimated 800,000 undocumented immigrants from deportation who came to the U.S. with their families as children. The University of New Mexico (UNM) is now figuring out how to deal with the news, as hundreds of DACA recipients study and work on campus.

The student-run organization, NMDT, called on and encouraged students and faculty alike to leave their classrooms and march through campus. Eventually the march became a city-wide demonstration and protesters walked miles down a major Albuquerque street to make their voices heard.

“[The demonstration] was a forum for Dreamers in the Albuquerque community to come together and feel solidarity with the activists from civil rights groups that organized the rally,” according to Ben Montoya, a UNM student and New Mexico resident who attended the protest. Montoya described that from what he can recall, there were a lot of crying and somber faces, “but there was such enthusiasm and support for the speakers who shared their experiences with DACA.”

When it comes to what percentage of those students who are also recipients of DACA, the numbers are less transparent. The UNM application process does not require students to relay their legal status and allows anybody to apply for university financial aid as long as they have proof of graduation from a New Mexico high school and residency in the state. However, it is estimated that around 7,400 New Mexican residents will be affected by DACA.

Regardless of the number of students directly affected by the decision, the community of students, advocacy groups and faculty members at UNM want the Trump administration and White House to know that they stand in solidarity with those impacted. “The main spokesperson from NMDT told everyone to call the governor's office, Congress and to get involved with the logistics of how this will play out in court,” said Montoya. At one point, the protest came to a halt in front of the office of UNM interim President, Chaouki Abdallah, who stated that he is unclear how the decision is going to affect the UNM community exactly, but that his staff is working with other universities and leaders to push Congress to act to preserve the protections.

The day after the protest broke out, the UNM vice president, Eliseo Torres sent out an official statement declaring that the university was against the Trump administration’s decision and conversely for the rights of undocumented students. “President Trump’s decision to revoke the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals protection will undoubtedly affect many of our fellow Lobos and members of The University of New Mexico and Albuquerque community,” said Torres, on Wednesday, September 6.

Since Donald Trump became President of the United States, young liberals have been extremely vocal and unapologetically against the new administration and their policies. At UNM, when the final ballot was cast and Trump was announced as President-Elect, the first thing the KIVA club, a student-run advocacy group on campus, did was organize all of their followers and stage a demonstration showing their opposition to the new commander and chief.

Students and Albuquerque residents took to the dimly lit streets of the city and blocked traffic for more than 3 hours, shouting the all too familiar chants heard from recent protests. Among those were, “no Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA,” which could be heard three blocks over from the main avenue that runs through the middle of town on old Route 66.

Now, whenever there is a major decision made by the Trump administration or an issue of civil/women's rights goes unresolved in the eyes of UNM students, there has likely been a protest organized shortly thereafter by one of the advocacy groups on campus.

The city of Albuquerque is most commonly known to people around the United States as the location for the popular drama Breaking Bad: a show about drugs, violence and the desert starring two white men. But what that show doesn’t provide its audience with about the city is the thriving community of its hispanic population and how integral they are to the history and economy of Albuquerque.

It is a place built on the traditions of Mexican and New Mexican culture, and those conventions are more or less observed in the demographics of UNM. As of 2017, 58 percent of the student body identify as Hispanic based on the Official Enrollment Reports from the Office of Institutional Analytics at UNM.