

The University of New Mexico

A NATIONAL LEADER IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The University of New Mexico has created an extraordinary record of national leadership in entrepreneurship. It stems from the combined impact of the University's prominent role in advancing Innovate ABQ, in facilitating rainforest-like interactions around innovation, in building strong relationships with nearby national labs, in advancing statewide initiatives for innovation, and in fostering collaborations that draw upon strengths inherent in Albuquerque and the university community. Key elements of the University's leadership stem from the following:

NATIONAL RANKINGS FOR INNOVATIONS

- ◇ [Albuquerque is ranked 1st among “best affordable & creative American cities.”](#)
- ◇ [New Mexico is ranked 1st for most likely having a university produce a “unicorn.”](#)
- ◇ [The University of New Mexico is ranked 2nd for innovation impact productivity among mid-sized universities.](#)
- ◇ [Albuquerque is cited as a key emerging metro area for life sciences talent clusters by CBRE.](#)
- ◇ [Albuquerque is named to the Quantum Insider's list of future quantum ecosystems.](#)
- ◇ [Albuquerque is listed as a new job hot spot by The Wall Street Journal.](#)

INNOVATEABQ: A MODEL FOR THE NATION

- ◇ The seven-acre InnovateABQ site is a model for cities across the nation and beyond seeking to jump-start unscripted interactions of an innovation rainforest. Located midway between downtown Albuquerque and the University of New Mexico (UNM) campus, the entire complex is designed to bring together entrepreneurs and their emerging businesses and spark catalytic interactions. The site's centerpiece is Lobo Rainforest, a six-story mixed-use facility that opened in 2017, with more than 100,000 square feet of space. The ground floor is home to [UNM Rainforest Innovations](#) (UNMRI, the technology-transfer and economic-development organization of UNM), the [Cecchi VentureLab](#) (UNM Rainforest Innovations' incubator), the [UNM Innovation Academy](#) (a UNM student program to stimulate creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship), [Sandia National Laboratories'](#) tech engagement office, the offices of global engineering firm [General Atomics](#), and the offices of Indigenous-led consulting firm Roanhorse Consulting LLC. Floors two through six offer housing and amenities for 310 UNM students.
- ◇ The Brookings Institution highlighted for the nation the work of InnovateABQ and Lobo Rainforest by publishing on July 13, 2023, a commentary by Lisa Kuuttila, CEO of UNM Rainforest Innovations, titled [“How a community innovation site is advancing entrepreneurship in Albuquerque.”](#)
- ◇ InnovateABQ is in turn the centerpiece for UNM's national leadership in combining the academic strengths of the university with the research capacities of nearby national laboratories including Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratory and with the business strengths of leading companies with facilities in New Mexico.

COLLABORATIONS THAT ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- ◇ UNMRI is partnering with [Right to Start](#), the national nonprofit organization championing entrepreneurship as a civic priority, to advance entrepreneurship in New Mexico by identifying barriers and exploring ways of removing them.

- ◇ With support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, UNMRI has started the New Mexico Tribal Entrepreneurship Enhancement Program, which seeks to create broader opportunity, wealth and job growth through enhancing entrepreneurship in tribal communities throughout New Mexico, especially those affected by coal mine closures. The Tribal Entrepreneurship Enhancement Program won the [2024 University Economic Development Association \(UEDA\) Award for Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).
- ◇ The Association of Public and Land Grant Universities named UNM a 2024 Innovation & Economic Prosperity (IEP) University Award Winner in Innovation - demonstrating outstanding work in technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and business development.
- ◇ UNM has structured monthly meetings with national labs to maximize activity: UNM has over 250 jointly-owned inventions with Sandia National Laboratories and over 50 jointly-owned inventions with Los Alamos National Laboratory.
- ◇ The new UNM Health Sciences & Main Campus Research Collaboration Seed Grant supports research collaborations at UNM. Administered by UNM Rainforest Innovations, the grant encourages investigators from UNM's main campus and Health Sciences to work together to advance research that may lead to new invention disclosures.
- ◇ UNMRI has a partnership with the New Mexico Economic Development Department for two new science and tech pitch and grant opportunities - the [University Team Pitch Award Pilot Program](#) (grants between \$100,000 to \$200,000) and [Advanced Energy Award Pilot Program](#) (grants between \$250,000 and \$1 million).
- ◇ In December 2023, Roadrunner Venture Studios opened in Albuquerque, backed by America's Frontier Fund and the New Mexico State Investment Council. Roadrunner works to commercialize American science and technology, especially ideas coming out of New Mexico's world-class national labs and innovation ecosystem.

DIGITAL VERSION:

View the pdf version, with hyperlinks, on the UNM Rainforest Innovations website.

