In Consideration of UNM’s Official Seal

Historical Review by Pamina M. Deutsch, Director of UNM Policy Office

Contemporary Review by Dr. Jozi De Leon, VP, for Equity and Inclusion
Contemporary Events - International

- University of Cape Town: call for removal of statutes of Cecil Rhodes, diamond-mining baron & progenitor of South Africa’s apartheid
- Oxford University: call for removal of statutes of Cecil Rhodes
Contemporary Events - National

- Ferguson, Mo. to Charleston, SC: call for removal of confederate flag
- Yale: Call for renaming of John C. Calhoun College
- Princeton: Call for renaming of Woodrow Wilson bldgs.
- Harvard: Royall Must Fall Campaign challenging the school’s crest
- University of Illinois: Call for the elimination of Chief Illiniwek as the mascot
Why Now?

- New Consciousness about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and increased diversity of students
- Students responding to racial injustice embedded in institutional histories & need to transcend that history
- Some symbols lend honor & legitimacy to people or events in history
NMSA 1978, § 21-7-4 ("Corporate powers of board"), which is based on the Enabling Act that created the University of New Mexico in 1889, states that:

The Board of Regents “shall constitute a body corporate...with the right...of making and using a common seal and altering the same at pleasure.”

This power of the Board is also expressed in Regents’ Policy 2.7 ("Use of the University’s name and Symbols").
The earliest known seal appeared in 1898-1899 on the University catalog. It resembled the Territorial Seal of New Mexico and featured the motto “Vita Lux Hominum,” the founding date, and an eagle.
The First Appearance of the Conquistador and Frontiersman

Sometime between 1909-1912, University President Edward Dundas MacQueen Gray, a Scotsman, designed an heraldic seal (pictured in a watercolor on display at Hodgin Hall). His seal superimposed the State of New Mexico seal upon a shield and included Spanish, French, and what were believed to be Native American symbols, as well as the figures of the conquistador and frontiersman.
President Gray’s seal was not officially adopted until 1923. The University’s catalog for 1918-1919 displayed the seal pictured below on the left, with a building that may have been modeled on the Kwataka men’s dormitory pictured on the right.
In 1923, the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents designated President Gray’s design as the official seal. It was noted “that considerable confusion has occurred during the past years” with several versions of the seal being used.
In 1934, Paul Walter, a professor of sociology, summarized concerns about the current seal and said the “heraldic design is incorrect in several important details.” The New York firm of Heinigke and Smith designed two versions of a new seal, A and B below.
However, on April 4, 1934, the Board of Regents postponed taking any action on the University seal.
On November 11, 1968, the New Mexico Lobo noted that President Ferrel Heady was presented with a medallion, which “incorporates elements of the University seal—the frontiersman, the conquistador, and the Latin motto...and utilizes a Zia Indian symbol of the roadrunner.”
On September 27, 1969, at the request of University Secretary John N. Durrie, the Board of Regents replaced the old seal (on left) with a new seal (on right) based on the presidential medallion designed by emeritus professor Ralph Douglass.
On November 9, 1978, the Daily Lobo reported that Burger King had used the UNM seal to sell fast food. Tony Hillerman, assistant to the University President, said “the University doesn’t care much.” The University’s attorney, Hillerman noted, “convinced us it would cost too much to register the seal as a trademark.”

Hillerman added, “If the average consumer thought the University had anything to do with cooking that food at Burger King, they wouldn’t go near the damn place.”

Note: The official seal was first registered as a trademark in 1999.
Irene Blea, the Director of Hispanic Student Services, wrote to University President Richard E. Peck on October 30, 1991 after seeing a banner that displayed the official seal:

“[R]ecently I concentrated on the symbol on the rich red banner behind the speakers [at a forum]. I found the symbolism somewhat contradictory to what was being said. A review of the banner will exhibit two white European males (no females) holding military arms in traditional male garb. This symbol completely overlooks the fact that women and Native Americans were very much present in the region UNM serves before the appearance of the European. I suggest a review of the banner and a different design that is inclusionary and more contemporary.”
All Voices Count

- We ask everyone to write their thoughts, ideas, opinions, recommendations on a card
- Voice your opinion by raising your hand and waiting to be called on
- Participate in a respectful and civil manner
Additional Information

- Visit [http://president.unm.edu/campus-community-engagement/university-seal/index.html](http://president.unm.edu/campus-community-engagement/university-seal/index.html) for up-to-date information regarding the process

- E-mail comments/suggestions to [unmseal@unm.edu](mailto:unmseal@unm.edu)

- Register for the listserv via the sign-in sheet or on the website