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## John Perovich - Biography

William E. Davis

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## JOHN PEROVICH

### **12th University President**

Served 1982 - 1984

Born Van Houten, New Mexico

February 9, 1924

Perovich was selected as acting president on April 1, 1982 and took office the following July 1. In November the Regents announced Perovich would continue to serve indefinitely as the 12th president.



### **Education**

Raton High School, 1942

B.B.A. UNM, 1948

M.B.A. UNM, 1949

### **Career**

2nd Lieutenant, US Army Air Corps from 1943-45. Perovich has worked as purchasing agent, comptroller, and vice president for Business and Finance – all at UNM.

### **Development of the University during Perovich's term**

# University of New Mexico Presidents

In a letter dated December 23, 1982, Regent Calvin Horn asked the governor-elect, Toney Anaya, not to consider him for an appointment to a third six-year term. The sixty-three-year-old Horn had served twelve years on the board, six as president.

The School of Law's Clinical Law Program, which placed law students in real-world work, its Indian Law Program, and its Institute for Public Law and Services had earned a national reputation. In 1983, a milestone was reached when women made up more than half the student body.

A significant development in research came in 1984 with the establishment of the Institute for Space and Nuclear Power Studies within the College of Engineering. In addition to professional training and research in space nuclear power and space systems technology, the institute hosts a major international forum in space technology that includes a design competition for secondary students.

In 1984, UNM had more than twenty-four thousand students on the main and branch campuses. Whereas in the pre-WWII period the average student at UNM was a recent high school graduate, by the 1980s the student body also included growing numbers of nontraditional students, and the average age was twenty-seven. Many had families or full-time jobs, necessitating more than 850 late afternoon and evening classes. More than half the UNM students were women, and more than 38 percent were minorities.

Some of the programs introduced included the Excel Scholarship, which provided \$1,000 per year for four consecutive years to the upper 10 percent of each high school graduating class, plus the UNM ACT Scholarship to cover full tuition for students who scored at least a composite score of twenty-six on the American College Test. Also, the university had twenty-four National Merit Scholars in 1984. New Mexico

was one of only five states with an operational state work-study program, which included more than three hundred students per year in on-campus jobs.

In the spring of 1984, the university published the first volume of *Quantum*, a journal of research and scholarship.

Voters approved bond issues for new branch campus facilities in Los Alamos (\$1.2 million), Valencia County (\$2.5 million), and Gallup (\$4 million).

Among the most dramatic developments at the university during Perovich's presidency was the expansion of the Medical Center, which now included the Carrie Tingley Hospital. The UNM Hospital dedicated a new seventy-four-thousand-square-foot, three-story critical care addition that housed an emergency department, a level I trauma center, a burn center, pediatric services, and new medical and surgical care units. Before the dedication of the building, Bernalillo County voters approved an eight-year mill levy to support both the UNM Hospital and the UNM Mental Health Center.

Another major development was designation of the Center for Non-Invasive Diagnosis, which was established in collaboration with Los Alamos National Laboratory. In this program, scientists and physicians from both the university and the national lab focused on developing magnetic imaging as a safe, noninvasive diagnostic tool. The Rio Grande Research Corridor involved UNM, New Mexico State, and New Mexico Tech in a collaborative effort funded by the legislature. UNM's other program in the research corridor was the Center for High Technology Materials.

Continued growth in the collections of the UNM General Library was augmented by an additional \$330,000 in the 1983-84 budget, plus another additional \$350,000 in the 1984-85 budget.

The spring of 1983 saw the graduation of the first students in the School of Medicine's Primary Care Curriculum. An outgrowth of the innovative, interdisciplinary program the school's founders had developed twenty years earlier, the PCC gave students the option of studying basic medical sciences alone or in small tutorial groups and working with physician preceptors instead of attending standard lectures.

In 1984 the School of Medicine had a total of 837 doctors who graduated, 152 of them had completed postgraduate training and gone on to practice in New Mexico.

In 1982, University Architect Van Dorn Hooker was made a fellow of the American Institute of Architects at an investiture ceremony in Hawaii.

During the Perovich years, construction was started on a new track-and-field facility and an addition to Johnson Center. Planning began on an eight hundred car parking facility on Lomas Boulevard, a new Schools of Management/Social Sciences building, a new Science and Engineering Center, and expansion and improvement of the football stadium. The new Student Services Center was completed, bringing closely related offices together under the same roof for the first time.

Environmental improvements on campus included new landscaping on the south side of La Posada, around the Cancer Center, and in front of Hodgin Hall. A joint venture with the city resulted in a landscaped bus stop with a sculpture on the corner of Girard and Central, and a contract was negotiated to landscape medians on Central.

A project near to all alumni was the remodeling of Hodgkin Hall at a final cost of \$1,355,000, which included \$154,595 for furnishings. The project turned the building into a showpiece of period furnishings and a museum for university memorabilia. It also provided a home for the Alumni Association and the UNM Foundation and was used for entertaining alumni and friends, as well as becoming a popular stop for visitors touring the campus. Hodgkin Hall was unveiled to the public at the UNM Homecoming on November 5, 1983.

The Bernalillo County Mental Health-Mental Retardation Center opened a \$1.6 million wing for adolescent and geriatric patients on January 10, 1984. Ground breaking for the critical care wing in the UNM Hospital was held in April 1984.

UNM enjoyed a moment in the national spotlight, as the Pit was the site for the NCAA Final Four Basketball tournament on April 2-4 1983. North Carolina defeated the University of Houston.

When Perovich first accepted the job of president on an interim basis he said he would serve two years. He announced his retirement in December 1984, effective January 1, 1985, after forty years of employment at UNM.

On March 20, 1984, the regents named a New York consulting firm to assist the board in its search. The board also stated that it intended to name a new president by June 30, 1984. The regents missed their target date, but on August 7, 1984, the board president announced that John Elac would be appointed president at the next public meeting of the board, which was scheduled for September 4. Following the announcement of Elac's pending appointment, protests erupted on the UNM campus. Among the loudest was that Elac had personal ties with Robert Cox, the head of the consulting firm. The faculty met on August 20, 1984 and voted no confidence in the

regents, and later on August 22, the Associated Students of UNM unanimously passed an emergency resolution condemning the regents. Elac met with Governor Toney Anaya, who has said that if he were unsatisfied with Elac's credentials, he would ask him not to accept the presidency. After returning to Washington D.C., Elac contacted the regents and notified them that he would not accept the presidency of UNM. The regents then turned to another finalist in the search – Tom Farer.

Excerpt from William E. Davis' Miracle on the Mesa.

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