

# University of New Mexico receives largest gift in its history

\$30 million gift from Gail and James Ellis to transform business education, rename business school



The University of New Mexico has received the largest philanthropic gift from an individual or couple in its 135-year history. A \$30 million commitment from Gail and Jim Ellis will transform the University's business school, expand access and opportunity for students, and strengthen New Mexico's economic future for generations to come.

In recognition of the gift, the Anderson School of Management—which has shaped the business education of New Mexico students since 1947—will be renamed **The James and Gail Ellis School of Business Leadership**. It is the first time in UNM's history that a college or school has been named in recognition of a philanthropic investment.

“This gift expands what’s possible for our students and positions UNM to build a nationally recognized business school grounded in excellence, equity, and opportunity,” said UNM President Garnett S. Stokes. “The Business School built a strong reputation over nearly 80 years, producing graduates who went on to lead businesses, nonprofits, and public institutions across New Mexico and beyond. What the Ellis family has made possible is the next chapter of that story.”

## **Immediate and Long-Term Impact for Students and Faculty**

This gift is anchored by a permanent endowment that will sustain progress over time while delivering support for students and faculty. It expands access through scholarships and financial support, strengthens the connection between education and career outcomes, deepens experiential learning, and advances a forward-looking curriculum aligned with the demands of today's economy. Five million of the gift is structured as a challenge fund, designed to match new endowments or contributions of \$250,000 or more to existing funds by other donors.

For students, the gift will create expanded scholarships, emergency funding, and support for global learning—resources designed to ensure that talented students can enroll, persist, and graduate regardless of financial circumstance. The Business School currently serves a high proportion of first-generation and diverse learners, and the endowment is structured to strengthen that commitment over time.

For faculty, the investment creates new resources to develop a forward-looking curriculum, pursue research that strengthens ties to New Mexico's economy, and elevate the Business School's national profile. Faculty will also gain expanded capacity to build the employer partnerships and mentorship infrastructure that connect classroom learning to real-world career outcomes.

***“UNM opened doors for me. It gave me the foundation to build a career across business, academia, and global markets. This investment creates that same opportunity for the next generation. If we do this right, the impact will be measured in the strength of the communities our graduates serve.”***

***– Jim Ellis***

The gift also deepens support for experiential learning, including competitions, travel grants, applied research, and internship programs that have long defined the School's practical, hands-on approach. Those programs will expand in scope and reach, opening access to leading employers both within New Mexico and nationwide.

"This is a defining moment for our school and for the students we serve," said Dean Alina Chircu. "The Ellis family's investment gives us the platform to compete nationally while staying rooted in the communities and the state that make UNM what it is."

## **A Defining Moment for UNM Philanthropy**

"Robert O. Anderson's name has been part of this school's story since 1974, and the institution he helped elevate has produced generations of graduates who have strengthened New Mexico," said Jeffrey Todd, president and CEO of the UNM Foundation. "The Ellis family's investment marks the next phase of that trajectory. It reflects a clear belief that sustained, visionary philanthropy is what positions a business school to stand alongside its peers at leading public flagship universities nationwide. This is how institutions expand access, deliver meaningful outcomes, and compete with purpose. We are deeply grateful to Gail and James for their confidence in what UNM can become."

### **About the Ellis Family**

Jim Ellis is an alumnus of The University of New Mexico and has served as National Vice Chair of the UNM Foundation Board since 2023. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from UNM in 1968 and an MBA from Harvard University. A global expert in commerce and business education, Ellis served for 12 years as dean of the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, building a career that spanned academia and international business leadership. He grew up in Albuquerque, attended Jefferson Middle School and Highland High School, and comes from a family with deep roots in New Mexico's business community. His connection to UNM is personal as well as professional.

Gail Ellis, Psy.D, is a clinical psychologist. Her grandfather founded the Galvin Manufacturing Company in 1928, which was re-named Motorola in 1947 and ultimately became a pioneer in the mobile communications industry. Gail earned two master's degrees and a Doctor of Psychology degree in clinical psychology and worked with students at Pasadena City College in Pasadena, California. An avid equestrienne, Gail rides and competes with several horses. She served on the board of Kidspace Children's Museum in Pasadena and was a member of the California Institute of Technology's Physics, Mathematics, and Astronomy Council.

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### **Support of The Anderson Family**

"The Anderson family is deeply grateful for the honor our father received and wholeheartedly supports the business school as it turns toward a new chapter," said Phelps Anderson, son of Robert O. Anderson. "We know he would have wanted what is best for UNM, and we stand firmly in that spirit."