

The Luna Light



"Creating Opportunities for You!"

Second Volume 2, Issue 5

February 6, 2019

At seventeen



Luna Community College's barbering/cosmetology program celebrated its 17th year anniversary on Monday, Jan. 28. Several students along with instructor Germaine Sandoval celebrated with a cake provided by Luna employee Janice Varela. Pictured (from left): Briana Garza, Gabriella Rodriguez, Samantha Padilla, Raylyn Sanchez, Conferina Halpern, Jovanna Gastelum, Veronica Arzaga, Sandoval, Tyree Torrence and Aaron Sanchez. Sandoval has been part of the program since 2002.

Luna presidential finalists named *Decision expected in February*

The Luna Community College Board of Trustees is expected to decide upon and name its selection for president this month.

The board named seven finalists for the position after a special meeting recently on campus. They are (in alphabetical order) Dr. Nicholas Akinkuoye, Dr. Arturo Cervantes, Dr. Anthony Hancock, Dr. Robert Muñoz, Dr. Diana Pino, Dr. Rolando Rael and Dr. LeRodrick Terry.

The national search began in mid-2018 and was extended in November after the LCC Board of Trustees' original choice, Dr. Bruce Moses, withdrew his name from consideration. Dr. Jeremy Moreland, who had been one of the original

finalists, recently accepted another position.

Three of the individuals were named as finalists in September.

Akinkuoye, Cervantes, Muñoz and Rael appeared in public forums Jan. 24-25, fielding questions from audience members.

Members of the campus community have had opportunity to provide the board anonymous feedback on the candidates. Original finalists — a group which included Hancock, Pino and Terry — also appeared in public forums, with feedback solicited from the campus community.

Luna's Fernandez and Varela to present at NMHEAR Conference

Luna Community College's Sierra Fernandez and Academic Raymond Varela have been chosen to speak at this year's New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention (NMHEAR) conference in Albuquerque. The conference will be held Feb. 21-22.

The duo will be speaking on the college's retention and completion plan and explaining the process of collecting and utilizing baseline data. Fernandez and Varela serve as chair and co-chair of Luna's Retention and Completion Committee.

"It's a new committee, and we have accomplished a lot this year," said Fernandez. "Part of our work has included the development of a survey, and we're working with institutional research director Maxine Salas to see where we're at with our data. We have four areas that we are focusing on — advisement, tutoring, instructional technology/distance education and recruitment and campus life. We will be talking about the progress we have made."

Fernandez, a student success coach in the nursing department, and Varela, coordinator of the Academic Center for Excellence, are the only individuals from Luna who will give a presentation.

The committee is in the first year of developing a three-year retention plan that aligns with the college's strategic plan.

"Retention and completion are extremely important issues that impact our students and our ability to



Luna Community College STEM Director Francisco Apodaca (far left) is pictured with Sierra Fernandez and Raymond Varela. Apodaca recommended Fernandez and Varela to present at the NMHEAR conference.

continue to work as a college," said Varela. "We have to retain and complete all our students; it's one of our goals as a college."

"One of the things we have to do is measure strategies that increase our retention and completion rates," said Fernandez. "Data is extremely important; we want our actions to be evidence-based."

Among the workshop subjects at the conference will be dual credit and Higher Learning Commission accreditation.

Fernandez said the committee researched what other colleges have done in the area of retention and completion.

"We tailored best practices to Luna and have had input from many individuals within subcommittees," said Fernandez. "We are confident that we are developing a plan that is putting us on the right path; we have learned a lot in the process, and we believe we have a promising future."

Both Fernandez and Varela said a main component to the

success of retention and completion is participation.

"I've learned how important it is to involve the entire campus and how important data-driven action is," said Fernandez.

"In order for all of us to be successful at this college, it's vital that everyone take part in it," said Varela. "Everyone is part of retention and completion."

The conference's keynote speaker is Dr. Deborah Santiago, CEO of Excelencia in Education in Washington, D.C. She is expected to focus on what it means to actually serve Latino students in higher education.

Serna says goodbye to Luna

Luna Community College interim President Ricky Serna sat down with The Luna Light staff for an interview. Serna is leaving Luna on Friday, Feb. 8, after 19 months on the job.

What would you consider your top accomplishments while at Luna?

I like to believe that I have helped build trust at the college. Very early on, I recognized the dire need to restore trust in both individual ability and for administration. This environment made it difficult for employees to feel empowered to help advance the institution. I believe the foundation upon which shared governance was established is trusting that we can speak freely about our beliefs and perspective without fear of reprisal.

What are some of the things you wish your administration could have done, but didn't?

There are so many things I wish I could have seen before leaving.

I wanted very much to provide adjunct faculty with dedicated space to prepare for classes, to meet with students and exchange ideas. A space that shows them how valuable they are to the institution. I hope this can be achieved in the near future.

I also hoped to truly enhance campus life at the college in a way that has more students socializing on campus and better connecting with the resources Luna has to offer. Student Senate has been remarkable in moving the needle with this priority, and I have confidence in their dedication.

It would have been icing on the cake for the college to be removed from Enhanced Fiscal Oversight, a designation placed on Luna in 2016. The college has demonstrated its ability to effectively manage its finances and regain a handle on the Foundation's holdings.

Your favorite memories about Luna?

I have a few that I will never forget.

Preparing the luminarias for Christmas in 2017 was unforgettable. I never realized how much work went into a 4,000-luminaria display. We worked hard, cooked *chicharrones* and simply appreciated the opportunity to give the community something beautiful. That night, more than a dozen of us toughed it out to the



Ricky Serna

very end, making sure every candle stayed lit. Hundreds of cars drove through campus. Several passengers shared notes of appreciation for the work we had done – it was amazing to be part of this tradition.

The visit to Chicago to meet with the subcommittee of the HLC Board was an experience I will never forget. The entire trip over, I was consumed with a variety of feelings that ranged from self-doubt to sure confidence. So much of me didn't think I was a strong enough leader to sit in that hearing and speak for the college. My confidence came from the team who accompanied me, and the well-wishes that came from everyone on campus. We walked in scared yet sure that we deserved to keep our accreditation.

Immediately after the hearing, committee

members shared positive feedback about our work, and a sigh of relief came over us. On that day, I felt especially blessed.

Finally, the privilege of conferring degrees at commencement will stay with me forever. Only 20 years ago I left home a first-generation college goer. I was underprepared on so many levels – academically, financially and maturity. I struggled in college, even went back home after the first semester. I saw firsthand the challenges Luna students overcame to walk across that stage. I felt emotionally connected to everyone.

What did you appreciate the most about your job as interim president?

I appreciate how everyone just kept giving and giving of their time and talent. I recall the day I shared with everyone the news that we were placed on Show-Cause. I was consumed with concern, and everyone else in the room was instantly fueled with determination. From that moment forward, overcoming the risk to accreditation became everyone's business and responsibility. Staff and faculty made it easy to distribute the intense workload that came with reshaping the culture of the institution. We worked weekends, nights and even through the holiday break. No one ever asked for more time, or more money, or more help. We were all tired and exhausted at the end of each day, but no one ever quit.

Continued on page 8

Luna returns to best audit opinion

Just a year ago, Luna Community College was placed on the New Mexico State Auditor's At-Risk list for having received an adverse opinion on its audit for the 2016-17 fiscal year. This opinion set in motion a comprehensive plan for addressing significant gaps with the college's Foundation records, management of fixed assets and timeliness of bank reconciliations.

On the last week of January, the result of this yearlong effort to address the previous year's findings was made public with the release of the college's most recent audit. The audit reports that Luna Community College achieved an unmodified opinion – the best possible that an independent auditor can issue.

"The college worked tirelessly to assuage the conditions of last year's audit," said Luna Chief Financial Officer Donna Flores-Medina. "Through the efforts of many dedicated Luna employees and the support of the Board of Trustees, the audit was back on track with an FY18 unmodified opinion."

The adverse opinion in 2017 had ended a streak of 22 consecutive years in which Luna had achieved either an unmodified or unqualified opinion in its annual audit.

"The adverse opinion was due in large part to oversight findings within the Luna Foundation, which is required to be audited along with the college," said Flores-Medina.

In response to findings associated with the Foundation, the college spent the last year working to obtain financial data and board records in an attempt to reconcile beginning and ending balances for multiple accounts and funds. This work called for a temporary halt on all Foundation activity to ensure that scholarship funds are used in the manner intended by donors.

"We are in the process of rebuilding the college's Foundation, and this effort will be ongoing for several months," said Ricky Serna, Luna's interim president. "The good news is we now have a strong handle on the Foundation's financial position and a vision for how the

college can better manage the Foundation's finances moving forward."

The college expects to re-establish a healthy Foundation board and execute an agreement that calls for adequate financial controls, oversight and reporting requirements between the Foundation and college officials.

"We are in the process of rebuilding the college's Foundation, and this effort will be ongoing for several months. The good news is we now have a strong handle on the Foundation's financial position and a vision for how the college can better manage the Foundation's finances moving forward."

**—Ricky Serna
LCC interim president**

In 2016, the New Mexico Higher Education Department placed the college on Enhanced Fiscal Oversight following a special audit. The recent year's improvements have administrators optimistic that Luna will soon be removed from this status.

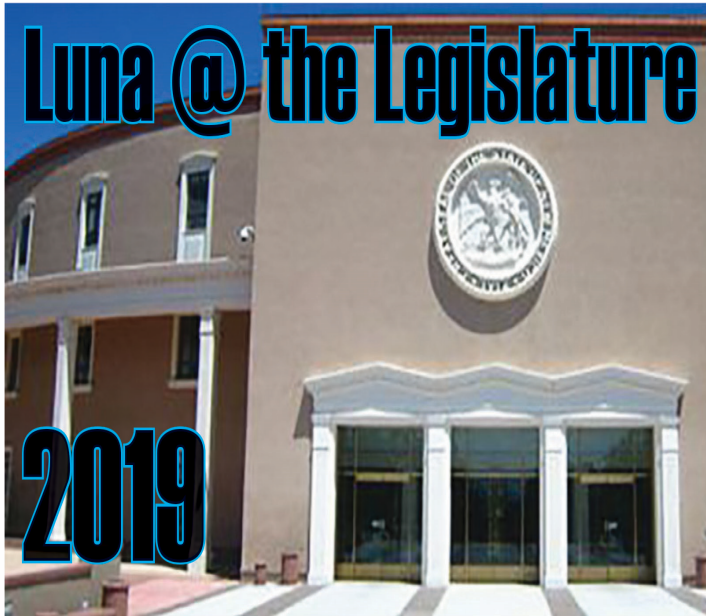
"We hope this means we have now earned the ability to be removed from fiscal oversight by the Higher Education Department," said Serna. "The audit is a significant piece of

evidence supporting our collective ability to carry out the strategies we put in place to address past year findings. The progress over the course of one year is truly remarkable."

The FY18 audit and grounds for the adverse opinion in FY17 are outlined in the audit reports available at saonm.org.

"The infrastructure needed to ensure financial accountability and stewardship is in place, and we need to continue to function within these practices," said Serna. "I am grateful for the work done by college employees over the past year. Not only did they achieve these results under the shadows of accreditation challenges, they performed in an exemplary manner under the scrutiny of other regulatory agencies in the state. This milestone belongs to the employees of Luna Community College."

According to the state auditor's office, an unmodified opinion means that "the auditor was able to audit the financial statements (entity's books, records, etc.) without problem (and that) the auditor feels confident that everything in the financial statements is a true reflection of the entity's operations."



Updates on legislation of interest to Luna Community College

The following is a list of legislation that has already been introduced at the Legislature. As you will see, some will have a direct impact on the college and its students. Other bills will have more indirect implications. Periodic updates on the status of these and other relevant bills will be distributed throughout the 60-day session.

MENTIONING LUNA SPECIFICALLY

House Bill 241 ... authorizes New Mexico Finance Authority to make loans from public project revolving fund for building, equipment, infrastructure, debt refinance, road, land acquisition, water, wastewater, water rights and solid waste projects ... introduced by Patricia A. Lundstrom and Jacob Candelaria

Senate Bill 254 ... General Appropriations Act funding state institutions and agencies (including up to \$9.996 million specifically for LCC) ... introduced by John Arthur Smith

Senate Bill 280 ... capital improvements to state institutions and agencies (including \$650,000 for

LCC infrastructure and ADA compliance) ... introduced by Carlos R. Cisneros and Jim R. Trujillo

Las Vegas &
San Miguel County
Day & Night at the Legislature



Thursday, Feb. 28, Santa Fe

- 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
at the State Capital Roundhouse,
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
- 5:30 to 10 p.m. at La Fonda Hotel,
100 E. San Francisco Street

DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY IMPACTING LUNA

House Bill 2 ... General Appropriations Act; includes \$830.1 million from general fund, \$6.6 million from other state funds, \$42.2 million from internal service funds and interagency transfers and \$9.5 million from federal funds in appropriations for higher education ... introduced by Patricia A. Lundstrom

House Bill 44 ... professional development for public teachers including career-technical teachers and educational assistants ... introduced by Sheryl Williams Stapleton

House Bill 91 ... career technical education pilot project funding and tracking high-quality career technical education programs ... introduced by Sheryl Williams Stapleton

House Bill 127 ... college affordability scholarship amount increase ... introduced by G. Andres Romero

House Bill 128 ... greater access to reduced tuition rate for senior citizens ... introduced by Linda M. Trujillo

House Bill 133 ... requiring schools to state affirmative consent standard for sexual activity in school policy ... introduced by Elizabeth Thomson

House Bill 134 ... early childhood education resources ... introduced by Elizabeth Thomson

House Bill 146 ... lottery scholarship based on need ... introduced by Debra M. Sarinana

House Bill 153 ... requiring suicide prevention training for public employees ... introduced by Patricio Ruiloba

House Bill 159 ... multicultural education framework ... introduced by Tomas Salazar and Christine Trujillo

House Bill 172 ... regulates student loan servicers ... introduced by Patricia Roybal Caballero

House Bill 183 ... allows apprenticeship program to count toward high school graduation ... introduced by Linda M. Trujillo

House Bill 239 ... creating children's savings account fund, with allowable use for higher education costs ... introduced by G. Andres Romero

House Bill 250 ... requires needs assessment and framework for better preparing American Indian students for high school graduation, college and careers ... introduced by Derrick J. Lente

House Bill 251 ... creates higher education coordinating council ... introduced by Roberto J. Gonzales and Patricia A. Lundstrom

House Bill 253 ... appropriates \$11.4 million from general fund for SFCC to administer SUNPATH consortium program on career pathways, involving

11 community colleges ... introduced by Elizabeth Thomson

House Bill 275 ... teacher loan repayment act, provides for financial aid in form of loan repayment for qualifying teachers ... introduced by Sheryl Williams Stapleton, Debra M. Sarinana, Raymundo Lara, Joanne J. Ferrary, Natalie Figueroa

House Bill 313 ... develops "promise scholarship" model to be introduced at Santa Fe Community College; model can be used statewide ... introduced by Linda M. Trujillo

Senate Bill 81 ... increases college affordability scholarship maximum per semester ... introduced by Gay G. Kernan

Senate Bill 89 ... N.M. Reconnect Scholarship, provides certain students tuition scholarships for community college ... introduced by Bill Tallman

Senate Bill 119 ... changes to New Mexico Works Act public assistance program ... introduced by Pat Woods

Senate Bill 160 ... regulates student loan servicers (see HB 172) ... introduced by Bill Tallman

Senate Bill 179 ... expands lottery scholarship eligibility to certain disabled students ... introduced by Elizabeth Stefanics

Senate Bill 251 ... providing foster children greater access to tuition waivers ... introduced by George K. Munoz

Senate Bill 286 ... allows for possible extension of nursing programs to award bachelor's degrees at community colleges and vocational-technical institutes ... introduced by Jacob R. Candelaria

Senate Bill 293 ... develops "promise scholarship" model at SFCC (see HB 313) ... introduced by Nancy Rodriguez

Senate Bill 322 ... provides for lease-purchase agreements for community college districts ... introduced by John M. Sapien

House Memorial 4 ... New Mexico Public Educator Appreciation Day Feb. 18 ... introduced by Debra M. Sarinana

Senate Memorial 12 ... New Mexico Public Educator Appreciation Day Feb. 18 ... introduced by Mimi Stewart



#LCCmatters

Luna nursing students partner with local Samaritan House

Care and compassion at core of agreement

Luna nursing students not only get a top-notch education; beginning this semester they are learning to help out the most poor and vulnerable in society.

The Luna nursing program partnered with the local Samaritan House and has started providing basic assessments, observation for disease control, intakes, referrals, goal setting, assistance with meals and more importantly, learning more about care and compassion.

“We are excited that our students have the opportunity to work with people that are barely meeting their

basic needs,” said Luna Nursing Director Maxine Hughes. “Our students will learn what it means to live moment to moment. As nurses, it is so important to have compassion with everyone in society.”

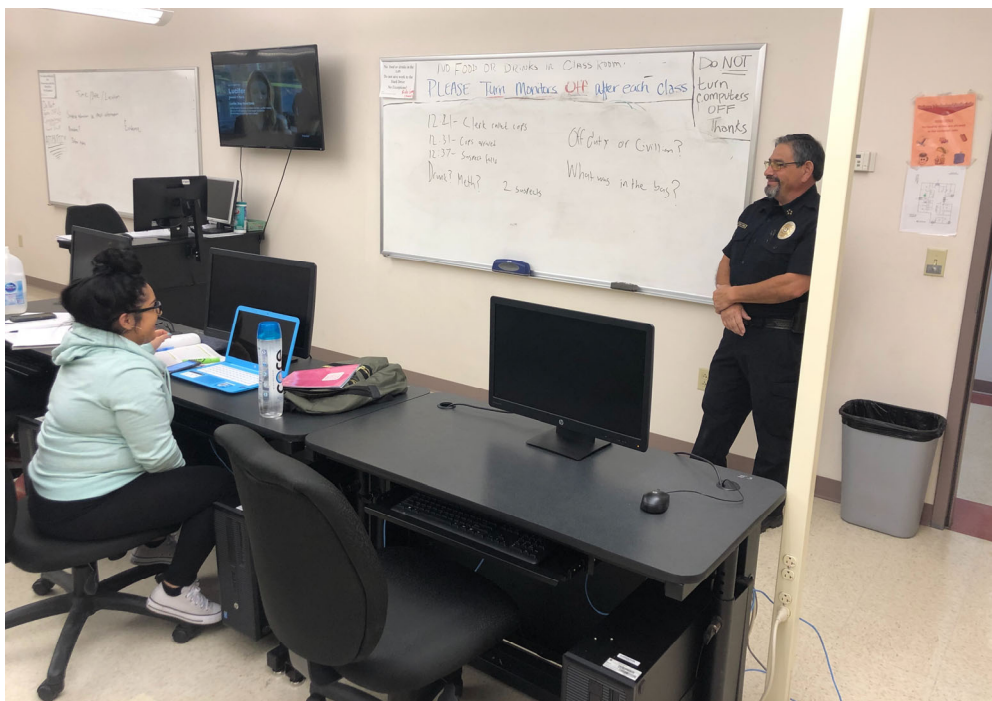
The mission of Samaritan House is to create a supportive community by providing housing and resources for positive change in lives of persons living with special needs as they provide a continuum of care to those in crisis due to homelessness, poverty or disability.

“I am excited at the opportunity to work with Luna nursing students in our emergency housing shelter,” said Las Vegas Samaritan House Executive Director George Lyons. “The need for services to the

impoverished is great in San Miguel County and especially in Las Vegas with a poverty rate of 34 percent compared to 20 percent statewide.”

“Luna is doing much more than simply partnering with us; they are teaching students a lifelong lesson of empathy for a person who experiences life from the outside in.”

According to information from the Las Vegas Samaritan House, in 2017 the organization met the critical needs of individuals by providing 4,728 food packages, 272 thrift store vouchers, 2,723 meals, 824 emergency bed nights, 97 motel bed nights for children and their families. Another 86 people were helped off the street and into stable housing.



Valuable insights

Luna student Dominique Archuleta asks a question to Highlands Police Chief Clarence Romero during Criminal Justice Report Writing and Documentation class on Thursday, Jan. 31. Luna Criminal Justice instructor Jason Killian periodically brings in guest speakers who are experts in their field to talk with students. For more information on Luna's Criminal Justice Program, call Killian at 454-2551.

Vice President's Honor Roll

Luna Community College is pleased to announce its Vice President's Honor Roll students for Fall 2018.

Inclusion on the Vice President's Honor Roll requires that a student successfully complete a minimum of 12 graded credit hours with a minimum 3.66 grade point average or higher without incomplete grades.

Graded credit hours do not include S/U graded courses, audits, or credit by exam.

Travis Aaron Baca
Billy C. Chapman III

Preciosa America J. Chavez
Britney P. Cordova
Edward J. DeHerrera
Isaiah Z. Fernandez
Michael R. Flores
Isailha E. Gallegos
Roxanne L. Garcia
Jared Gonzales
Julie M. Gonzales
Dominic J. Graston
Maria Theresa Gray
Shaylunn Jones
Robert T. A. Kelly
Katelina V. Laumbach
Nicholas A. Maestas
Andres R. Martinez
William Thomas McBride

Pauline M. Medina
Jasmine D. Montaña
Ashlea Nicole Ortega
Shannon Megan Ortiz
Shanaya L. Pacheco
Nathan J. Padilla
Dominick F. Quintana
Taylor Rayne Quintana
Chris Daniel Rivera
Briana R. Sanchez
Carmelita E. Sanchez
Laticia L. Sanchez
Hilary A. Smith
Melanie C. Soto-Ramos
Olivia K. Tenorio
Briana L. Thomas
Terrilee Vasquez

Luna grad Chavez earns recognition from Air Force

Luna 2015 graduate Lorenzo Chavez recently got kudos from a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force.

Chavez, a native of Mora, received recognition from Lt. Col. Andrew D. Anderson from the Space Test Program Branch out of Kirtland Air Force Base.

Anderson said that Chavez is doing important work for his country and that Chavez is helping shape future space technologies to ensure that the U.S. military is prepared to keep peace and if necessary to win wars.

Anderson said that he is "impressed with Chavez' creativity, engineering judgement and willingness to take on any task with a positive attitude." Anderson went on to say that Chavez has an incredibly bright future as a space program manager for the Air Force.

CDL drivers needed

Sysco New Mexico is looking to hire CDL-ready drivers who are willing to relocate.

Currently they are hiring:

- Delivery driver with 1-plus years of CDL delivery experience in: Taos, Roswell, Carlsbad and Gallup.
- They are also interested in talking with those who have less than one year experience.

They are also hiring for an Outside Sales Associate to grow sales in Taos/Espanola/Los Alamos areas. An individual should have prior experience in conducting cold calls, growing sales, and have prior food industry experience.

For further information on Sysco New Mexico, please give Christine Garcia a call at 505-761-1279 or e-mail her at

Garcia.christine@nm.sysco.com.

Serna...

Continued from page 3

Luna became unstoppable, and I appreciate being able to see that.

What was your impression about Luna when you started and what is your impression as you leave?

My first impression was it shouldn't be too tough (to) hold down the fort for eight months, plus I have a TV in my office.

On a more serious note, I was familiar with some of the challenges facing the institution, and my experience led to assumptions that morale would be low and that relationship building would be a priority. I found that the freedom to be creative and take initiative was slowly stripped from employees. This isn't uncommon in an environment where most decisions are made by few people.

My impression now, 19 months later, Luna was the stage for the most difficult role I have ever held, and I can't even tell you if that TV works. Today, I can best describe the college as a large family. It's strong enough to get through anything. We had our differences from time to time, but mostly wanted to get through them as quickly as possible. Not only does the college possess the talent and capacity to grow exponentially, but its inviting culture is encouraging to others who want to be part of an organization with a strong mission. Being at Luna isn't just a job; it's a rewarding experience – a place where making a difference happens every day.

What advice can you give to Luna students?

At the age of 17, I attended Eastern New Mexico University as a college freshman. I had \$490, I hadn't completed a FAFSA, and was placed in math and English developmental courses. To say the very least, I was a retention nightmare. Nine weeks into the semester I found myself in the midst of the disenrollment process, I had no money, I was hardly passing my courses, and more homesick than I ever knew could be possible. The disenrollment

process required that I get signatures from several individuals, one of whom was my First Year Experience instructor. She took the time to ask about the circumstances that led to my decision to leave. She was insistent that I give her a chance to help me. She walked me over to meet with an advisor who spent the entire day finding me the resources that I needed to stay in school. I still remember the names of these two women – they taught me how powerful we can be when we commit to helping one another.

As you know, life is sticky and messy sometimes. In the moment of despair, we often fail to see the miracles that keep us from giving up on wanting to better ourselves. Sometimes these miracles involve people who have dedicated their lives to helping others see the potential they hold. I am forever grateful to those women who kept me in school. Not only for helping me get through that semester, but for opening my eyes to several who have helped me thus far as a person and professional.

I urge you to embrace the help we all need to persevere, and to honor that assistance by giving back to others.

What advice can you give to Luna employees?

Be the Train! It feels as though we have been discussing my departure for a long time. In the beginning, the discussion centralized around concerns that a newly established culture would depart with me, leaving behind the need to conform to an all new set of values and goals. I hope that you have all come to realize that together, you embody the values of this institution. Together you have grown this institution in to a home for students who aspire to improve their lives for generations. Your commitment to our communities combined with passion for what you do is the unstoppable train. It existed before I got here. It was my pleasure to help you lay the tracks that got you moving in the right direction. I'll miss you so much.

You all have made me a better person.

Luna softball and baseball scores

Rough Rider softball overall record: 1-4

Games from the Cowtown Classic in Fort Worth, Texas:

Lamar State 8, Luna 0

Seminole State 7, Luna 0

Northern Oklahoma Enid 13, Luna 10

Luna 4, Northern Oklahoma Tonkawa 3

Weatherford College 7, Luna 1

Upcoming games

Feb. 9, Northeastern CC (DH), noon, Las Vegas

Feb. 10, Northeastern CC (DH), 11 a.m., Las Vegas

Rough Rider baseball overall record: 1-3

Eastern Arizona 1, Luna 0

Eastern Arizona 10, Luna 4

Luna 13, Eastern Arizona 3

Eastern Arizona 9, Luna 1

Upcoming games

Feb. 9, at Otero JC (DH), noon, La Junta, Colo.

Feb. 10, Otero Junior College (DH), noon, Las Vegas