

Excellence & Accountability

For more than a dozen years, Ms. Lopez has been the first face that faculty, staff, students, and visitors see when entering the UNM Prevention Research Center in the Division of Prevention and Population Sciences. She supports a division with two dozen faculty and staff and is committed to the organization and its success. This was especially obvious during the COVID crisis and the related necessary safety precautions. Ms. Lopez demonstrated an ability to pivot quickly and to be flexible in meeting the needs of the organization. When working from home, she was always available and responsive, and would readily switch to in-person work to meet the needs of the multiple principal investigators that she supports. She continued to provide excellent support following the retirement of the division's Unit Administrator, and the subsequent 6-months it took to hire a new UA. She willingly covered many of the duties while the position was open, contributing to successful operations.

Compassion

As part of her position, Ms. Lopez is positioned at the front desk and regularly greets everyone calling and entering the office. Because of the location of the office, we often have individuals come in to ask directions or who are otherwise not in the correct office. She is invariably kind and offers to assist visitors to HSC in identifying and finding the offices where they are supposed to be. This includes providing maps, directions and occasionally guiding people to other buildings, including the mental health facility located near our office. Although some of the patients are scared, angry, or nervous about their appointments, Ms. Lopez is invariably calm, approachable and responsive. Similarly, when she sees an opportunity to assist coworkers that are having difficulty, she offers her assistance to get the work done faster and to lighten the burden on others.

Diversity

Ms. Lopez is a native New Mexican and Latina with strong roots in the state and local community. She works in a diverse environment with Latinx, Native American, Asian and white faculty, staff, and students. She is unwaveringly respectful of her colleagues as well as with the diverse participants and partners in our research and prevention programming. She values the distinct contributions and voices of others. Ms. Lopez also demonstrates cultural humility. She has attended trainings on unconscious bias as part of professional development, and has participated in discussions of racism, and contributed to the discussion that led to development of an equity statement at the Center.

Integrity, Professionalism, & Ethical Behavior

It has been a pleasure working with Ms. Lopez because she demonstrates a professional demeanor, is extremely dependable, and manages her workload well. She follows through with commitments when supporting research and community projects and can be trusted to handle and resolve problems. One example of this was an incident that occurred with our conference room equipment. Following the theft of video projection equipment a few years ago, Ms. Lopez oversaw the ordering, installation, and security measures for replacement equipment. When that equipment recently failed to work, although outside of the warranty period, Ms. Lopez respectfully communicated with the installation company regarding concerns about the equipment. After initial reports that we would need to purchase new equipment, Ms. Lopez was able to resolve the issue with a free replacement saving the division several thousand dollars.

Social Responsibility

Within the office, Ms. Lopez has worked diligently to ensure that materials are appropriately recycled. This has been especially important over the last year when she assisted PIs in the review of more than 100 boxes of research materials to determine which documents needed to be shredded, which documents could be

recycled through typical methods, and which other elements (e.g., folders, brochures, etc.) could be repurposed. In addition to these sustainability activities in the workplace, Ms. Lopez contributes in big and small ways to her community. She works to increase social capital and the sense of community in her neighborhood through extensive Halloween decorations and welcoming children and families to enjoy it. She also participates in flash mob actions that bring costuming and dance activities to communities. Additionally, within her family, Ms. Lopez contributes to the regular caretaking of her niece and nephew.

Creativity & Innovation

In the more than 10 years that I have worked with Ms. Lopez, I am continually amazed by her artistic creativity which she uses to make the office a more inviting and engaging place to work. She uses her skills and passion for costuming and bead work to decorate the front office and waiting area, especially for holidays. This makes for a more welcoming environment for faculty, staff, students and visitors. She also regularly participates in departmental efforts to engage staff in activities (e.g., costume and decorating contests) and shares her passion with others. In addition to these activities that make the office friendlier, Ms. Lopez has also worked especially hard during COVID to always make sure that the office is maintained as an environment where faculty, staff, students and visitors can feel safe. She has done this by ensuring that PPE and cleaning stations were set up and maintained strategically throughout the office.

Excellence & Accountability

The long-time Prevention Research Center (PRC) Unit Administrator retired during COVID, and we were without a unit administrator for more than half a year. During this time, Ms. Lopez, the receptionist and administrative support for the PRC, stepped up and provided excellent service for the entire PRC. The quantity and quality of activities in which she engaged during this particularly challenging time is noteworthy, as is the magnanimity and good nature she displayed while undertaking such a heavy workload. For example, she was one of only two people in the PRC who had a Pcard after the departure of the unit administrator, and she often placed supply and equipment orders for half a dozen staff members in a day on top of her regular responsibilities. She is now generously training the new unit administrator in addition to her other activities. I truly do not know how any of us in the PRC could have gotten our work done during the time without a unit administrator without the extra efforts of Ms. Lopez, and her positive attitude during this crush of work is truly admirable.

Compassion

Ms. Lopez has taken great care in ensuring that the PRC has all the needed cleaning supplies and other equipment that we need to promote safety during COVID. She routinely confirms that areas are stocked with supplies and that we are all aware of their availability. Her attention to our safety benefits all of us and our families and other associates.

Diversity

Ms. Lopez is Hispanic, which is very important to our Center. We conduct community-engaged research, and we value having our team reflect the composition of the community. Ms. Lopez is the receptionist at the Center, and so she is the first point of contact for people and the face of the Center to the communities in many cases.

Integrity, Professionalism, & Ethical Behavior

During COVID, the PRC staff were advised to work from home. However, we were receiving equipment, supplies and other critical items delivered to the PRC. Ms. Lopez came into the PRC regularly during that time to process mail and deliveries, and she sent them to us at our homes. She did this without being asked, and she engaged in these activities with a generous spirit and positive attitude. We all were able to reduce our exposure to COVID and protect each other through her efforts during this time. This also greatly facilitated our ability to execute our jobs effectively during the work from home period.

Social Responsibility

Ms. Lopez has helped the staff at the PRC switch from paper to more electronic processes, such as signing documents. This greatly reduces the need print, which helps us all become more environmentally responsible.

Ms. Lopez also represents the UNM School of Medicine well in the community and enhances the quality of life of the community. She is an active member of several artistic communities, and she distinguishes herself by her the quantity and quality of her work. For example, in this year's state fair, she won five ribbons in the jewelry and hand-crafted items categories, including two first place and two second place ribbons. She shares her skills and passion for creating beadwork jewelry and other items through workshops and online forums. The annual Halloween display at her home is a highlight of the Albuquerque Halloween season and has delighted families for years.

Ms. Lopez also adopted a cat, Nikki, who was rescued from the Emergency Medicine parking lot.

Creativity & Innovation



The primary way that Ms. Lopez has used creativity and innovation to improve working at the PRC has been to develop and then train the rest of us on new electronic procedures for getting our work done. Examples include getting signatures on forms and routing materials. This not only enabled us to effectively work from home during and after COVID, but it has improved our efficiency of undertaking these activities even when we are in the office. Ms. Lopez not only figured out how to execute these activities electronically, but she also displayed great patience and generosity in helping the rest of the PRC staff learn the new procedures.

Excellence & Accountability

Karen has been an outstanding employee during the very challenging pandemic. She was a constant that we could depend on to be safely at the office making sure that everything was in order. We are in a separate building, the RIB, that has issues with doors being left unlocked, windows being broken, water leaks, and other small disasters. Although she could have stayed at home during COVID, she chose to work from the office maintaining and increasing our communication. She took on the role of scheduling frequent zooms for our research teams and our entire group. She assisted me in frequent email blasts to all faculty and staff regarding updates on COVID safety and was one of the first to get the vaccine as soon as she was eligible.

And even though we were following a hybrid work schedule and few of us were ever in the office at the same time, Karen followed best practices for keeping the offices sanitary, hand sanitizer and masks available. She truly kept us informed and safe and I was confident that our UNM work environment was being maintained with great diligence.

Compassion

Karen demonstrates compassion everyday. She is one of the most caring people I know. One example is when a stranger walked into our office suite obviously agitated and upset. Since we are located near the mental health center we were immediately concerned that it he could have been a patient. I came out of my office to see what was happening. Karen was calmly and gently talking him down and simultaneously calling campus police without further agitating the stranger. Police arrived immediately and gently lead the person outside and the situation was under control. I believe that Karen's kind and compassionate handling of the situation contributed to the safety of everyone.

Diversity

Karen is always respectful and inclusive in everything she does. Karen herself is a professional Hispanic woman and is an excellent example for the many students that work and learn at the Center.

Integrity, Professionalism, & Ethical Behavior

Karen has a very high standard of ethics. In the many years that I have supervised her, I have never observed her saying or doing anything dishonest or unprofessional. Although quite shy, Karen will speak out when she see something that is unkind, unprofessional or unethical. It is hard to pick one example because it is just the way she is and the way she lives her life.

Social Responsibility

This is an area where Karen sets an example for us all. Recently we have been purging some boxes we extracted from storage. Because of Karen not one paper clip, file folder, or other reusable supplies has been discarded. She makes sure students and new employees are educated about our recycling policies. She is also prompt in notifying the UNM recycle crew when the bins are overflowing. Karen also maintains our book (and other stuff) exchange table encouraging reuse of books and other reusable items.

Creativity & Innovation

This is where Karen excels. She creates her own costumes for Halloween and decorates the office on other occasions. She recently won several awards at the NM State Fair for her handmade jewelry and other crafts. WE can always see her during her break time either reading a book or working on a craft project. Her beaded spiders are famous around the office. She sets an good example for life work balance.