



March 18 - 22, 2026
EXPO NM Manuel Lujan Building
& UNM Student Union Building

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Visit the [**RESEARCH CHALLENGE VIRTUAL LOBBY**](#) for instant access to virtual Research Challenge events!

Link to the lobby will be emailed to participants and posted on our website no later than 3/16/26.

March 16 – 22 ~ Virtual Lobby Open~ visit at your convenience!

PROJECT SHOWCASE – browse all student research projects competing in Research Challenge

STEM HALL – visit profiles and interactive exhibits from our sponsors and community partners

SPEAKERS & PANELS – view engaging discussions with STEM professionals including:

- The 2026 featured STEM Panel is TBD

Monday, March 16

6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Judging Workshop – Live on Zoom

Students, prepare for judging day with long-time Research Challenge Master Judge Chairs Len Duda and Robert Deblassie as they provide tips to prepare for judging interviews and answer your questions.

Wednesday, March 18

3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Project Set Up – EXPO NM, Manuel Lujan Building

ALL student exhibitors must register and set up their project displays during this time. **Doors will close promptly at 7:00 pm!**

Community Partner Showcase will also take place during set up. We are excited to host fun and informational booths from local STEM partners!

Students, complete a Community Partners Passport by visiting booths. Turn in completed passport before you leave and be entered into a raffle for prizes!

Thursday, March 19

9:45 am – 12:00 pm	Junior Division Category Judge Interviews – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall A</i> STUDENTS AND JUDGES ONLY ON EXHIBIT FLOOR! Doors open at 9:30am. 9:45 is the required start time for ALL students.
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch Break — NOT PROVIDED —Food vendors will be available. EXHIBIT HALL CLEARED OF ALL STUDENTS.
1:30 pm – 3:15 pm	Junior Division Special Award & Grand Award Interviews – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall A</i> STUDENTS AND JUDGES ONLY ON THE EXHIBIT FLOOR! <i>Exhibitors must take project board and all other materials with them when they leave at the end of the day!</i>

Friday, March 20

9:30 am – 12:00 pm	Hands on activities with Air Force Research Labs (for participating 4th & 5th grade students) – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall A</i>
9:45 am – 12:00 pm	Senior Division Category Judge Interviews – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall B</i> STUDENTS AND JUDGES ONLY ON EXHIBIT FLOOR! Doors open at 9:30am. 9:45 is the required start time for ALL HS students.
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch Break — NOT PROVIDED —Food vendors will be available. EXHIBIT HALL CLEARED OF ALL STUDENTS.
1:30 pm – 3:15 pm	Elementary Division Judging Interviews – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall B</i> STUDENTS AND JUDGES ONLY ON THE EXHIBIT FLOOR! <i>Note: elementary students will be interviewed by both category and special award judges during this time.</i>
1:30 pm – 3:15 pm	Senior Division Special Award & Grand Award Interviews – <i>Manuel Lujan Bldg, Hall B</i> STUDENTS AND JUDGES ONLY ON THE EXHIBIT FLOOR! <i>Exhibitors must take project board and all other materials with them when they leave at the end of the day!</i>

Sunday, March 22

4:30 pm	Award Winners Reception – <i>UNM Student Union Building</i> For award winners and guests only. Light refreshments and “selfie station”
5:15 pm	Grand Awards Ceremony – <i>UNM Student Union Building</i> Awards Ceremony is by invite only. Student winners, parents/guardians and teachers will be notified on Saturday if they have won an award and are invited to attend the ceremony.

Note: Senior Division ~ grades 9-12; Junior Division ~ grades 6-8; Elementary Division ~ grades 4-5