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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2021

THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO GALLUP

Gallup, NM, May 3, 2021 – National Economic Development Week is the perfect opportunity for us to shine a light on the efforts of the small businesses in our area during COVID. Pivoting has become commonplace these days. How well you are able to run a business, manage employees, and accomplish your own business goals depends heavily on your specific circumstances. While you can't change those circumstances, you can set yourself up for success--whether it's for the remaining months of uncertainty or a future in which flexible working arrangements are the norm. Either way, any small changes that can boost your remote work capabilities are well worth your time.

Back in March 2020, many Americans began commuting to their kitchen tables and makeshift home office space, and few believed we would still be here today. For now, there may be more online than face-to-face. Out of all of this we can all agree with certainty that we got a lot clearer on the reality of remote work.

Many businesses, organizations and events plan to officially reopen by July. And with so many colleagues meeting in person for the first time in over a year, things are bound to be a little awkward. The SBDC at UNM-Gallup has been among those organizations resuming in-person work the beginning of spring. We incorporated best practices to help ease that awkwardness and anxiety by executing a safe and equitable return to the office as we complied with our host institution guidance. Of course, each company's strategy will look different--but plenty of business owners tend to agree that for now, leaders should listen to employees and stay flexible. For instance, don't expect that all employees will be eager to return to the office even if they're vaccinated. Rather, encourage employee buy-in by validating individual concerns and asking them what will make them feel safe.

After all, employees experienced the pandemic in vastly different ways. Some were low risk and affected only indirectly, others lost loved ones, got sick themselves, or had reason to fear for their safety on a

daily basis; and some might still be dealing with long-term symptoms. "Find ways to support employee autonomy," recommends Dr. James Malm, Chancellor at UNM Gallup Branch and a professor of business, "Recognize and acknowledge that your workforce will be at different points of acceptance with regards to their return-to-work process."

The UNM-Gallup Branch is renewing its COVID plan and reviewing the campus safe-return plan to possibly implement a soft open over the summer before a fuller reopening in the fall. The UNM-Gallup plan will closely align with the "Bringing Back the Pack" main campus plan. If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Cyndi Jarvison at 505-722-2220 or email at cjarvison@unm.edu.



The New Mexico Small Business Development Center Network (NMSBDC) was established in 1989 through a partnership with the US Small Business Administration, the State of New Mexico, the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges, and the New Mexico Association of Independent Community Colleges. The NMSDC Network State Office is located on the campus of the Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe, NM. The program provides no cost business consulting and low cost business training to entrepreneurs throughout the state. Strategically located in 20 communities throughout New Mexico and serving all 33 counties. Entrepreneurs have access to subject matter experts in everything from accounting to social media and franchising to e-commerce. For more information visit www.nmsmdc.org.

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