



Office of the Governor

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Health secretary returning to UNM

Dr. Collins, having helped lead New Mexico's

COVID-19 vaccination effort, will move back to academic life

SANTA FE – Dr. Tracie Collins, who has served as New Mexico health secretary for eight months, will return to academic life at the end of July.

Collins last fall accepted Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's request that she serve the state in an official capacity and lead the Department of Health through a perilous and challenging portion of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the understanding she might elect to return to her previous career as an academic after operationalizing and overseeing the agency's COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

"I am grateful to my colleagues at the Department of Health and to the governor for her faith in me," said Dr. Collins. "Our partnership has been the foundation of an incredibly successful vaccination drive. I'm proud of the work we've done to protect New Mexicans, especially with our emphasis on equity and reaching underserved populations. Although it's time for me to return to my academic career, I look forward to continuing to work hand in hand with the governor and her administration to enhance public health throughout our state."

“We were fortunate enough to have the chance to steal Dr. Collins for a few months, and we will keep working together in whatever context,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “We’d be delighted to have her forever. At UNM, where our partnership will continue, she will be preparing and training the next generation of public health responders and leaders, and we all recognize how incredibly important that is for our state. These last months, we’ve decisively put the worst of the pandemic behind us, getting shots into arms all across the state, educating people about the benefits of the vaccines and saving lives. New Mexico will continue to lead in public health and economic recovery.”

The Department of Health has, through its vaccination efforts, kept New Mexico among the national leaders throughout the spring and early summer, with high rates of first and second shots as well as vaccination supply usage.

Before the Department of Health, Collins worked at the University of New Mexico as dean of the College of Population Health. Prior to that, she served as chair of Preventive Medicine and Public Health at the University of Kansas, where she also served as the Kansas Health Foundation distinguished professor of public health and as a professor of internal medicine; she worked in other leadership roles at the University of Minnesota, the Baylor College of Medicine and the Michael E. DeBakey V.A. Medical Center in Houston, as well.

Human Services Secretary David Scrase, M.D., will step in to lead the Department of Health, in addition to his ongoing duties leading the Human Services Department. Scrase’s leadership has been an integral part of the state’s comprehensive COVID-19 response, and there remains significant overlap between the two agencies’ missions.

“It has been a pleasure to work with Dr. Collins, and I look forward to an ongoing partnership with her at UNM, as we navigate the final stages of the pandemic and work to invest in and protect the health of New Mexicans moving forward,” said Dr. Scrase. “The state of New Mexico, in partnership with the Medical Advisory Team and so many others, has been a national leader all throughout the pandemic. Under the governor’s leadership, we will keep up the hard work and ensure New Mexicans are as healthy and safe as can be.”

“I ask a lot of Dr. Scrase, and that won’t stop any time soon,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “Throughout the pandemic, he has shown his quality day-in, day-out, as a leader who gets the most out of people and as someone who digs into the data and helps us find the right answers. We are in good hands.”

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