



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

August 28, 2013

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

The March on Washington: August 28 marks the 50th anniversary of the “march on Washington for jobs and freedom” where Martin Luther King, Jr. [delivered his “I have a dream” speech](#). Long considered one of the best speeches in American history, the speech remains a powerful call to arms to make sure that everyone has the tools of equality in the 21st century, including access to a quality education.

College Cost, Access, and Quality: About two years ago, I discussed in this forum the iron triangle of “cost, access, and quality” that has plagued the performance of higher education institutions. Briefly, the iron triangle symbolizes the inherent difficulty of delivering the best quality education, while maintaining access to the largest possible number of New Mexico citizens, and keeping the cost of attendance as low as possible. Another concept, known in economics as the “cost disease,” was advanced by Bowen & Baumol, and is summarized as follows: “In labor-intensive industries such as the performing arts and education, there is less opportunity than in other sectors to increase productivity by, for example, substituting capital for labor. Yet, over time, markets dictate that wages for comparably qualified individuals have to increase at roughly the same rate in all industries. As a result, unit labor costs must be expected to rise relatively faster in the performing arts and education than in the economy overall.”

The iron triangle and its evil twin cost disease have long forced universities to focus on one, and at times two, of the triangle vertices at the expense of the others. Politicians, university leaders, and the public at large have also focused on one, and possibly two, of the three criteria to criticize or exalt the performance of a university. This past week, President Obama has unveiled a new proposal to rank and encourage universities, using federal financial aid, to increase graduation rate (quality) while maintaining affordability (cost) and educating as many students as possible (access). [According to the White House](#), the “plan will measure college performance through a new ratings system so students and families have the information to select schools that provide the best value. And after this ratings system is well established, Congress can tie federal student aid to college performance so that students maximize their federal aid at institutions providing the best value. The President’s plan will also take down barriers that stand in the way of competition and innovation, particularly in the use of new technology, and shine a light on the most cutting-edge college practices for providing high value at low costs.”

So, how would UNM score? Despite our recent tuition adjustments, we remain affordable and our students have low loan default rates (sort by state, then go to page 41, on [The Wall Street Journal’s “How Does Your School Rank?”](#)). According to the [White House’s College Score Card](#), we also provide good access, but fall short on our graduation rates and other quality measures.

The six-year graduation rate for UNM’s first-time-full-time-freshmen (FTFTF), at more than 47.3 percent, is the highest ever since the ratings began in 1983. This remains low, however, compared to [our peers and aspirational peers](#) (around 60 percent for six-year FTFTF) and our focus will be on improving it, as well as improving our four-year FTFTF graduation rate, which currently stands at 15 percent (also highest ever). Most of our Academic Affairs initiatives this year and beyond will focus on the goal of increasing our four- and six-year graduation rates while increasing the quality of support and education through better advising and closer monitoring, new tools and teaching approaches, and rewarding good teaching performance. I am fully aware that quality is not simply measured by graduation rates, and we are looking for other outputs (such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment) to include in our quality measurements. The White House plan will be [dissected](#) and [modified](#), but we all need to work towards making sure that the iron triangle is bent, and eventually broken, using a combination of hard work, research, technology, and drive!

On the blog site, I will ask for ideas to see what can be done to help keep UNM accessible, affordable, and most importantly, an ever higher performing institution.

Student Success Center Ribbon Cutting: The grand opening of the new Student Success Center—a one-stop student resource center located in the University Advisement and Enrichment Center—will be held on Tuesday, September 3 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. We are also celebrating the unveiling of a number of other new student success initiatives, including the students.unm.edu website, the degrees.unm.edu website, and the [LoboAchieve advising portal](#). These critical student resources were part of the Foundations of Excellence initiative and the Lumina Unidos project, two important student success efforts at UNM. The event is open to the public, and refreshments will be served.

TEDxABQ comes to Popejoy on September 7: For four years running, the TED.com licensed conference has showcased New Mexico's biggest ideas and fascinating thinkers to sold-out audiences. Every year, the [TEDxABQ event](#) highlights 16 to 20 remarkable homegrown ideas from New Mexico's most passionate engineers, lawyers, authors, farmers, scientists, artists, doctors, and others. On Sept. 7 at Popejoy Hall, we invite you to discover and interact with these extraordinary thinkers, as well as meet hundreds of students who are also excited about big ideas. All tickets are available at the UNM Ticket Office or through unmtickets.com, and are selling out quickly.

2013 Top CEOs: Congratulations to our own Douglas M. Brown, dean of the Anderson School of Management, who was selected to receive the Career Achievement Award by Albuquerque Business First in their [2013 Top CEOs](#).

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