



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

October 23, 2013

The Not so Good News: The United States does not perform well in many indicators of the 2013 Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) report “[Education at a Glance](#).” As an example, we rank below the OECD average in first-time graduation rates from university-level education (1995, 2011) and are next to last in the successful completion of a college degree in the allotted time. We also spend more per student than any other OECD country, and along with citizens of Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, Americans spend more than \$100,000 to obtain a college degree versus the average \$50,000 for OECD countries.

The Good News: On the [other hand](#), the United States continues to “produce, cultivate, attract and retain” more Nobel Prize winners than any other country. “Since 2000, Americans have won 21 of the 37 physics prizes, 18 of the 33 medicine prizes, 22 of the 33 chemistry prizes and an astonishing 27 of the 30 economics prizes.” Whether this will continue to be the case, however, will depend on whether we continue to attract immigrants, to properly educate our kids, and to support our schools and universities.

On Difficult Conversations: Difficult conversations present a number of problems for all but the most skilled diplomats. When addressing sensitive subjects, [the advice](#) from Harvard Review Board’s The Magazine includes a list of nine mistakes and a guide of how to avoid them.

Bridge To Success Scholarships: Speaking of difficult conversations, there has been much in the news lately about the Bridge to Success scholarship. Unfortunately, we were not careful in communicating proposed changes in the scholarship and for that I take full responsibility. The University has committed to engage in a conversation to explain the current status of the scholarship and to discuss future changes. More information can be found [here](#).

Are Most Published Research Findings False? This is the central thesis of [a paper](#) that was discussed in a recent issue of the Economist. “There is increasing concern that in modern research, false findings may be the majority or even the vast majority of published research claims... a research finding is less likely to be true when the studies conducted in a field are smaller; when effect sizes are smaller; when there is a greater number and lesser pre-selection of tested relationships; where there is greater flexibility in designs, definitions, outcomes, and analytical modes; when there is greater financial and other interest and prejudice; and when more teams are involved in a scientific field in chase of statistical significance. The basic idea is summarized as follows: “Of hypotheses interesting enough to test, perhaps one in ten will be true. So out of 1,000 hypotheses, 100 are actually true. The tests have a false positive rate of 5 percent so that 5 percent of the remaining 900 will lead to another 45 false positives. On the other hand, the tests have a power of 0.8 that lead to 20 false negatives. Not knowing what is false and what is true, the researcher sees 125 hypotheses as true, 45 of which are not.”

James Burke, Fall 2013 Distinguished Lecture: British broadcaster, science historian, author, and television producer James Burke delivers the Fall 2013 Distinguished Lecture for Campus and Community on **Monday, Oct. 28 at 5 p.m. in Keller Hall**, located in the Center for the Arts on the University of New Mexico main campus. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, see [the announcement](#) at UNM Newsroom.

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