



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

October 15, 2014

Whatever Happened to MOOCs? Throughout the last two years, much has been written about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). MOOCs were supposed to be the answer to the cost disease, to make higher education available to all, and to disrupt the current higher education model. To others, MOOCs were tools used to destroy quality education and traditional academic values. MOOCs went from being praised or vilified one year, to being almost forgotten within two. As I have repeatedly advocated in this Communiqué, MOOCs are but one of the many tools that a modern university can use to teach its own students and reach new ones. In fact, as stated in [The Chronicle](#), “MOOCs might not put thousands of colleges out of business in the next 50 years, as Sebastian Thrun, a co-founder of Udacity, [predicted in 2012](#), but they are changing how students learn, how professors teach and grade, and how higher-education leaders figure out what differentiates face-to-face instruction from online learning.” At UNM, we have offered two MOOCs so far, and are on track to offer four more. Since no long-term and effective MOOC business models have emerged, the courses are currently being used as free samples for higher education. And free samples are extremely useful, as [Costco has shown](#).

The Crisis in American Higher Education: A recent book by Goldie Blumenstyk, [“American Higher Education in Crisis? What Everyone Needs to Know,”](#) spells out the challenges affecting higher education in the U.S. This is one of the clearest explanations I have seen about the students, costs, leadership, and future of universities.

The Lightning Lounge: is an upcoming series of short talks by UNM faculty and staff within the informal atmosphere of the Faculty-Staff Club, in an effort to open up wider conversations about the research our faculty and staff are doing, and foster collegiality across campus. We are hosting three events, from 5:30-7 p.m., on Oct. 23, Nov. 13, and Dec. 10. The evenings feature four to five presenters, speaking for no more than seven minutes each, with time for questions and comments. More information on the themes and presenters can be found on the [Academic Affairs website](#). I hope you will join us for an entertaining and illuminating evening.

Community Engaged Scholarship Forum: I would like to encourage faculty, staff, and administrators to participate in the [2014 Community Engaged Scholarship Forum](#), which will be held in the Student Union Building on Friday, Nov. 21, 2014 (RSVP no later than Friday, Nov. 7). The purpose of the forum is to begin a dialogue about the value of community engagement for academic culture, teaching, and scholarship. The forum also affords students an opportunity to share their engagement projects. A call for Poster Presenters can be found [here](#). More information, including deadlines for poster presenters, can be found on the [Academic Affairs website](#).

National Search for the Vice President for Research: I am pleased to inform you that the search is underway for the next Vice President for Research. This is a full-time faculty executive position with a preferred start date of July 1, 2015. I would like to invite interested faculty to [apply](#) or [nominate](#) qualified individuals. For best consideration, applications should be submitted by Sunday, Dec. 21, 2014. For more information, visit the [search committee website](#).

Honorary Degrees: The Office of the Secretary is still receiving nominations for [honorary degree recipients](#). Please send nominations to the Office of the Secretary, Scholes Hall 103, MSC05 3340, or email secretary@unm.edu no later than Friday, Oct. 17.

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at <http://provost.unm.edu/communiqué/communiqué-archive.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu. Please also see the Provost’s Blog, which can be found here: <http://provost.unm.edu/communiqué/index.html>.