



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

February 3, 2016

Black History Month: February is Black History month. UNM's Office of African American Student Services and Africana Studies led the university in [kicking off events](#) with a brunch on Saturday, Jan. 30. The luncheon speaker was President Freeman Hrabowski, of the University of Maryland-Baltimore, who delivered a call to arms, and one of the best in my estimation, to address higher education challenges. For more, you can listen to President Hrabowski's [TED talk](#). For a list of Black History month events, please see the [Africana Studies website](#).

CS4All: This past weekend, President Obama launched a \$4 billion initiative — \$4 billion for states and \$100 million going directly to school districts — to increase computer science in K-12 education: by training teachers, expanding access to high-quality instructional materials, and building effective regional partnerships." The initiative, titled "Computer Science for All," (CS4All) is the president's bold effort to empower all American students from kindergarten through high school. By learning computer science, students will gain "the computational thinking skills they need to be creators in the digital economy, not just consumers, and to be active citizens in our technology-driven world." At UNM, an earlier CS4All National Science Foundation-funded project was led by Professor Melanie Moses. Forty-three high school teachers earned certificates to teach the NM-CS4All. According to Moses, "Those teachers taught 491 students in NM high schools between 2013 and 2015. Seventy-two percent of students were from underrepresented groups in STEM, including 36% women, 25% Native American, 17% Hispanic or Latino, 2% African American, and 21% in two or more groups including an underrepresented group." We are delighted that Professor Moses and her colleagues will be leading a campus and statewide effort to compete for the new presidential initiative.

Legislative Update on Funding: The news from the 2016 legislative session remains challenging. The last New Mexico revenues estimate, which is being used to build the FY 17 budget, calculates only \$30 million in new revenues, down from the prior estimate of \$232 million. The state must allocate an additional \$130 million for Medicaid and special education maintenance. Therefore, the legislators are struggling to find \$100 million, which will translate into a cut from last year's allocations. We will know more later this week, as the house is expected to send out House Bill 2 to the senate.

In Memoriam: Marvin Minsky, a revered computer science engineer at MIT and a pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence, passed away on January 24, 2016. At a time when Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications are popping up all around us, from IBM's Watson to self-driving cars, it is important to remember luminaries such as Minsky and to appreciate their original contributions that paved the way to understanding and designing intelligence into our machines.

Teacher of the Year: The Teacher of the Year nominations are now open and the deadline is Wednesday, Feb. 10. Please visit the [Center for Teaching Excellence website](#) to submit a nomination.

Your Dazzling Brain: Last week, I wrote about developmental psychologist Michael Tomasello and the trait he proposed as the defining human characteristic. The topic generated feedback, including information about three short talks coming on March 15, presenting the latest discoveries in neuroscience. For more information, and to register, please visit the [Albuquerque Academy website](#).

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