



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

February 17, 2016

The News from Santa Fe: According to our Office of Government & Community Relations update: “The Senate moved quickly on the state budget bill this afternoon, once the shock of just what a ‘heck of a mess’ the state was in had been digested. House Bill 2, the \$6.2 billion general appropriations act for FY 17 that had been sliced another 2 percent from what the House delivered just three days ago, passed the Senate on a 39 -1 vote. Higher education was cut \$19.5 million from the current year operating base in this budget. UNM and the Medical School I&G account for over \$6 million of that cut. We also anticipate a further half-percent cut from the current FY16 budget.” The session ends tomorrow at noon, and the governor will have 21 days to sign or line-item veto. Once the governor signs the state budget, we will have a clear idea on how to construct our university budget in what promises to be yet another very challenging cycle.

Can Berkeley Stay Berkeley? While our budget challenges feel monumental, we are hardly unique. As many of you have noted, public universities across the U.S. are facing serious challenges. Increasing costs, reduction in state support, and limits on tuition force public universities large and small to face up to the problems with their current models of delivering education. Even the University of California, Berkeley, the nation’s top public university, feels the pain. According to an [article](#) in Inside Higher Education: “Athletics, administration, academic programs — everything’s on the table. That’s what the University of California at Berkeley told professors and staff Wednesday in announcing it’s seeking a ‘new normal’ in light of projected long-term budget deficits. While details of the structural overhaul are scant thus far, the news left many wondering if Berkeley can maintain its standing as one of the world’s leading research universities throughout the process. In essence, can Berkeley stay Berkeley?”

Gravitational Waves: And while we are awaiting the release of the New Mexico state budget, let’s be aware of other black holes in the universe. Remarkably, [scientists have detected](#) the sound released by two black holes that collided a billion years ago, confirming a prediction of Einstein’s theory of general relativity. “That faint rising tone, physicists say, is the first direct evidence of gravitational waves, the ripples in the fabric of space-time that Einstein predicted a century ago. (Listen to the actual sound [here](#), or to the Prairie Home Companion’s version [here](#))”

How small is the World? The six degrees of separation hypothesis, referred to variously as the small or shrinking world theory, was first described in a short story titled ‘[Chain Links](#)’ and written by Hungarian poet Frigyes Karinthy. In the story, as described [here](#), “he claimed he could reach anyone in the world, whether a Nobel Prize winner or a worker in a Ford auto factory, through a series of no more than five intermediaries.” The phenomenon was clearly shown by Stanley Milgram (the same Milgram depicted in the film “[Experimenter](#)”) in the famous [Small World Experiment](#). The theory received an update when Facebook’s data scientists found only 3.5 intermediaries between members of the social network, which appeared to show that the world was becoming smaller — by almost half! An [article](#) from a researcher at Microsoft, however, explains why this is not the case, and provides a good description of small world effects.

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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