



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

October 12, 2016

As society goes, so goes the university; but also, as the university goes, so goes society.

—Clark Kerr

State Budget & UNM: The New Mexico governor signed the budget fix that the legislature sent to her office. This budget only addresses the shortfall in the current fiscal year. The legislature will have to work during the 60-day session, starting in January, on the budget for the next fiscal year that will start in July 2017. For the current fiscal year, they cut higher education, including UNM, by 5 percent. This amounts to a \$42 million cut to higher education and \$9.8 million to UNM’s main campus. They also attempted to replenish the general fund reserves to 0.9 percent. Note that the general fund reserves have fluctuated between a low of zero in FY 2016 to a high of 16.9 percent in 2006. At UNM, we are working to design and implement these cuts in collaboration with deans, vice presidents and directors. We will continue to engage the campus community in the conversation to strategically balance and restructure our budget and our university.

The State of Higher Education: A World Academic summit was recently convened by the [Times Higher Education at Berkeley](#) to discuss the state of higher education across the globe. Much of the discussion was led by US Academic leaders. President Emeritus Mary Sue Coleman of Michigan (past provost of UNM) reminded us that public higher education in the U.S. is at [a tipping point](#). President Coleman concluded, “We need to remind ourselves as a nation of higher education’s true value and its return on investment, not only to the individual but to society. Our collective progress and prosperity hinge on quality higher education. It is the strongest argument we have for lifting up our public support of this critical public good.” Many dissenting voices, including some of our own, blame rising administrative costs, the student debt crisis, and the lack of preparedness for jobs, among other things, for the current state of higher education.

The Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) [initiated a project](#) to address some of these concerns. I urge you to look at the findings. As usual in complex situations, the truth lies between the extremes, but any discussion within our university on a path forward must be grounded in facts and supported by solid research. As an example, the fixation on STEM majors and workforce development, and the related exclusion of other majors and fundamental research must be revisited in light of [voices from the scientific community](#), [scientific surveys](#), and the [warnings of Nobel Laureates](#).

On the other hand, simply burying our heads in the sand in the hope of better times ahead is unacceptable. Over the years, universities have survived and thrived not because they were stagnant, but because they adapted and, in many cases, led the waves of change in society, science, art, and education. It is high time that we take back our responsibility to explain why the university is a pillar of a vibrant and democratic society. The only question left is: how do we fund public higher education? That is where we all come in.

Faculty Compensation Study and Salary Adjustments: In the 2015-16 academic year, our office undertook an effort to study UNM's faculty compensation policies and practices. The information provided by those studies was used to make adjustments to the salaries of a quarter of our continuing faculty, and to build a framework for setting faculty compensation in the future. I encourage you to read today's [UNM News article](#) about the studies and subsequent improvement efforts. More information can be found on the [Academic Affairs website](#).

Social Justice and Institutional Change: Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, president and founder of the Washington Consulting Group (WCG), and president and founder of the Social Justice Training Institute, will be on main campus Monday, Oct. 17. He will provide a keynote address from 1-2:30 p.m. in the Student Union Building, Ballroom C, followed by a workshop from 3:30-5 p.m. in the Stamm Commons Room 104, in the School of Engineering. For additional information, see [diverse.unm.edu](#).

Institutional Assessment Days: The UNM Office of Assessment is hosting the second annual UNM Institutional Assessment Days (IAD) to gather feedback from students about their academic experiences. The IADs will occur university-wide during the month of October: UNM-Main and UNM-Valencia, Oct. 18-19; UNM-Taos, Oct. 19-20; UNM-Gallup, October 24-25; and UNM-Los Alamos, Oct. 25-26. Participating students will be eligible for prizes. Please encourage undergraduate students to participate during IAD. For more information, visit the website [iad.unm.edu](#) or call (505) 277-3499.

Honorary Degrees: The Office of the Secretary is receiving nominations for honorary degree recipients until this Friday, Oct. 14. Please send nominations to the Office of the Secretary, Scholes Hall 103, MSC05 3340, or email secretary@unm.edu.

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this Communiqué is available on the [Academic Affairs website](#). Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu. Please also see the [Provost's Blog](#).