



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

April 11, 2012

“Theories are like maps: the test of a map lies not in arbitrarily checking random points but in whether people find it useful to get somewhere.” Ronald Giere.

The 'Boy Problem' Examined: In an earlier communiqué, I reviewed the problem of widening college access between rich and poor. “The working paper, which uses data from the U.S. Census and the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth, also notes a striking and substantial difference between the sexes in educational attainment, with women outpacing men in every demographic group.” An overview of the described study is described in <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/12/06/women-high-income-families-outpace-their-brothers-college>.

More on Female Mathematicians: Last week’s communiqué on female mathematicians generated feedback from many of you. Dr. Chandler, an Emeritus professor of Physics sent me the following: “A good short biography of Noether is found at http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/Biographies/Noether_Emma.html. This University of St. Andrews web site (called MacTutor) contains the biographies of many mathematicians and theoretical physicists—including many women. A biography of Kovalevskaia is there. You might also find interesting the biography of Émilie du Chatelet, one of Voltaire’s lovers and the person who translated Newton’s Principia into French (among many other mathematics and physics things).”

Is College Worth It? Is a theme that keeps appearing in this communiqué and one that was highlighted by our most recent Academic Planning speaker, Dr. Faulkner (for more information navigate to: <http://news.unm.edu/2012/03/unms-academic-affairs-hosts-fourth-lecture-related-to-academic-planning-efforts/>). A recent Pew Research Center study attempts to answer the question as given in: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/05/15/is-college-worth-it/>. Another theme touched upon by Dr. Faulkner was recently discussed by the President of the Association of American Universities (AAU), Dr. Hunter Rawlings, “*But over time, the renewed public investment in higher education that our country needs is unlikely if we do not acknowledge our own shortcomings and begin to address them. First, we need to say loudly and clearly that improving undergraduate education will receive our closest attention and best efforts. We need to alter faculty incentives by making undergraduate teaching at least equal to research and graduate teaching in prestige, evaluation, and reward. And we need to do research-based teaching that takes account and advantage of the latest findings of cognitive science, which are extensive, on how students learn. In brief, they learn by doing, not by just listening to someone else; they learn by solving problems, not by passively absorbing concepts; they learn best in groups of peers working things out together.*” The full article can be found at: <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/03/30/essay-research-universities-must-pay-more-attention-student-learning>.

The Making of an Expert: I have always been intrigued by the concept of an “expert.” I kept coming across the rule of thumb that it takes around 10 years to make an expert. The attached article describes the making of an expert (<http://www.scribd.com/gwapuboy/d/32905911-The-Making-of-an-Expert-HBR-Article>) and distills the process into the following three steps: 1) Deliberate practice 2) Outstanding coaching, feedback and mentorship, and 3) A significant investment of effort over time (typically ten years or more). Some of us may therefore be experts!

Congratulations are in order: Ms. Vanessa Harris, Director of University Advisement, is one of only ten internationally who has been selected for the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) 2012-2014 Class of Emerging Leaders. To find out more about NACADA’s Emerging Leaders Program navigate to: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Programs/EmergingLeaders/ELPLeaders.htm>

It Begins With Me. Hector Torres a beloved professor in the English Department and Stefania Gray, a wonderful graduate student in FLL/Comp Lit were murdered in a domestic violence/stalking incident 2 years ago. The 2nd annual Gray-Torres conference on interpersonal violence helps to train students, staff, and faculty about how to do practical things every day to stop such violence. The conference will take place on Monday April 16 between 9:45 AM and 6:30 PM in SUB Ballroom B.

Sincerely, Chaouki Abdallah,
Provost & Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at: provost@unm.edu or at the electronic town hall: <http://connectu.unm.edu/>. You can also follow the Provost on Twitter: @UNMprovost