



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

November 2, 2011

“If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.” - Chinese proverb

“The academy should make for less misery among the poor, less ignorance in the schools... less suffering in the hospital, less fraud in business, and less folly in politics.” - Daniel Coit Gilman, President of Johns Hopkins University, 1879.

The Big Questions: As we prepare for our academic planning exercise, the University of New Mexico community needs to start thinking of answers to the following questions: Is Higher Education a public good or a private one? What should UNM look like in 10 (or more) years? What will our relation be to our City and our State? What type of faculty will we attract and retain? What will the profile be of our graduate and undergraduate students? Will UNM be an international university? What will be our societal and global impacts? What will our research footprint look like? Answers to these questions will help shape our goals and our path. Towards those ends, the Academic Affairs office will soon be inviting national educational leaders to speak to the University community and to have open forums around these and other questions that will emerge.

The Cost of Education: According to data pulled from the report Trends in College Pricing 2011 (http://trends.collegeboard.org/college_pricing/), on average a public Doctoral institution charges \$9,185 (in-state) for tuition and fees, an increase of 8.2% in the last year. The total cost (tuition + fees + room & board) has increased at an annual average of 4.1% during the last decade. State funding per FTE student for higher education institutions was 23% lower in inflation-adjusted dollars in 2010-11 than it had been a decade earlier. You can find specific data about UNM (up to 2009) at The Delta Cost Project IPEDS Database (<http://www.tcs-online.org/Home.aspx>).

What do we believe? A recent article highlights the difference between scientific and non-scientific beliefs, using a recent experiment that may have shown that some particles can travel at faster than the speed of light (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/blog/2011/sep/28/faster-than-light-science-religion>). In 1919 Karl Popper posed the question, "When should a theory be ranked as scientific?" or "Is there a criterion for the scientific character or status of a theory?" The answer provided by Popper is that “the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability.” The book *What We Believe but Cannot Prove: Today's Leading Thinkers on Science in the Age of Certainty*, edited by John Brockman, provides many interesting twists on such questions.

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.
Your feedback and input is welcome at: provost@unm.edu.

Sincerely,

Chaouki Abdallah, Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs