



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

July 10, 2013

College Costs & Affordability: College costs are back in the news as congress was not able to agree on how to keep the rates from rising by the July 1, 2013 deadline. [According to CNN Money Reports](#), "On Monday (July 1, 2013) rates surged to 6.8% after Congress couldn't agree how to keep them from rising. Despite the bad news that the hike could cost average student borrowers an additional \$2,600 over 10 years (or an extra \$21 a month), it doesn't really affect anyone—at least not yet. The hike applies to loans issued after July 1, 2013. Students typically sign their loan documents when they return to campus in the fall." The UNM financial aid office is monitoring the situation and has taken steps to try to minimize the effects on our incoming students should the rates stay at 6.8 percent, as opposed to the original 3.4 percent. Such steps include providing more financial aid from tuition revenue (20 percent of such increases) and the novel "Powering Success" program established in collaboration with our community partner, New Mexico Educators Federal Credit Union. The program was described in [President Frank's Weekly Perspective](#) and was selected as the national recipient of the Catapult award from the Public Strategies Group.

Differential Tuition: One potential approach to address the across-the-board rising cost of higher education is to charge differentially by major. UNM already charges such differential tuition for some professional programs (e.g., law, business, public administration, medicine, nursing), but [a recent move to charge students more for costlier undergraduate majors](#) is being considered by some universities. Interestingly, the effectiveness of differential tuition is not completely clear. A paper from [the National Bureau of Economic Research](#) describes how "differential pricing does alter the allocation of students to majors, though heterogeneity across fields may suggest a greater supply response in particularly oversubscribed fields such as nursing. There is some evidence that student groups already underrepresented in certain fields are particularly affected by the new pricing policies." In engineering, for example, charging more resulted in a 1.1 percent dip in the share of degrees awarded (on a base of 14.7 percent). Alternatively, differential tuition did not statistically affect business degree production, and actually increased the share of nursing degrees by 0.8 percent (on a base of 4.4 percent). Finally, there are some state legislatures, such as Florida's, that have proposed charging less for majors in the STEM fields because these degrees have "greater" market potential than those in the humanities and social sciences. Countering this perception are recent surveys by [the Association of American Colleges & Universities \(AACU\)](#) and [Georgetown University](#). Not only are unemployment rates for college graduates with humanities majors comparable with certain math and computer science majors, but employers value the "big-picture knowledge" and set of intellectual skills gained in the humanities.

MOOCs Transfer Credits: Despite the excitement about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), there does not seem to be yet a viable model for transferring credits into traditional degrees. One of the first institutions to attempt to do so, Colorado State University-Global Campus, reported that after a year of launching the transfer program [not one student has taken advantage of the offer](#). This is yet another sign that MOOCs, far from being the end of the traditional college experience, remain at best a work in progress.

Technology (and other Ideas) Hype: New technologies and ideas go through an interesting hype cycle (see previous item on MOOCs). According to [the report from Gartner](#), once a new technology triggers a Hype Cycle, there is a peak of inflated expectations, a trough of disillusionment, followed by a slope of enlightenment, and, finally, a plateau of productivity.

Staff Scholarships for Fall 2013: The Provost's Committee for Staff will once again be offering three \$350 scholarships to UNM staff who participate in the Tuition Remission Program for the fall 2013 semester. The money will help cover the cost of academic books, course fees, and supplies. [To apply, please visit the PCS website](#).

Bilinski Fellowships: [Eight UNM humanities doctoral students in the College of Arts & Sciences](#) will receive dissertation completion fellowships made possible by a \$400,000 gift from the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Educational Foundation. Bilinski Fellows will be supported for two to three semesters while they complete dissertations on topics ranging from an unknown manuscript of Genesis, to the Plains Indians' control of the Missouri River, and from nanotechnology and environmental ethics, to contemporary Chicana art.

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