



*WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ*

**November 20, 2013**

*When the winds of change rise, ordinary people build walls while extraordinary people build windmills.*

—Chinese Proverb, quoted by Rob Asghar

**Academic Leadership:** In selecting academic leaders we look for people who can earn the trust of faculty, staff, and students, and who can also lead. The recent [article](#) in *The Chronicle* stated that “administrators say they often have to call upon the same small overworked group of faculty members to chair departments, committees, or initiatives successfully. Professors often blame ‘administrators’ for institutional woes — even when those very “administrators” may well have been, just a few months before, their respected faculty colleagues. It’s as if once you cross over to running the institution, you become some evil, other character. And then, perhaps dangerously, I hear trustees, corporate executives, and policy makers repeat, as if it were factual, that ‘academics aren’t leaders.’ The implication is that you need CEOs or former politicians or policy wonks to head our major institutions. How do we identify, support, and reward the kind of faculty leadership that is needed at all times, but especially at times of change?” A powerful answer is provided by a response to the article: “Perhaps leadership and learning are two aspects of a similar cluster of commitments. Perhaps we can seek our leaders among those most conspicuously committed to learning?”

**The Lottery Scholarship:** The New Mexico Legislative Lottery Scholarship, which has paid tuition for qualified students for up to eight semesters, is in need of quick funds infusion in the spring of 2014. The scholarship was established in 1996, and until recently was able to fund all eligible students. In recent years, however, the increasing number of eligible students, the rise in tuition, and flat to decreasing revenues have made the scholarship fund unsustainable. This year, for example, the fund is expected to pay out \$67 million in scholarships while only taking in about \$40 million. The Spring 2014 semester shortfall is about \$10 million and it is believed that a bill will be submitted on the first day of the legislative session (January 21, 2014) for a supplementary appropriation to give everyone holding a scholarship, or qualifying for the first time, a full ride for the Spring 2014 semester only. A long-term solution will depend on other legislative action, and there are many competing proposals (some by our own students) to make the successful program sustainable in the long run.

**The STEM Crisis:** Do we have a STEM crisis? The [article](#) in *The Chronicle* presents data to the contrary. I for one believe that we have a STEM education crisis, but not necessarily a STEM graduate crisis.

**Your Friends are More Popular than You are:** This was the conclusion reached by [a 1991 article](#) of Scott Feld. The mathematical justifications are fairly simple, and one can explain the apparent paradox as follows: “People with more friends are more likely to be your friend in the first place; that is, they have a higher propensity to make friends in the first place. Another example deals with Twitter: The people a person follows almost certainly have more followers than they. This is because people are more likely to follow those who are popular than those who are not. Thus, over 98 percent of users are subject to the friendship paradox. This observation has been used as a way to forecast and slow the course of epidemics, by using this random selection process to choose individuals to immunize or monitor for infection while avoiding the need for a complex computation of the centrality of all nodes in the network. A recent study found that those in the center of their social networks can detect flu outbreaks almost two weeks before traditional surveillance measures can.

**Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification:** Virginia Scharff, recently appointed as associate provost for Faculty Development and Academic and International Initiatives, is currently undertaking the weighty task of documenting all community engagement efforts at UNM in preparation for our institution’s application for [Carnegie’s Elective Community Engagement Classification](#). The team is seeking courses, programs, or research initiatives that involve partnerships with our community. If you believe that your teaching, research, or program

embodies this I encourage you to describe your endeavors in [the surveys](#). We are looking to document the diversity of approaches to community engagement at UNM that will help to facilitate and support our university's commitment to promoting and sustaining the health equality, social justice, and economic development that enhances the quality of life for all New Mexicans.

**UNM's Professor Homer Featured in Best Law Teachers Study:** Professor Steven Homer, interim director of the Legal Analysis and Communications Program, and recipient of the University of New Mexico's Outstanding Adjunct/Lecturer of the Year award, was one of only 26 "best law teachers" in the United States, according to the new book *What the Best Law Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press, 2013). Please join me in recognizing Professor Homer's [outstanding achievement](#) and his commitment to excellence in the classroom.

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Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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