



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



*WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ*

**December 2, 2015**

**Oh, Canada:** Last week, I was happy to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. In my excitement to do so (and despite my practice of sending my message to be reviewed by about eight colleagues) I included Canadian Thanksgiving wishes. Many of you have gently corrected my mistake (Canada's Thanksgiving holiday was on Oct. 12) which brought to my attention two comforting thoughts: some of you (critically and carefully) read what I write every week, and better yet, that despite my continuing efforts to be accurate, I will always make mistakes that generate even more interest and discussions! And speaking of being a critical thinker and having a "baloney detection kit" here is some timeless advice from [Carl Sagan via brainpickings.org](http://Carl Sagan via brainpickings.org).

**What Should a University Become?** One of the most lucid assessments of the promises and challenges of universities comes from Charles Vest, the president of the National Academies of Engineering (2007-2013), and twice MIT's president. Dr. Vest [describes](#) how American universities were once a cause of "brain drain," before evolving into "brain circulation" machines, then into "brain integration" centers. In this last reincarnation, Dr. Vest suggests that the promise of the American university model can be fulfilled by embracing its traditional role in a new way: generating knowledge using the power of the network to connect researchers across disciplines and geographic boundaries, and by "creating opportunities" for graduates, business, and industry. And as he pointedly remarked, the promise of economic development may be fulfilled despite the very difficult task of predicting "how and when a research university will advance the economy of a region, as no one planned Silicon Valley."

**Free Science & Anniversaries:** This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Einstein's Theory of Relativity, as well as the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nobel Prize. You can download free PDF books (related to relativity and many other subjects) after a simple registration with the [National Academy Press](http://National Academy Press). Alternatively, by logging into [www.morganclaypool.com](http://www.morganclaypool.com) from a UNM computer, you will also have free access to hundreds of books on (mostly) scientific subjects that can be downloaded to your computer.

**Please!** If you have not already done so, please submit your textbook orders to the UNM bookstore. As I keep on saying, it costs us nothing but helps our students save money, at a time when everything else is costing them more!

**Community Engagement Center Symposium:** The Community Engagement Center, which connects students to community organizations, is having its Fifth Annual Symposium on Saturday, Dec. 3 from 8:30-3:30 p.m. in the Student Union Building. The event is free and everyone is welcome. More information can be found [here](#).

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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