



# The Wednesday Communiqué

**April 11, 2018**

## **On the Power of Teachers and Explainers**

During the 63rd Annual Research Lecture by UNM distinguished professor Dr. McCrady, I was reminded of the power we hold as teachers. Dr. McCrady described how, after starting out as an undergraduate biology major, she switched to psychology because of the influence of one teacher. While I am confident she would have become a successful biologist, that teacher indirectly helped shape the future of many UNM students and benefited patients of UNM's Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions (CASAA).

My own educational trajectory was impacted by a high school teacher who helped me discover the love of mathematics and science. Another influence was my Ph.D. dissertation adviser, who taught me how to read research papers, question authority, and write and present my ideas. I lost touch with my high school teacher, but remember his encouraging smile, and his ability to communicate, what seemed to be at the time, advanced concepts with ease and excitement. I remain close to my adviser, however, both professionally and personally. He helped shape my writing and presentation skills and guided my responses to reviewers' concerns as I revised (sometimes multiple times) my submitted papers. He taught me, by example, to care about my students, and the joy of communicating discoveries and results in clear and concise ways.

It is therefore with a mix of nostalgia and dread that I read this [article](#) in the Atlantic, claiming that the traditional scientific paper may have outlived its usefulness. The more I thought about it, however, the more convinced I became that "advanced" scientific concepts may be better communicated using visual tools, and that great science communicators have much in common with visual artists. My hunch was further validated while reading another [recent article](#), exploring why so many scientists want to become filmmakers, or other kinds of artists (musicians, painters, novelists, poets) later in their careers.

## **2018-19 PROVOST'S CORE CURRICULUM TEACHING FELLOWS**

Our new initiative to strengthen the general education Core Curriculum at UNM acknowledges the power of committed and imaginative teaching to transform lives through flexible integration of new approaches to knowledge, communication and social experience. The Office of Academic Affairs invites faculty (T-T, lecturer, main and branch campus) interested in enhancing how we educate undergraduates in the general education core curriculum to become one of a dozen Provost's Teaching Fellows who will integrate racial and social justice, research, writing, global knowledge, community



engagement or innovation into the general education experience. If you are already teaching a core curriculum course, are developing one, or want more generally to share knowledge and approaches to learning, this is an opportunity to disseminate and exchange ideas. Each fellow will receive a \$3,000 fellowship to design and work in a community of practice. Applications are due April 23. For more information and the application, please consult: <https://provost.unm.edu/people/curriculum-and-assessment.html>.

### **Health Hackathon 2018**

The UNM Clinical & Translational Science Center is hosting New Mexico's first-ever Health Hackathon May 18-20 at the Domenici Center for Health Sciences Education. Health Hackathon 2018 brings together innovation, collaboration, and research aimed at creating better health outcomes for our community. For more information, please contact Carla Cordova at [CNCordova@salud.unm.edu](mailto:CNCordova@salud.unm.edu), or by calling (505) 272-8553.

### **National Student Employment Week**

This week (April 9-13), UNM joins colleges and universities across the country to recognize student employees during National Student Employment Week. I hope you had a chance to enjoy the carnival on Tuesday. The Student Employee of the Year Awards ceremony will be held this Friday at noon in the SUB Atrium. Please help us recognize our excellent student employees this week and show your appreciation for all of their hard work.

## **Chaouki Abdallah**

**Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs**

A PDF version of this weekly brief is available on the [Academic Affairs website](#). Your feedback and input are welcome at [provost@unm.edu](mailto:provost@unm.edu).