



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

April 24, 2013

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.
—Samuel Becket

The Five Things: *What five things have you learned to improve education?* is the question asked of various education leaders. [The second answer, from Andreas Schleicher](#), the special advisor on education policy to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's secretary-general and deputy director for education, is very telling: "The skills that are easiest to teach and test are also the skills that are easiest to digitize, automate, and outsource."

The Real Payoff of a College Degree: How should the value of a college degree be measured? According to the [recent Chronicle article](#), "Looking at college explicitly in terms of its 'return on investment,' measured in starting salaries and potential earnings, is something new—a confluence of anxieties about the rising cost of college, mounting debt among students, a flaccid economy, and the ubiquitous vocabulary of the market. This perspective is everywhere now, embedded in the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard, the college 'ROI rankings' from the salary-tracking company PayScale, the countless recent books assessing the value of college, and *The Chronicle's* own new tool, [College Reality Check](#)." But should higher education be measured only by its financial rewards, or should personal growth, citizenship, and other long-term non-monetary benefits be factored in? This is the discussion taking place at various campuses, state legislatures, and kitchen tables.

Competency-Based Education: [It is finally happening!](#) The U.S. Department of Education will award financial aid to students based on "their mastery of competencies as opposed to their accumulation of credits." Specifically, the department "approved the eligibility of Southern New Hampshire University (a private, non-profit university) to receive federal financial aid for students enrolled in a new, self-paced online program called College for America."

Patton Oswalt: The following message, [which appeared on comedian Patton Oswalt's Facebook page](#), captures how I felt after the Boston events: "I remember, when 9/11 went down, my reaction was, 'Well, I've had it with humanity.' But I was wrong. I don't know what's going to be revealed to be behind all of this mayhem. One human insect or a poisonous mass of broken sociopaths. But here's what I DO know. If it's one person or a HUNDRED people, that number is not even a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a percent of the population on this planet. You watch the videos of the carnage and there are people running TOWARDS the destruction to help out. (Thanks FAKE Gallery founder and owner Paul Kozlowski for pointing this out to me). This is a giant planet and we're lucky to live on it but there are prices and penalties incurred for the daily miracle of existence. One of them is, every once in awhile, the wiring of a tiny sliver of the species gets snarled and they're pointed towards darkness. But the vast majority stands against that darkness and, like white blood cells attacking a virus, they dilute and weaken and eventually wash away the evil doers and, more importantly, the damage they wreak. This is beyond religion or creed or nation. We would not be here if humanity were inherently evil. We'd have eaten ourselves alive long ago. So when you spot violence, or bigotry, or intolerance or fear or just garden-variety misogyny, hatred or ignorance, just look it in the eye and think, 'The good outnumber you, and we always will.'"

Not on Our Campus: The Not on Our Campus campaigns address safety and inclusion on campuses, including issues of racism, anti-Semitism, LGBTQ bias, and hazing. Please join us for the upcoming working session, brought to you by the Division of Equity and Inclusion and the LGBTQ Resource Center. The session will be held on Monday, April 29 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Student Union Building, Ballroom C. For more information, please see [the announcement on the Division for Equity and Inclusion website](#).

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at: provost@unm.edu or at the electronic town hall: <http://connectu.unm.edu/>. Please also see the Provost's Blog at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.