



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

July 3, 2013

It's Not What You Say; It's What Google Says: In dealing with crisis management, including campus crises, we struggle to communicate the facts, as well as safety information. [A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*](#) describes how “in the age of the Internet and social media, the ‘truth’ about a campus incident—that is, the narrative that everyone believes is the true account of what happened—often is not a factual rendering of what occurred. It is, instead, the story first propagated on Web sites like Facebook and Wikipedia, and then ‘catches on.’ Truth, in other words, is what people believe.” The author is being provocative; equating truth with belief is an obvious hyperbole. Belief, as described above, misses two out of Plato’s three criteria for knowledge—it is neither justified (not reliably anyway) nor true. The author’s overarching point, however, about the influence of social media on popular belief, emphasizes the importance of getting the facts to social media before the rumor. It also stresses the need for critical thinkers, those who can separate the true beliefs from the false ones.

UNM Affordability: How much does college really cost? How much do states spend on higher education? How about the rise in tuition and costs? [This information has been available](#) since 2011—as a requirement of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008—to provide students, or those considering secondary education, as well as their families, accurate information about the cost of college. [UNM’s scorecard summary can be found here](#). For example, the average net price for public four-year institutions and above in 2011-12 was \$10,863. Among the research universities, UNM, at \$11,001, was one of the least expensive. Others include ASU, at \$12,369, and the University of Arizona, at \$13,485. The “Net Price” is the new currency and is found as follows: “Average net price is generated by subtracting the average amount of federal, state/local government, or institutional grant or scholarship aid from the total cost of attendance. Total cost of attendance is the sum of published tuition and required fees (lower of in-district or in-state), books and supplies, and the weighted average for room and board and other expenses.”

Who Knows MOOCs? According to [a recent survey](#), it turns out that while MOOCs remain largely unfamiliar, students were most aware of them, parents were interested in MOOCs for themselves but not for their children, and MOOCs enjoy modest conceptual support. The survey is the first to measure “attitudes towards MOOCs among five audiences often critical to higher education leadership: parents, students, alumni, donors and employers.”

Affirmative Action: A recent decision by the Supreme Court sent an affirmative action case back to lower courts. [The lawsuit was brought by Abigail Fisher](#), 22, who is white and “says that her race was held against her” when she was rejected from the University of Texas at Austin. [A *New York Times* article](#) says that the Supreme Court grappled with two questions, as described by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.: “He wanted to know how much diversity was enough. And he wanted to know when colleges would be able to achieve an acceptable level of diversity without using racial preferences.” For some idea of the effect of eliminating affirmative action programs, you can find [information about how minorities have fared in states with affirmative action bans](#).

New Compact between States and Public Higher Education: Financial as well as political and social support for higher education continues to slip. [A recent report](#) suggests that we need to revitalize our efforts to renew our compact with the state along the following lines: “1) Make Institutional Accountability the Foundation of a New Compact, 2) Build an Institutional Agenda Linked to State Needs, 3) Address College Affordability Concerns, and 4) Convey Institutional Outcomes.” We also must “amplify efforts to help policymakers better understand the cost of higher education; explain factors that influence costs; describe our institutional efforts to control costs; and describe the state’s role in providing institutional operating support and need-based financial aid to keep college affordable.”

LFC Meeting: On July 17, 2013: The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) [will visit UNM on July 17, 2013](#) to discuss “Student Progress since formula reform: UNM actions to boost student performance.” This is a great opportunity for us to explain to legislators and their staff some of our actions and policies as suggested in the previous item. It may be of interest to you to look over the following LFC documents describing how New Mexico allocates its funds, especially to higher education:

[Overview of New Mexico Finances: FY13 Budget](#)

[LFC Finance Facts: Understanding State Financial Policy](#)

Designing Humor: “The New Yorker receives around 1,000 cartoons each week; it only publishes about 17 of them.” In [a recent Ted talk](#), the cartoon editor and “self-proclaimed ‘humor analyst’ Bob Mankoff dissects the comedy within just some of the ‘idea drawings’ featured in the magazine, explaining what works, what doesn't, and why.” The talk is at times raw and offensive to some, but always interesting and funny.

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