



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

August 7, 2013

Economic Impact of the Arts on New Mexico: Dean Kymberly Pinder of the College of Fine Arts reminded me that, in 2007, Dean Christopher Mead was part of a group that created a study of the creative economy in New Mexico. Similar to the item I included last week, [the Arts and Cultural Industries Action Plan](#) (scroll down for the full report and summary) discusses the economic impact of the arts on our local setting.

The Cost Disease: “William G. Bowen is President Emeritus of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and was the president of Princeton University from 1972 to 1988. Dr. Bowen has also been partially responsible for JSTOR, the Mellon International Dunhuang Archive, ARTstor, and Ithaka.org. With Professor Baumol, he defined the cost disease in higher education and the arts. The cost disease involves a rise of salaries in jobs that have experienced no increase of labor productivity in response to rising salaries in other jobs that did experience such labor productivity growth.” Most recently, Dr. Bowen has studied the possibility of curing the cost disease using technology. His most recent work on the subject is summarized in [the Tanner lectures](#). This short manuscript provides a lucid description of the financial challenges to (public) higher education, and a potential technological solution.

APLU Institutional Consortium: [The association of public and land-grant universities](#) has “217 members that include campuses in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. The membership consists of 188 public and land-grant universities, 25 state university systems, and five higher education-related organizations. The total includes 74 U.S. land-grant institutions, of which 18 are historically black institutions. In addition, A·P·L·U represents the interests of the nation’s 33 American Indian land grant colleges through the membership of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC).” The APLU is concerned about the changes in delivering distance higher education and recently established a consortium to monitor and manage changes that may affect how we deliver public higher education. UNM joined the consortium as one of the founding members.

Vitae-Chronicle: *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has launched a new initiative to assist in Academic career management. [The Vitae website](#) allows visitors to get “access to exclusive career advice and news, connect to fellow academics, apply for the best jobs, and use career management tools like the free dossier service—just for higher education.”

Shaking Up The Social Sciences: [A provocative article in the New York Times](#), by sociologist and physician Dr. Nicholas Christakis, proposed the creation of “new social science departments that reflect the breadth and complexity of the problems we face as well as the novelty of 21st-century science. These would include departments of biosocial science, network science, neuroeconomics, behavioral genetics, and computational social science. Eventually, these departments would themselves be dismantled or transmuted as science continues to advance.” Regardless of where you stand on the issue, Dr. Christakis obviously underestimates what it takes to dismantle academic departments, or to create new ones!

Flex Degrees: The University of Wisconsin has launched a Flex Degree option. [According to the web site](#), “Through the UW Flexible Option you can take full advantage of free educational resources available online and elsewhere, and then demonstrate your knowledge through robust, reliable assessments. The result is a new option for obtaining a high-quality degree that can reduce costs and improve accessibility.” The UW Flexible Option allows students to begin courses when they want, proceed at their own pace, and complete their degrees by making the most of what they know. As stated on the website, “You can use the knowledge acquired in the workplace, from free open educational resources, or from other experiences to pass an assessment, which demonstrates mastery of a subject matter.” The flexible degrees include options for registered nurses seeking higher credentials (e.g., from R.N. to B.S.N., or from R.N. to a Masters of Nursing), a bachelor’s of science in Diagnostic Imaging, a bachelor’s in Information Science & Technology, and a certificate in Professional and Technical Communication. UW Colleges will also offer liberal arts and general education courses in the flexible degree format.

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