



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

October 2, 2013

The Constitute Project: Google has recently provided a grant to the University of Texas at Austin, which along with additional financial support from the Indigo Trust and IC² helped to create the [Constitute Project](#). According to the website, “New constitutions are written every year. The people who write these important documents need to read and analyze texts from other places. Constitute offers access to the world’s constitutions that users can systematically compare them across a broad set of topics.” As an example, the project contains 177 constitutions, and 170 of them guarantee freedom of expression.

Solar Decathlon: After two years of preparation, the UNM and Arizona State University solar decathlon team (team ASUNM) is finalizing its entry into the competition, held in Irvine, Calif., that begins tomorrow, Oct. 3, and lasts until Oct. 13. “The effort is a collaboration among students in design, architecture, construction and engineering at ASU and the University of New Mexico focusing on ‘building materials and energy systems that are appropriate for the desert Southwest—a part of the country expected to see continued population growth over the coming decades.’” To find out more about the project called SHADE, you may visit the [ASUNM website](#), or the [Flicker account](#) of the UNM faculty adviser, Professor Lavrova, as well as the [Team ASUNM twitter account](#). Note that after the competition the SHADE home will go to UNM for several months and later move to Arizona.

Ignorance: Last week, I came across a curious TED talk titled “[The pursuit of Ignorance](#),” by Professor Stuart Firestein. Professor Firestein teaches a course at Columbia University titled “Ignorance.” According to his website, “Scientific knowledge increases at an exponential rate. Curiously ignorance does not similarly decrease. The basic activity of science is in fact confronting ignorance, and often producing more of it.” I have since started reading up on the subject of ignorance, and found that I am more ignorant about ignorance than I thought!

College Readiness: Across the US, only 43 percent of students taking the SAT scored more than 1550 out of 2440, the score considered the minimum for [college readiness](#). According to the College Board, the organization that administers the SAT, “students who score more than 1550 have a greater chance of attaining a B-minus average or higher during their first year of college and persisting to graduation. The mean score for 2013 was 1498.” The issue is especially acute for students who come from lower-income families. “The College Board’s report showed that test takers in the lowest income percentile, whose families make less than \$20,000 per year, averaged a score of 1326, well below the mean. The average score for students from families who make more than \$100,000 was 1619.” For us at a flagship public research university, such findings present us with challenging questions: How can we best combine access for students from all backgrounds with our permanent commitment to cultivating research excellence? What admissions policies, pedagogical practices, graduate training efforts, and financial priorities offer the best assurance of excellence with fair access? How can our research and professional training programs best train New Mexico students for success in K-12, in college, and in life?

Survey on Work-Life Balance: Last Monday, an online survey about faculty life at UNM arrived in your inboxes. For the time being, the survey was sent to UNM main campus faculty members (no HSC faculty or staff on either side of Lomas are being surveyed for now). We have drawn on faculty work-life surveys conducted across the country over the last decade, but have adapted those instruments to meet UNM needs. Your responses to this survey will guide our understanding of UNM main campus faculty members’ perceptions of their workplace. Your answers to these questions constitute the initial step toward improving the UNM workplace for all of us. The Office of Academic Affairs and the University are committed to using the data to improve policies affecting various aspects of academic life, including faculty development and advancement.

Hillerman Country Exhibition: This Friday, Oct. 4, from 5-7 p.m. in the Law School Forum, UNM’s Law School Committee has organized an Art Reception in tribute to Tony Hillerman, who once worked as assistant to the

president and professor of journalism at UNM before resigning to focus on his best-selling books. Please consider attending for a chance to see art inspired by Tony Hillerman's words.

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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>.