



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

April 23, 2014

Data-Driven Debates: At a time when many national and local debates are governed by prior assumptions and emotional arguments, data-supported arguments are in short supply. Moreover, and while we profess the need for data and logic, we tend to remember stories rather than cold numbers. A clever approach, however, “instead of launching directly into argument, is to start by summarizing the “opponent’s best arguments,” as detailed in a recent [blog](#). In effect, “managers and executives confronting serious strategic, operational or cultural disagreements on issues that matter should insist that their people be able to convincingly make their opponents’ case.”

Nonexempt Staff Salaries: While we have been able to calibrate and compare our faculty members’ salaries to national and regional norms for many years, the same was not true for staff salaries. A recent [survey](#) “conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), is the group’s first attempt to gather information on nonexempt staff members in higher education, workers who are paid an hourly rate and are eligible for overtime pay.” The sortable [Table](#) shows the median of such salaries across various higher education institutions.

Student Placement: To better support all UNM students, and to provide incoming students with credit-bearing courses rather than non-credit bearing Introductory Studies courses, the manner in which incoming students are placed in mathematics and writing courses will change next academic year. Specifically, the Core Writing Program in the English Department will begin offering multiple versions of English 101 in the Fall. Because of these new offerings, ISE100 will no longer be offered. Accelerated Composition (ENGL 110) replaces the old English 101. Composition I & II (ENGL 111 & 112) offer students a college-writing curriculum that is “stretched” across two semesters. Enhanced Composition (ENGL 113) augments the curriculum with a weekly 1-hour studio/lab. Please note that ENGL 110, 111/112, and 113 will be treated as equivalent. Composition III (ENGL 120) replaces the old English 102. For more information, visit the English Department’s [web page](#).

Professors Beth Davila and Cristyn Elder developed, piloted, and assessed these new alternatives during the current academic year. The pilots were extremely successful and the new courses will be offered to all incoming first-year students in the Fall 2014 semester. In addition, students can now challenge their placement by the taking the COMPASS exam up to three times prior to the start of the semester. In addition, UNM is revising how exams are used to place students into mathematics and statistics courses from ISM-100 to Math 162. The Department of Mathematics & Statistics anticipates more accurate placement and faster student progress. Within limits, multiple attempts at the COMPASS will now be allowed for math placement. Immediate re-takes will not be allowed, encouraging students to seek help. Note: help can be found in a dog-eared high school trigonometry text, a YouTube lecture, or from one of many helpful resources on campus. To prevent over-placement, which often slows student progress, placement scores that are out-of-date will be dropped and advisors across campus will work to limit *ad hoc* over-rides. The University Advisement Center, Enrollment, the UNM testing center, and many others, have been working to effect these changes in time for the next New Student Orientation.

Research Match at UNM: UNM Faculty members frequently need undergraduate students who are interested in working on a research project. Some students work for academic credit. Others are hired to work on a specific grant. UNM has just launched a website to connect as many faculty members and students as possible around available research projects. Both faculty and students can sign up at <http://research-match.unm.edu/>.

Bilinski Fellows: Five talented doctoral students in the humanities at UNM will receive 2014 Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships thanks to a generous gift from the Bilinski Educational Foundation: Rebecca Ellis (History), Mary Henderson and Rachel Spaulding (Spanish & Portuguese), Nicholas Schwarz (English), Gino Signoracci (Philosophy). Dissertation projects range across 10 centuries and four continents focusing on topics as diverse as philosopher G.W.F. Hegel’s interest in Indian philosophy, schools for the blind in Argentina and improved bilingual education in New Mexico. More information about the 2014 Fellows may be found [here](#).

In Memoriam: Don Chalmers passed away on Easter Sunday. Don served UNM for many years as a member of the board of regents. He was one of the kindest souls I have ever met and handled many contentious situations with infinite grace. He opened his purse to support our students, and gave his most precious time to the University he loved. Don Chalmers will be missed by all who knew him and the many more who have benefited from his generous spirit.

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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