



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

April 29, 2015

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

—T.S. Eliot (The Rock)

Nepal Vigil and Donations: The Nepali Student Association at the University of New Mexico will hold a candlelight vigil in a show of support for the Nepali people and mourning for the enormous loss of life and destruction caused by the massive earthquake that struck Nepal and the Himalayan region on April 25. The UNM community is invited to attend the vigil, which will take place in front of the south entrance of the Student Union Building on the UNM campus from 7:30-8 p.m. this Thursday, April 30. [Donations to the recovery efforts](#) will be accepted at the vigil or can be made online to charities such as the [International Medical Corps](#), [American Nepal Medical Foundation](#), [Help Nepal Network](#), or [American Red Cross](#).

Apples to Apples: A CNN headline from April 24, “Airlines saved \$3.4 Billion, you saved 66 cents,” caught my attention. In a clever twist, the CNN headline masters compared the total amount saved by airlines, because of the drop in their fuel costs, with the savings to individual travelers. In fact, there were more than 830 million passengers last year, making the more appropriate comparison that between \$3.4 billion and \$545 million. I bring this to your attention as we continue to address the [college student debt problem](#). Most discussions have focused on the fact that student loan debt has exceeded credit card debt and now totals over \$1 trillion. A careful analysis should account for the fact that the total debt is assumed by many more students, even while acknowledging that individual debt has also increased to more than \$27 thousand per borrower. An even more careful examination will find that the highest levels of debt are assumed by students attending for-profit colleges, then by professional and graduate students. Most importantly, recent graduates with debt totaling less than one year of salary are able to pay it back within 10 years. It is, however, those who assume any amount of debt but never finish college that are most at risk of defaulting, and it is those students that we should be most concerned about through our advising and financial literacy efforts.

It all Makes Sense Now: Decision-making within universities resembles a person rummaging around inside a garbage can! In 1972, Michael Cohen and others [developed a model](#) based on organizational anarchy to illustrate the decision-making and problem-solving activities they observed within universities. They noticed that the behaviors they were seeing did not conform to standard organizational models with coherent structures and foundational preferences. So they proposed what they called the “Garbage Can theory” as a description of “the operation of universities and their many inter-departmental communications problems.” They noticed that, for instance, “problems, solutions, and decision makers move from one choice to another depending on the mix of recognized problems, the choices available, the mix of solutions available for problems, and outside influences on the decision makers.” They thought this issue, in which “problems are uncoupled from choices,” and that “poorly understood and addressed problems can drift into and out of [the process],” was what created this overall appearance of decision-making as rummaging around inside a garbage can. They added that, “in this sense, decision-making appears ‘pathological’ instead of rational.” Being aware of the organizational issues at universities might help us mitigate their effects, by approaching problems thoughtfully and with as much evidence as is available, and compensating where possible for the transient shifting of problems, choices, participants, and outside influences.

Our First Carnegie Fellow: Dr. Mala Htun, an associate professor of political science, was UNM’s nominee for a [2015 Andrew Carnegie Fellowship](#). She has been formally selected as a fellowship winner. To quote from the letter of the president of the Carnegie Foundation, “In this inaugural year, out of 301 nominations, the jury chose 32 fellows, an acceptance rate of about ten percent. Dr. Htun’s selection is a great tribute to your institution.”

Startalk: New Mexico High School students and beginning UNM freshmen can sign up to learn Arabic this summer in the Startalk program, offered by the Africana Studies Department in cooperation with UNM National Security Studies. More information can be found [here](#).

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