



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

January 28, 2015

UNM Days in Santa Fe: Monday, Feb. 9, is UNM day at the Legislature. It will be held at the Capitol Rotunda, Halls of History, East and Westside. In addition, the New Mexico Council of Graduate Deans is hosting Graduate Education Day at the Legislature this Friday, Jan. 30. Every graduate school in the state will be represented by a group of students presenting their research and scholarship. UNM's graduate studies dean, Julie Coonrod, has organized the trip for six UNM graduate students who will be presenting projects ranging from developing an inhalable drug delivery system for chemotherapy (Amber McBride, PhD in Nanoscience and Microsystems Engineering) to examining different Gallina communities — their subsistence, ceramics, and stone tools (Jacqueline Kocer, PhD candidate, Archaeology). The Graduate and Professional Students Association (GPSA) representatives will be further advocating for graduate education in the state and representing the many graduate programs at UNM. UNM produces 80 percent of the doctorates in the state, and more than half of all New Mexico graduate students attend UNM. More information about the 2015 60-day legislative session is available [here](#).

And Speaking of Research Presentations: In the age of TED and PechaKucha talks, as well as the elevator pitch, some colleges are teaching their (graduate) students how to “sell” their research to a wider audience, primarily by eliminating jargon. Even UNM faculty are getting into the act with the monthly [Lightning Lounge talks](#) at the Faculty and Staff Club. [Here](#) is an article detailing the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) concept as designed, and copyrighted, by the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. UNM's version of the 3MT will be on display at the [Shared Knowledge Conference](#) to be held on April 23 and 24. UNM students can also win prizes for pitching their technology-based business ideas on March 27 at an Elevator Pitch Competition sponsored by Innovation Academy, Anderson School of Management, and STC.UNM (details to be announced soon).

Wisdom of the Crowds, or Groupthink: Are two heads better than one? That is certainly the idea behind forming groups to solve challenging problems, including those faced by UNM and other universities. It is also the philosophy behind Wikipedia, which has generated spirited discussions within our community when I have referenced it. According to [this article](#), and the book “Wikipedia U: Knowledge, Authority, and Liberal Education in the Digital Age,” the attacks on Wikipedia are fundamentally “questions about the nature of scholarly authority.” Here is what I consider the most insightful comment of the article: “Wikipedia and academe are opposites, the one prohibiting original research (on the principle that only secondary sources are generally verifiable) and the other following the rule of publish or perish, and imperative to research that leads to the paradox that students be taught a body of conventional knowledge by instructors who are working to undermine it.” While group thinking can help overcome the limitations of the individual, groups can also devolve into herds that make even worse decisions. I just started reading the book “Wiser: Getting Beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter” by Sunstein and Hastie, which claims (at least in the parts that I have read) that groups need to have anxious members who can anticipate challenges and encourage probing, diverse, and honest disagreements in order to escape the groupthink mentality.

Lobo Reading Experience: The [Lobo Reading Experience](#) has grown each of the past five years, and has been increasingly integrated into classrooms and New Student Orientation. The goal of the program is to foster a common intellectual experience within our campus community. One way to begin participating is to help select the book for next year. [Students and staff can vote](#) on the three nominated books between now and Tuesday, Feb. 3. [Faculty can vote](#) as well, and are invited to provide input on how the selected book might be incorporated into the classroom. The book selection committee would like you to know that many considerations go into selecting the book for the Lobo Reading Experience, including finding a book by an author who is able to visit UNM for lectures and other events, and focusing on a story or subject that can be incorporated into as many academic disciplines as possible. I encourage you to vote today.

UNM vs. NMSU Blood Drive: Come support your local community during the weeklong blood drive beginning on Feb. 2, which is being pitched as the [Battle of I-25 Blood Drive vs. NMSU](#).

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/communique-archive.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu. Please also see the Provost's Blog, which can be found here: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.