



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



### WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

May 4, 2016

**The Why, the How, and the Wow:** Students can learn to ask *why* (or *why not*), to learn *how* to do something (to build or engineer, to make legal arguments, or to diagnose and treat diseases), or pursue the truth and beauty needed to create the “*wow*” in human endeavors. These three purposes could loosely describe the various missions of higher education. Some colleges have only one of these goals and, as such, are more focused in their mission and in allocating their resources. Public research universities, such as UNM, have a more comprehensive mission that can actually create more complete educational opportunities, though at the expense of diluting resources and slowing the pace of change.

But this need not always be the case: many of our STEM programs, for example, attempt to inject the “wow” factor by incorporating creativity concepts, and the “why” questions by stressing ethical concerns. In posting #1486 at [Tomorrow’s Professor](#), the author states that the purpose of requiring engineering students to write “was to suggest that writing is one way, and a very effective way, to clarify our thinking, to illuminate the more distant recesses of our minds. As nicely stated by playwright Edward Albee, ‘I write to find out what I’m thinking’ and by the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, ‘The blank page on which I read my mind.’”

On the other hand, many have combined the philosophical with the practical to create a more complete educational and human experience. Perhaps no one exemplifies this more than Henry Clay Brockmeyer, “the polymath frontiersman.” The [article](#) at The Chronicle, reminds us that in America there was “a time when high theory was integrated into the workings of culture, to a time when meaningful philosophy wasn’t just done by ‘philosophers.’” American philosophy, an intellectual movement initiated by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller in the first decades of the 19th century, held that individuals working through the business of living could, and often do, think and read deeply about the human condition.” In fact, “Brockmeyer didn’t set out to be a philosopher. He was, first and foremost, a mechanic. Born in Prussia in 1826, he lived at a strange moment in intellectual history, at a time when philosophy was read widely and had a hand in determining the social and political destiny of Europe. In the early 19th century — in the wake of an age of revolutionary idealism — philosophy had not given up its intimate relations with politics and culture. It was still written by humans, for humans, like a young Brockmeyer. And it wasn’t read for the sole purpose of becoming a professional thinker but in the hopes of becoming a better or at least a different person.”

**The UNM Seal:** In the course of more than a century, the seal of The University of New Mexico has gone through seven iterations. This is not surprising. Over time, this institution has changed a great deal, has grown and diversified into the great university it is today.

Some have expressed their view that the current seal sends a message of exclusion and silencing of indigenous presence. We see their activism as the most recent rising of the long struggle for civil rights in our nation, and we have now had the opportunity to see the seal anew through their eyes.

As one generation gives way to another, and as history poses new challenges and possibilities, we have used many symbols to say who and what we are as a university. It is important that our symbols reflect our community and its values. This is a moment to demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and to develop an institutional process that embodies our respect for tradition, embraces our diversity, and establishes our vision for the future. We will be reaching out to the University community and working collaboratively with students, faculty and staff this summer to determine how best to address this important issue in an appropriate way with wide input from the community.

**Finals, Graduation, and Commencement:** Next week is our finals exam week for the Spring 2016 semester. Please make sure to adhere to the [Final Examination schedule and policies](#). Also, please note: “Per the Faculty

Handbook, Section D125: Faculty grades are expected to be entered and submitted using Web Grades within 48 hours after the final exam. Law School grades are due 30 calendar days from either the paper due date or the date the examinations are delivered to the faculty member, whichever is later. The law clinic grades are due one business day before the first day of the following semester.” I also take this opportunity to encourage faculty to attend their college or school convocation, the Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony (Saturday, May 14 at 9 a.m. at WisePies Arena, a.k.a. The Pit) and the Graduate Commencement Ceremony (Friday, May 13 at 6 p.m. at WisePies Arena).

**Main Campus Faculty:** The cost of textbooks continues to rise, and now rivals the amount students pay in mandatory student fees. You can help students save money and reduce their cost of attendance by ordering your textbooks for Spring 2016 and Intersession terms on time. It costs us nothing but a little planning, so please enter your book information online as soon as possible on the [UNM bookstore website](#), or by sending an email to Peg Lewis ([peglewis@unm.edu](mailto:peglewis@unm.edu)) or Jonathan Benavides ([jonb@unm.edu](mailto:jonb@unm.edu)).

**Nobel Laureate to speak at CHTM:** Professor John L. Hall, who shared in the 2005 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work in precision spectroscopy, including the optical frequency comb technique, [will present a CHTM Distinguished Lecture](#) at the UNM Center for High Tech Materials, Room 103, 10 a.m., Friday, May 6. His topic: "Intracavity Nonlinear Spectroscopy, technical issues, and scientific opportunities.”

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Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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