



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

January 20, 2016

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.

–Martin Luther King, Jr.

Welcome (back)! For those of you who were with us last semester, I hope that you enjoyed the break. For those of you joining the UNM family this semester: welcome!

Essential Education: In my Nov. 4 Communiqué, I discussed issues surrounding UNM’s Core Curriculum. Core curriculum generally refers to the set of common courses required of all undergraduates. To quote from that message: “UNM adopted a revised Core Curriculum as of Fall 2003 which all undergraduate students must complete as part of their baccalaureate program. Its goal is to give all students at the University a grounding in the broad knowledge and intellectual values obtained in a liberal arts education and to assure that graduates have a shared academic experience. The required courses encourage intellectual development in seven areas of study: writing and communication, social and behavioral sciences, mathematical reasoning, scientific methods in the physical and natural sciences, the humanities, the fine arts, and languages. The basic Core Curriculum requires approximately 37 credit hours of courses in seven areas of study. The UNM core curriculum meets the requirements set forth by the State of New Mexico law (Chapter 21, Article 1B NMSA 1978), and the established policies by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED).”

The New Mexico Higher Education Department, in collaboration with the 32 (32!) institutions of higher education in New Mexico, organized a kick-off meeting at UNM on Jan. 13. Eight representatives from UNM joined eight representatives from each other New Mexico Higher Education institution, along with Cabinet Secretary Damron of HED and her team, to discuss general education curriculum in New Mexico. Paul Gaston, one of the speakers at the meeting, cautioned us to use “essential education,” as opposed to “general education.” The eventual outcome of the meeting is to form a state-wide team to interface with the internal faculty teams on updating the essential education curriculum.

A recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education by Nicholas Lemann, titled “[What Should Graduates Know?](#)” reminds us that Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and St John’s College have built their core curriculum around a canon of great books, while Amherst College and Brown University have no specific core curriculum requirement. His own preference is to “produce a canon of methods rather than a canon of specific knowledge or of great books – that is to define, develop, and require instruction around a set of master skills that together would make one an educated, intellectually empowered, morally aware person. Graduates should possess: Rigorous interpretation of meaning, taught mainly through close reading of texts. Numeracy, including basic statistical literacy. Pattern and context recognition. Developing and stating an argument in spoken and written form. Visual and spatial grammar and logic. Understanding how information is produced, how to locate it, and how much faith to put in it. Empathetic understanding of other people and other cultures. Learning to explore rigorously the relationship between cause and effect and to draw plausible inferences.”

The 2016 New Mexico Legislative Session: started yesterday, Tuesday, Jan. 19, and will run for thirty days. For updates, you may want to sign up at UNM’s [Government Relations website](#). Here is a summary of a recent update: “December projections of \$232 million in new money may very well erode to near nothing when new revenue projections come out next week. UNM, meanwhile, will be sharply focused on maintaining the higher education funding formula while preserving or increasing higher ed’s slice of the budget pie, currently around 13 percent. A compensation increase for faculty and staff is a major priority along with HSC funding, a lottery scholarship fix, and equitable capital project funding. Senate Bill 122, one of 298 pre-filed bills, outlines general obligation bond

funding for state projects. In that bill, higher education projects add up to \$133.9 million, with \$27 million earmarked for UNM's Physics and Astronomy building and another \$7.5 million for branch campus projects. Higher ed libraries would get \$3.5 million in a separate bond issue."

Cheer up! The Guardian newspaper has been publishing a section on higher education and recently, they have added a question: Would you like to tell us why you love your PhD? It turns out that there is a lot to love as described in the [wonderful piece](#).

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