



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

August 29, 2012

Inconvenient Truths vs Wondering Aloud: In trying to engage the various UNM constituents in conversations about university challenges, I sometimes need to wonder aloud about policy changes, new funding models, or student preparedness and faculty workloads. At other times, we have to engage each other in public discussions. It is always challenging to keep the balance between informing while seeking advice, and presenting already-made decisions. It may be helpful to remember Daniel P Moynihan's statement: "No one is innocent after the experience of governing. But not everyone is guilty." On the other hand, some governing cases are so clear-cut and full of inconvenient truths, as described in: <http://chronicle.com/article/VirginiaPenn-State-Boards/133751/>

Learning Dimension: The third dimension in Foundations of Excellence (FoE) is the Learning dimension. "Foundations Institutions deliver intentional curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission. *Whether in or out of the classroom, learning also promotes increased competence in critical thinking, ethical development, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.*" The rationale for this dimension is: "The importance of learning in the first year, both in and out of class, cannot be overstated. As the Preamble to the **Foundational Dimensions** asserts, 'the academic mission of the institution is preeminent.' But the degree to which institutions determine and evaluate specific learning goals in the first year varies widely. Although colleges and universities may assume that learning is taking place, they need evidence in order to improve and also to satisfy the growing demands of external bodies such as regional accreditors and state legislatures."

All You Need to Know about MOOCs: This article summarizes much of the available information about MOOCs: <http://chronicle.com/article/What-You-Need-to-Know-About/133475/>

The Six-year Graduation Rate: The standard consumer measure for parents and students at any 4-year college is the 6-year graduation rate (1.5 times four). Historically, this measure came about because "Rep. Tom McMillen and Sen. Bill Bradley wanted to force colleges to publish the graduation rates of their athletes. Although the NCAA eventually agreed to publish the information on its own, the idea still made its way into a broader disclosure bill in 1990 that also required colleges to publish crime rates at their institutions. By then, the graduation-rate provision was expanded to include all students." While this remains the standard measure (<http://dashboard.unm.edu>), many are now arguing that it is flawed since it does not capture the graduation of part-time and transfer students. As an example, President Obama [started college or enrolled--to avoid "college" twice?] at Occidental College in 1979, and then transferred to Columbia University in 1981, where he completed his BA in 1983. Neither Occidental, nor Columbia could count the President of the United States as graduating within 6 years!

If Only We Had Taller Been: Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon died this past weekend, while the rover "Curiosity" is beginning to explore Mars. Approximately a year ago, I described in the September 21, 2011 Communiqué that the Mars rover ChemCam instrument was developed by a joint US – French team led by P.I. Dr. Roger Wiens of Los Alamos National Laboratory. The team that proposed and is running ChemCam on Mars includes a scientific co-investigator and science team member, Dr. Horton Newsom, from UNM's Institute of Meteoritics, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, and graduate students Nina Lanza and Ann Ollila. Dr. Penelope King, also of the Institute of Meteoritics, is a co-investigator and science team member for another instrument on Curiosity, the Alpha Proton X-ray (APXS) instrument, along with graduate student Jeff Berger. While Ray Douglas Bradbury, who wrote "The Martian Chronicles," did not live to see Curiosity land on Mars (he died on June 5, 2012), you can watch Bradbury recite his beautiful poem on space exploration at this link: <http://boingboing.net/2012/06/06/ray-bradbury-at-nasa-jpl-1971.html>.

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