



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

January 11, 2012

Welcome back! I hope that you all had a restful holiday season, and that you are ready to take on what promises to be an exciting Spring 2012 semester. I heard once that most people don't do much thinking at the office, so I hope that you will be coming back with lots of new ideas!

New UNM President: UNM has a new President! Dr. Robert Frank, current Provost at Kent State University and UNM Alum, will assume the UNM Presidential helm on June 1, 2012. Dr. Frank is an experienced Provost who promises to be a great champion of UNM academics. In an attempt to get familiar with our issues, challenges and current planning exercises, Dr. Frank is engaging faculty, staff and administrators for in-depth conversations over the coming weeks and months. I look forward to partnering with Incoming President Frank to facilitate these conversations and to ensure a smooth transition and alignment of our goals for the next academic year.

Academic Planning: Visit by President of Mellon Foundation: As a part of our UNM Main Campus academic planning initiative, I am happy to confirm that Dr. Don Randel, President of the Mellon Foundation, will be visiting UNM on January 23, 2012 to speak to the UNM Community about national higher education trends. Dr. Randall became Provost of Cornell University in 1995, President of the University of Chicago in 2000, and joined the Mellon foundation in 2006. Dr. Randel's talk is titled "*Disinvesting in Higher Education, Disinvesting in Ourselves,*" and is open to the University public. Dr. Randel will speak at 4:00 PM of January 23, 2012, at UNM's George Pearl Hall. Please plan to join us for this important event.

Wikipedia: In some of my earlier Wednesday Communiqués, I quoted and referred to Wikipedia and then received a lot of criticism and feedback (some of you really let me have it!) I would like to set the record straight (especially for our students) on how I use Wikipedia, and any other source of information. First, I note that we must engage in "re-research" and not in a simple "search," for information. We must build upon information and data gathered by others and then determine its credibility as we use it in our own analysis. Wikipedia and other open source repositories are convenient starting points. However, in my opinion, no single source should be taken as completely accurate or truthful. To prove my point, please reference: "Internet encyclopedias go head to head," *Nature*, December 15, 2005: 900-01, which claims that Wikipedia is as accurate as Britannica. However, if one follows up at http://corporate.britannica.com/britannica_nature_response.pdf, you will find that the case is not black and white! How do you learn more about this? By using Wikipedia of course!
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reliability_of_Wikipedia.

Christmas Break Reading: Many of you have recommended (and a colleague actually gave me a copy of) the excellent book, "*Thinking, Fast and Slow*" by Daniel Kahneman. I also read a very interesting book titled, "*Analytics at Work: Smarter Decisions, Better Results*" by Thomas H. Davenport, Jeanne G. Harris, and Robert Morison. Finally, I am currently reading the book, "*Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland,*" by Pasi Sahlberg.

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.

Your feedback and input is welcome at: provost@unm.edu.

Sincerely,

Chaouki Abdallah, Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs