



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

July 24, 2013

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

—John F. Kennedy

Personalized Learning: The holy grail of education is to achieve personalized learning on a massive scale. Last Friday, July 19, 2013, in [a report in *National Journal*](#), “the Federal Communications Commission started restructuring the “E-rate” under which Washington provides funds to help schools connect to the internet. This seemingly obscure decision could trigger an education revolution by enormously accelerating the deployment of tablets and other digital tools into classrooms. The generational opportunity that advocates envision centers on the use of digital technology to create a more personalized learning environment. Reformers project a reimagined classroom in which all students are equipped with tablets or laptops that allow them to work at their own pace on lessons that adjust to their progress; use video links to take courses, such as advanced science lessons, only available at other schools; and receive real-time feedback from teachers who obtain reports on their performance through online connections with the students’ devices. Constant digital updates would replace bulky out-of-date textbooks lugged in spine-crushing backpacks.”

The Humanities, the Arts, and the Economy: Recent discussions around our state and country about the value of college degrees have focused on exalting the value of STEM degrees. While I firmly believe in the need for more STEM majors and that scientific thinking and education are pillars of our society and economy, I have always felt that the value of college education should not be measured solely by the immediate economic return. Most CEOs and academic leaders have made it clear that critical thinking, creativity, the abilities to collaborate, to speak and write well, are often more important than a specific technical ability. Unfortunately, most recruiters and commentators have focused on the short-term goal of hiring and praising the workforce of today, thus missing the long-term economic benefits, as well as the non-economic impact, of higher education. Should the arts and humanities be valued economically? Recent articles, [such as the one in the *Atlantic*](#), point to the benefits and pitfalls of such an approach. The current British Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, stated in a recent speech that “culture should be seen as the standard bearer for [Britain’s] efforts to engage in cultural diplomacy, to develop soft power, and to compete, as a nation, in both trade and investment.” Such rationale for funding is disputed by the outgoing head of Arts Council England, Liz Forgan. “Forgan warned against the dangers of ‘directing our investment in culture for its commercial potential,’ lambasting this approach as a self-defeating exercise, which will result in ‘worse art’ and a ‘worse commercial outcome.’” [An independent report](#) discussing the economic impact of the arts can be found at the Arts Council England website.

Our Town, Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico School of Architecture + Planning and the City of Albuquerque were awarded a grant of \$150K from the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town program. The proposed project is to design a community garden and plaza space along historic Route 66. [More information can be found here.](#)

MOOCs, LOOCs, & BOOKS: At a recent meeting of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities’ (APLU) chief academic officers, I was reminded by a colleague of the other experiments in massive learning. You are by now familiar with Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), but you may not be aware that [some universities have experimented with Little Open Online Courses \(LOOCs\)](#) with the strategic goal of improving reach and attracting new paying customers. My colleague reminded me also that we used to have BOOKs to achieve the similar goals of massive learning and attracting new paying customers!

Operation Lobo Move-in: Residence Life and Student Housing are seeking volunteers to assist with the third annual Operation: Lobo Move-in event. Volunteers are needed to assist over two thousand on-campus residents

move in on Tuesday, August 13, 2013 between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. To sign up, please visit [the Student Housing website](#).

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu or at the electronic town hall, here: <http://connectu.unm.edu/>. Please also see the Provost's Blog at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.