



*WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ*

**September 11, 2013**

**Retention, Persistence, & Graduation:** Last Friday, September 6, was the last day for students to drop a class and still receive a 100 percent refund. This upcoming Friday, September 13, is the last day for students to change the grade mode for their classes. What this effectively means is that, starting this week, students who drop a class will not only lose their money, but will also affect UNM's class completion rate, leading to a loss of state funding. It is therefore critical to make sure that our students receive all the support they need so that they can earn a passing grade in their courses. Help is available through the [UNM Student Success Center](#) (277-7000), located in the University Advisement and Enrichment Center, which began operation in August and has already served a large number of students. The Student Success Center was developed to quickly and conveniently address student issues and concerns.

**The Higher Cost of Higher Education:** According to [data](#) from 2010, UNM spent around \$91,000 per degree in 2010 in order to produce 3,048 undergraduate degrees. This can be contrasted with \$69,000 for the average 4-year US public institution. More importantly, the actual cost of educating students at UNM is around \$50,000 for four years. This is the estimated cost of providing education, including support services, to an average UNM student. In order to be able to continue to provide quality higher education for future generations, we need to lower the cost of graduation. If we could match the cost of average US institutions, we would have an additional \$60 million available each year to reinvest in faculty and staff compensation, new buildings, and new initiatives. Another (more likely) approach may be to increase our graduation rates while keeping our cost and our students' cost constant. Either way, by pulling together, there is much work to be done to keep cost down while improving the quality and efficiency to completion.

**Public Colleges & Economic Growth:** A recent [article](#) by Robert Gates Jr. and David Boren, both of whom were politicians as well as presidents of public higher education institutions, spells out the economic case for investing in higher education better than any I have seen in recent years. While the article describes only one of the many benefits of higher education, it does address the immediate concerns of many federal and state legislators.

**Strategic Transitions in Higher Education:** David Ward served as interim chancellor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison from 2011-2013, after serving as Chancellor from 1993-2000. He also served as president of the American Council on Education (ACE) from 2000-2008. In a recent [article](#) (forwarded to me by colleagues from our College of Education), Dr. Ward argues that current changes in higher education may indeed be different from the “pendulum swing” of the past half-century. The article also describes some innovations in education at the University of Wisconsin. Their experience provides an interesting look down paths now open for us at UNM.

**The Rhetoric of Reaction:** I recently became acquainted with Albert O. Hirschman's book “The Rhetoric of Reaction.” [The ideas of the book](#) (which I just started reading) struck a chord with me: they have given some shape to considerations of how to encourage meaningful change and respond to the current challenges of public higher education. It is no surprise that those invested in the status quo will fight change. According to Hirschman's book, they do so by way of three standard objections: perversity, futility, and jeopardy. “According to the perversity thesis, any purposive action to improve some feature of the political, social, or economic order only serves to exacerbate the condition one wishes to remedy. The futility thesis holds that attempts at social transformation will be unavailing, that they will simply fail to ‘make a dent.’ Finally, the jeopardy thesis argues that the cost of the proposed change or reform is too high as it endangers some previous, precious accomplishment.” On the other hand, those who seek change for the sake of change may provide “equally simplistic and flawed arguments, namely: The Synergy Illusion — the idea that all reforms work together and reinforce each other, rather than being competing; The Imminent Danger – urgent action is necessary to avoid imminent danger; and the History is on our side argument.”

**Nomination for Sarah Belle Brown Community Service Award:** Serving New Mexico is central to the University's mission. All of our endeavors here at UNM — education, research, patient care, and public service — advance the interests of New Mexico. To support and promote the University's commitment to public service and to recognize those individuals engaging in our community, former regent and current Anderson School Dean Doug Brown established [this award](#) in honor of his wife, Sarah Belle Brown. The President's Office is currently accepting nominations for this prestigious award that recognizes a student, member of the faculty, and a staff member with a \$1,500 award.

Many people across our university are performing outstanding service and going above and beyond in their commitment to our community. Please consider recognizing their efforts and nominate a deserving colleague or student for this award.

**UNM Volunteer Fair hosted by the Provost's Committee for Staff:** The Volunteer Fair will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 11 from 11:30-2 p.m. outside the north entrance of the Student Union Building. Organizations such as the Barrett Foundation, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central New Mexico, City of Albuquerque Open Space, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Family Promise are looking for members of the UNM community who want to make a difference. Sponsored by the Provost's Committee for Staff, the fair is a great way for you to connect with outstanding N.M. volunteer organizations. Please visit the [Provost's Committee for Staff website](#) for more information.

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](mailto: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>.