



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

November 26, 2014

Happy Thanksgiving. UNM lost two students this past weekend, Matthew Grant and Briana Hillard, who were killed in a car accident. Two others, Julia Thompson and Joseph Mendoza, were seriously injured in the collision. Please keep them, their families, and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

The History and Future of Student Loans: There is much data, discussion, and confusion surrounding the issue of college student debt. The Lumina Foundation has released [a documentary film](#) describing the history of student loans and the challenges of repaying them. “The film traces the idea of a student-loan program to the 1950s, when well-off families in Boston were worried about paying to send their children to elite colleges. At first, those families intended to set up a scholarship fund, but they realized that a loan program would be cheaper. That set a precedent for policy makers. Federal loans were subsequently included in the National Defense Education Act of 1958. And they were woven into the 1965 Higher Education Act to appease lawmakers by expanding President Lyndon B. Johnson’s college-affordability efforts to the middle class.” The film describes the various “programs’ origins, milestones, and current issues as we ponder future direction and navigate foreseeable roadblocks to new policy innovation.”

Open Access: Should the results of research (especially those paid for by federal funds) be available free of charge? That is what the [open access movement](#) advocates. The flip side of the argument is that some research may lead to intellectual property and should therefore be protected, and that [the quality control](#) of some open access journals is suspect. [Academic libraries](#) have been at the forefront of the open access movement, and recently they have also ventured into promoting the adoption of open educational resources, such as textbooks.

National Student Graduation Data: We now have the ability to compare student graduation data across the many sectors of 4-year colleges. A [recent article](#) and report compares the success of students who entered college in 2008. The article states: “Six years after a flood of students entered college, many seeking shelter from a sinking economy and a leg up in an uncertain job market, their progress report is in, and it isn’t encouraging. Only 55 percent of the students who entered college in the fall of 2008, at the peak of the Great Recession, had earned college degrees or certificates by May 2014, according to a report released on Tuesday by the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#). That’s down from 56.1 percent for the cohort that started in 2007.” UNM’s graduation rate for the class of 2007 was 55 percent, including those who graduated from UNM and those who graduated elsewhere.

How Universities Work: I just finished the book by John V. Lombardi, who served as president of the University of Florida, the chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the president of the Louisiana State University System. The book’s title says it all: “How Universities Work” is a comprehensive look at the gears and levers of the modern university, including its financial, governance and academic systems.

Two Events: On Monday, Dec. 1 at 12 p.m. there is an event on Race, Power, and Representation in the Student Union Building (SUB) Atrium, followed by a related discussion at 1 p.m. in SUB Ballroom A. The event will include a dialogue on race and power, and how it appears in images across campus. On Saturday, Dec. 6, the 4th Annual Community Engagement Center (CEC) Symposium will be held in the SUB from 8:30-4 p.m., which will highlight the impact of institutional oppression on access to quality educational opportunities.

Chaouki Abdallah

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/communique-archive.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at provost@unm.edu. Please also see the Provost’s Blog, which can be found here: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.