WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

September 24, 2014

On Communication: I am always fascinated by the speed with which some messages propagate within a social network, while others fail to reach their intended audience. Mindful of the high volume of email to which the University community is subjected, I contribute to the noise with the hope that my message reaches *its* intended audience. I want to clarify three different initiatives that may have been conflated in internal university deliberations, leading to misunderstanding and rumors. I addressed this issue yesterday in more detail in my meeting with the Faculty Senate, but think it important to also clarify this issue with the wider faculty directly.

First: Academic Affairs is required, per longstanding University policy, to report faculty workload to the Regents. Thus, departments are regularly asked to collect and report their faculty members' teaching, research, and service workload (note, however, that we recently reduced that reporting burden to once per year instead of once per semester). To meet this need, new ways of tracking faculty workload are under development. Some of those tools are being developed within Colleges, and some are university-wide. The purpose of developing these tools is to lessen the administrative burden—upon faculty, chairs, and deans—of reporting faculty workload. Any such tools will be sensitive to the differences between the disciplines as well as the specific aspirations of individual departments. And while the faculty handbook requires annual evaluations of faculty, no deadlines are imminent for this effort, as it requires real deliberation to do well.

Second: UNM is currently evaluating several "scholarly productivity" software packages. They are currently under *consideration* to be used at UNM; no final decision has been made about actually acquiring any of these tools. I believe, however, that such a tool would help UNM address two longstanding goals: (1) to systematically track faculty contributions to the academic mission, *and* (2) to unburden the faculty of the obligation to report their contributions in multiple formats multiple times each year. In addition, these software tools could support the Academic Program Review (APR) process. The APR process is a requirement for Higher Learning Commission (HLC) institutional accreditation, as well as the external accreditations that many programs seek to provide additional value to students and faculty—our graduating teachers, business students, architects, and engineers would be placed at a severe disadvantage without these accreditations. If successful, this initiative would also allow us to more effectively make the public case for UNM's academic excellence and contributions to New Mexico and elsewhere. I encourage you to learn more about such tools and consult with your colleagues at other institutions where these tools are being used.

Third: I have also asked the deans for their thoughts about assessing quality *at the College level*. This is relevant for both general university decision-making and the implementation of our new budgeting process, Results Oriented Management (ROM). By quality, I mean both the factors that most impact College performance relative to the University's academic mission, and the metrics the University should be using to measure that performance. While the search for these metrics is open, and could include quantitative or qualitative assessments, there are some requirements. First, they need to allow comparison over time. Second, they need to allow deans to determine what facets of the College's work are improving from year to year (and should therefore be rewarded), and what facets need closer attention. These quality metrics will complement the more easily measured quantitative metrics, such as enrollment numbers, graduation rates, and number of PELL Grant graduates. These metrics are already included in state formula funding, and will also be a part of our ROM metrics. I have asked the deans for initial proposals (due to me this month) to help create a first draft of potential quality metrics, which will be presented to the Board of Regents early next month. The metrics will be debated again with the deans and other representatives, but must be selected soon enough to be part of next year's budget process. Failure to do so will leave the budget solely dependent upon the easily collected metrics.

To review, the first initiative concerns better and simpler ways of assessing and crediting faculty workload, per longstanding University policy; the second initiative concerns a possible software tool; and the third initiative concerns ways of assessing broad, college-level advancement of the academic mission. The first and third initiatives seem to have been conflated, leading some faculty members to believe they are under pressure to create workload assessment policies in short order. It is true, however, that as we make our case for a better-funded academic enterprise, we must be able to provide justification and comparative data in a timely and transparent fashion.

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