



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

January 14, 2015

Scientists are often criticized for taking the wonder out of the world, but they generally do so in the hope of putting truth in its place.

—Ian Morris

Welcome (back)! For those of you who were with us during the Fall 2014 semester, I hope that you had a restful break. For those who are joining the UNM family this semester, welcome to the fold!

MLK day: The nation will celebrate on Monday the 19th of January the life and work of Martin Luther King Junior. Dr. King wrote in 1947, in a campus paper, a column titled “[The purpose of education](#)” that is as timely now as it was visionary then.

Transformational Ideas for Higher Education: Public universities are facing challenges that include a more difficult funding environment and more accountability demands. UNM’s specific challenges are in many ways less severe than those of the higher education sector as a whole, but in other respects are more so because of our multiple missions. [Here](#) is what Inside Higher Ed proposes as six (potentially) transformational ideas to deal with challenges while delivering on our mission.

On Feedback: Soon, we will be asking supervisors, chairs, and deans to provide annual evaluations for most everyone working at UNM. Those of us engaged in teaching are no strangers to the process of assessment and feedback, even if we call it “grading.” To some (including myself), grading is a necessary, but the least enjoyable, part of teaching. Years ago, however, I began to consider grading as a semester-long form of providing feedback rather than simply an easy way to separate my students into percentiles at the end of the semester. It recently struck me that the same is true for managers who are asked to provide feedback on their team members’ performance. [This entry](#), from the blog “Tomorrow’s Professor,” makes the case better than I ever could about why and how feedback should be used. The article is actually from the book (that is next on my reading list) “Creating Significant Learning Experiences, Revised and Updated: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses,” by L. Dee Fink.

And Speaking of Reading: I had a chance to read many books during our break. By far, the most interesting was recommended to me by a member of the board of regents, and is titled “Why the West Rules — For Now,” by Ian Morris. Morris’s argument boils down to the idea that the West rules for now because it has developed a more advanced ability to “get things done — to shape the physical, economic, social, and intellectual environments to its own end.” Morris blends arguments from biology, sociology, and geography to explain the history of societies’ social development. Two others were “Without You, There is No Us,” by Suki Kim, which provides a more informative look at North Korea than “The Interview” movie, and the last is “Nothing is True And Everything is Possible,” by Peter Pomerantsev, which provides a look at modern Russia.

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>.