



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

March 18, 2015

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

—George Bernard Shaw

Welcome back! We're more than halfway into our spring semester, and 2.5 days away from the end of the New Mexico Legislative session!

On the Future of Higher Education: Is American higher education in crisis? There are, and have [always been](#), a [variety](#) of [opinions](#). The president of Stanford University thinks it faces challenges rather than being in actual crisis. President Hennessy delivered the Robert H. Atwell Lecture at the American Council of Education (ACE) annual meeting. In [his speech](#), he discussed the power of technology to improve access to education, learning, and degree completion, and reduce the cost of higher education. His aim is to make college education “affordable, accessible, and adaptable.” I encourage you to watch the 30-minute video. It is an excellent example of focusing the conversation away from the hype of technology to its promise and limitations.

What Can I do with My Boy? In 1869, Charles Eliot asked that question in an [article](#) that appeared in The Atlantic Monthly. It was titled “The New Education,” and resulted in Eliot being offered the presidency of Harvard. He transformed Harvard into the university we know today and, with it, transformed American higher education. What was most relevant to me is how, even back in 1869, the question of what college education should be about was debated heavily. Eliot’s concern “was not merely curriculum, but the ultimate utility of education. A college education could enable a student to make intelligent choices, but should not attempt to provide specialized vocational or technical training. Although technical training should be more explicitly vocational, it should also include instruction in history, languages, political economy, as well as providing a broad knowledge of science and mathematics. Only by differentiating the two levels of the educational process and making each as comprehensive as possible, could higher education hope to prepare students to cope with the rapid pace of technological, economic, and political change. A truly useful education, in Eliot's view, included a commitment to public service, specialized training, and a capacity to change and adapt.”

A Good Year: In 1945, Dr. Vannevar Bush wrote two papers. The [first paper](#), titled “As We May Think,” predicted the internet and the availability of instruments “which, if properly developed, will give man access to and command over the inherited knowledge of the ages.” The [second paper](#) (a report to President Roosevelt) was titled “Science, The Endless Frontier.” It made the case for the establishment of the National Science Foundation (NSF). Bush “insisted upon the principle of Federal patronage for the advancement of knowledge in the United States, a departure that came to govern Federal science policy after World War II.” A look at the [National Science Foundation's statistics](#) underscores Bush’s clairvoyance. In fiscal year 2013, all research and development expenditures totaled over \$67 billion, of which \$39 billion came from federal sources and \$15 billion came from internal university funds.

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