



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

November 9, 2016

Teaching to be a Good Reader: Vladimir Nabokov, the author of *Lolita* was also a great teacher who believed that “learned qualities as well as innate ones play a role in the activity of reading, and that ‘artistic sense’ can be learned.” He actually devised a “[good reader quiz](#)” that provided ten definitions of a reader, and from these ten, he had students choose the four definitions that would combine to make a good reader. The four that Nabokov chose are that, “the good reader is one who has imagination, memory, a dictionary, and some artistic sense.” A teacher such as Nabokov has influenced many students who went on to become leaders in various fields but who never forgot the power of words. Judge [Ruth Bader Ginsberg](#) studied under Nabokov and stated that, “I attribute my caring about writing” to Nabokov, who “was a man in love with the sound of words. He taught me the importance of choosing the right word and presenting it in the right word order.”

Football & Mathematics: In recent communiques, I have discussed the linkages between mathematics and music, science and the humanities, and engineering and the arts. This week, I learned of one more unusual link. While conducting some research for my class, I came across the work of [John Urschel](#) on graph theory. Urschel is a professional football player from the Baltimore Ravens and has bachelors and masters degrees in mathematics from Penn State. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in mathematics from MIT, and “plans to be a great [Mathematician](#).” So, long after John retires from professional football, he may be enjoying his research in mathematics. There are of course many mathematicians who apply their craft to the [business of sports](#), such as in scheduling, scoring, and recruiting, but Urschel is to the best of my knowledge, the first professional sports player who is actively pursuing a career in mathematics.

The Evolution of Scientific Impact: The conventional wisdom, often supported by funding agencies and early career awards, is that research is a young person’s game. Recent [research](#) however indicates that, “Looking across a variety of fields found that while a researcher’s productivity generally declines with age, creativity and impact do not.” The paper cites the case of John B. Fenn, who shared the 2002 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for work he had done at Virginia Commonwealth University after being forced into retirement by Yale University. “A researcher is just as likely to have an important discovery at any age, and the greater success rate of younger researchers is entirely attributable to their higher rates of productivity at younger ages.” So, take heart colleagues and keep on conducting your research, as you are just as likely to produce your best work at any stage of your professional life.

Weekly Dashboard Challenge: Answer to the October November 2 question can be accessed at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/mkf8xmlkcomfkid/dbc2-ans.mov?dl=0>. Question was: what majors, undergraduate and graduate, have the largest student population, and what is the demographic make-up of those groups (both gender and ethnic background)?. If you submitted the correct answer by last Friday, you are eligible for a \$10 Lobo Cash card and you will hear by e-mail if you are selected.

This week’s challenge question: What year did UNM become a majority-majority institution? Remember to use our go-to resource dashboard.unm.edu and submit your answer to provost@unm.edu by 5 pm on Friday, November 11 to be eligible for Lobo Cash.

International Education Week: Next week, November 14-18, UNM and universities around the world will be observing International Education Week (IEW). IEW is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange. This joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education promotes programs that attract future leaders from the United States and abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences. This year’s theme is Empowering Youth through International Education. Check out UNM’s [IEW calendar of events](#), and see what’s planned around campus and the community.

Black Lives Matter Event: The third session of #BLACKLIVESMATTERATUNM will be held on Thursday, November 17, 2016 from 5:30pm-7:30pm in SUB Ballroom A. This session, titled Population Health and Student Belonging will examine the health outcomes of black students, staff and faculty including the distribution of such outcomes within the group) and educates listeners about an approach to health that aims to improve the well being of the entire human population. The goal of the #BLACKLIVESMATTERATUNM series is to discuss, identify, and work toward solutions to improve campus climate for Black students at UNM. <https://goo.gl/En6uT6>

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