



The Wednesday Communiqué

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The Purpose of Universities

It seems obvious to me that until universities build greater consensus regarding the role and purpose of the university in American life that our internal and external rankings and measures will continue to highlight our differences and shortcomings. A recent Chronicle article, with the provocative title: “[The University Has No Purpose](#),” makes a clear distinction between “two divergent understandings” of the purpose of universities: “First is the ascendant ‘practical-political’ view, which generally aims at one of two goods: social justice or career preparation. Second, and much less common, is the ‘disinterested’ university, where contemporary political and social problems are set aside for an interval in favor of learning as its own end.” As expected, the article, like so many others, does not specify a unique purpose for college education but instead encourages us to have a “pluralist university,” or as Clark Kerr termed it a “multiversity,” that serves many constituencies and purposes. As a result, universities remain challenged on how to communicate our worth or performance as we deliver on our ever-expanding missions.

At UNM, building such a consensus in the state of New Mexico could position us for continued and sustained progress across the ups and downs of the state economy and changing state and local leadership under different political parties. Such a consensus surely must address what it means to be a truly excellent research university in New Mexico. One effort to articulate such a mission came from the recent DEI Task Force, built around the rubric of [excellence-and-equity](#). Let’s continue the dialogue toward such a consensus, both on campus and beyond.

The Native American Pedagogical Conference

The [Native American Pedagogies Conference](#) at UNM on Friday will examine how faculty can best support and facilitate learning among Native American students. It will also focus on how Native American ways of knowing can influence pedagogy at UNM. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Lloyd Lee, the recipient of the 2016-2018 UNM Presidential Teaching Award, followed by three roundtable discussions: Indigenous Worldview in Higher Education, Teaching & Pedagogy, and Intersectionality (details at link above).

On the Internet, Nobody Knows You’re a Dog

[On the Internet, Nobody Knows You’re a Dog](#), or for that matter that you’re not even real! Chris Quintana, a UNM graduate and ex-Albuquerque Journal reporter, co-authored an [article](#) in the Chronicle



exposing an expert on student debt, a certain Drew Cloud, as a “a fiction, the invention of a student-loan refinancing company.”

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