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Wednesday Communiqué, 11/14/2012

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WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

November 14, 2012

Bonds B & C: Thank you all who voted on the two bonds! They will help us in supporting our libraries as well as fund some of our most critical capital projects at UNM!

E.B. White on Democracy: From NPR: “White was responding to a letter from the Writers’ War Board, a domestic propaganda machine during World War II. The board had written, asking for a statement on the meaning of democracy. Here’s the response, from E.B. White: ‘It is presumably our duty to comply with such a request, and it is certainly our pleasure. Surely, the board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the don’t, in don’t shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the **recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time** [emphasis mine]. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths; the feeling of communion in the libraries; the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is the letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn’t been disproved yet; a song, the words of which have not gone bad. It’s the mustard on the hot dog, and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from a War Board—in the middle of the morning, in the middle of a war—wanting to know what democracy is.’” You can listen to the story at: <http://www.wbur.org/npr/164631081/author-e-b-white-on-the-meaning-of-democracy>.

RCM: In recent meetings with staff and faculty groups, I have been trying to explain the RCM budgeting process. Far from being an expert, I am struggling to learn about it myself and to figure out how other universities have implemented it. I have recently come up with what I consider a clear explanation. The University is a union of colleges not unlike the United States. Just as states have their own budgets, revenues, and responsibilities, so do colleges. On the other hand, the federal government has responsibility for the common good and for cross-states relations. Our budgeting process today is very centralized. RCM, properly implemented, divests much of the central authority to the schools and colleges. It will always be the case that some states provide more into the federal coffers than what they receive back. Others (such as New Mexico) are net beneficiaries. The reason the union works, however, is that the Union is not built around a budgeting process, but rather around the common shared values of its members. Seen in this light, RCM is a model that has a more decentralized union and budgeting process. For information about RCM see <http://cfo.ufl.edu/committees.asp>, and for a critical review of RCM, see: <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ffp0212s.pdf>.

First Year Learning Communities: In a continuation of last week’s discussion on the imaginative consideration of learning, all Albuquerque UNM faculty—including tenured and tenure-track faculty, full-time lecturers, emeritus, clinical and research faculty—are invited to submit a proposal to teach a First-Year Course of your own design in the First-Year Learning Communities in fall 2013. The deadline for submitting proposals is Monday, December 3, 2012. The invitation can be seen at <http://freshman.unm.edu/Faculty-Invitation.pdf>, where you will find links to more information, proposal guidelines, and the on-line proposal submission form.

Nate Silver Book: A new celebrity after last week’s presidential election is Nate Silver, who has accurately “predicted” the result of the election for the second straight time. As most everyone knows by now, Nate is actually a statistician who used statistical models in his FiveThirtyEight.com blog. Many political pundits disregarded his conclusions but were ultimately confuted by the power of numbers and statistics. I am currently reading Silver’s book titled “The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail-but Some Don’t”.

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