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Wednesday Communiqué, 7/25/2012

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THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

July 25, 2012

Undergraduate Education: Dean Brown of the Anderson School of Management recently sent me an article by President Hennessey of Stanford on re-designing the 21st century curriculum. The article pointed to the recent self-study by Stanford faculty of their curriculum as described in <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/sues/>. This January 2012 report deals with questions that are familiar to our UNM community: *How do we 'appraise,' 'improve,' and 'reward' undergraduate teaching? How can we improve the 'culture of advising,' including the 'disturbing unevenness' in faculty commitment to it? Can we design 'residential programs that will help the residences become effective contributors to the student's educational experience'? How do we prepare students for the responsibilities of global citizenship in a 'complex' and 'interdependent' world—a world 'growing smaller and smaller' by the day? How do we balance the 'intense specialization' essential to a world-class research university with the 'broad liberal education' necessary to both 'responsible citizenship' and long-term professional success? How do we induce departments, which are understandably attuned 'to the needs of their own graduate students and undergraduate majors,' to offer the kind of substantial but accessible courses required by 'non-specialists'? Can we design and sustain general education courses that inspire exploration and discovery, or must such courses always devolve into 'hurdles to be jumped and then forgotten' by students? What can we do to 'make cultivation of the mind a socially acceptable objective' among Stanford students, some of whom take a distinctly 'instrumental,' if not 'anti-intellectual,' approach to their educations? How do we make 'self-examination and self-reflection' about undergraduate education an 'integral part of our institutional life,' a 'permanent habit of mind,' rather than a 'convulsive once-a-decade effort'?* Most importantly however, the same exact questions were also asked in Stanford's earlier studies, the last of which was completed in 1994!

ABQ+ UNM CityLab: A collaborative effort between the city of Albuquerque and UNM's School of Architecture and Planning led to the creation of the CityLab. The ABQ + UNM CityLab team will be housed in a 3,000 sq. ft. storefront studio space at 505 Central Avenue in the heart of downtown Albuquerque. This project will provide opportunities for UNM graduate students in the field(s) of Planning, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture to gain first-hand knowledge and experience working directly on City projects while working within the school curricula. ABQ + UNM CityLab will serve as a model for future collaborative efforts between the University and other external partners. For more information please visit: <http://news.unm.edu/2012/07/unm-school-of-architecture-and-planning-city-of-albuquerque-rethink-downtown/>.

UNM's Collaborative Teaching & Learning Building (CTLB): After more than six years of planning and fund raising, the University of New Mexico Collaborative Teaching & Learning Building (CTLB) ground breaking ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, August 2 at 2:00 PM in Travelstead Hall. The UNM CTLB is a \$9M interdisciplinary classroom building that will provide main campus with six new centrally scheduled classrooms in FY 14 that are designed to support a collaborative and active learning environment for our undergraduates. It is one of many academic initiatives designed to support Academic Affairs student success goals. The August 2 groundbreaking ceremony will include remarks from President Frank, Provost Abdallah, and a number of other academic administrators and supporters of this initiative. The invitation to the University community can be found at <http://coe.unm.edu/ctlb/>.

MOOCs: You have probably seen the recent coverage about Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs. The article at <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/07/growing-pains-for-online-education/260159/> describes why dropout rates at such courses should not be seen as failure of the medium since the cost of taking them and of dropping out is low (free!). The aforementioned president of Stanford was recently interviewed at NPR discussing the potential of such courses (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2012/07/23/157132291/stanfords-next-lesson-free-online-courses-for-credit-and-degrees>). At UNM, and to the best of my knowledge, we have not yet

experimented with MOOCs but I would like to encourage a brave UNM faculty member to propose one such course. While I am not sure what will eventually come of teaching such courses, I am personally gratified by the recent Chronicle article: <http://chronicle.com/article/Why-We-Need-the-Physical/133041/>. The article makes the case that “physical campuses will remain important to key aspects of higher education not because they are the least expensive way of doing anything, but because they are the best way of doing it. That value lies in people’s being able to communicate one-to-one, and something very important: the ability for people to share time at the same time and at the same place.”

Chaouki Abdallah,
Provost & Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs

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