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Wednesday Communiqué, 2/29/2012

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THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Office of the Provost



WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ

February 29, 2012

“We tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run and underestimate the effect in the long run.”
Roy Amara, an American futurist and past president of the Institute for the Future.

MITx: Ten years ago, MIT launched its OpenCourseWare (OCW) initiative, and many other universities followed suit by posting many of their courses online. Today, MIT is launching MITx (<http://www.mitx.org>). “Beyond the MIT campus, MITx will endeavor to break down barriers to education in two ways. First, it will offer the online teaching of MIT courses to people around the world and the opportunity for able learners to gain certification of mastery of MIT material. Second, it will make freely available to educational institutions everywhere the open-source software infrastructure on which MITx is based.” With MITx courses, one can envision a future where “credential entities” can verify that a candidate knows her subject and awards her a certificate or even a degree!

Electronic Town Hall: Please visit our electronic town hall (<http://connectu.unm.edu>) which was launched last week. It is your opportunity to engage in discussions about the ongoing academic plan and the future of UNM!

Universities Economic Impact: Measuring the impact of a university education is notoriously difficult. How does one put a price on the value of a graduate? Is one degree always truly worth more than another to society? What if the history major later becomes a president, and the engineer invents a life-saving device? What if the music student creates an opera or the English major writes a masterpiece? When pricing the cost of education, we tend to focus on the short term (what is the cost of a degree?) but a slightly longer-term view measures the economic impact of a university as described in <http://www.edu-impact.com/>. Check out the NM-specific reports: <http://bber.unm.edu/pubs-sip3.htm#yr2012> and: http://bber.unm.edu/pubs/UNM_STC.pdf. I personally remain convinced however, that the impact of a university cannot be measured only by using economic data!

How to Make College More Affordable? After 3 years of cutting costs, the UNM Presidential Strategic Advisory Team (PSAT), has recommended this year that efficiencies in delivering college education is where our efforts should be focused. A recent article in the Atlantic (<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/02/5-ways-to-make-college-much-more-affordable-for-all-americans/253564/>) based on research by McKinsey & Company reaches the same conclusion and suggests the following 5 strategies: make sure students graduate, and graduate faster, try new ways of teaching, recognize that learning happens outside the classroom, slim down non-instructional costs, and use financial aid as a carrot and stick for schools.

Where the Jobs Will Be: Professor Peter Winograd of our UNM College of Education pointed the following article to me: <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/02/where-jobs-will-be-2020/1153/>. “Combining the industry employment predictions with climate, education, and density gives us the full view of where the jobs will be in 2020.” According to the article, Albuquerque is one of the top 10 fastest job growth metro areas.

Books on my reading list: I am currently finishing the book “The University: An Owner’s Manual,” by Henry Rosovsky. I just ordered the book “The Wandering Gene and the Indian Princess: Race, Religion, and DNA,” by Jeff Wheelwright. I ordered it based on my reading an excerpt from that book titled “Sex, God, and DNA: The Creation of New Mexicans” at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/02/sex-god-and-dna-the-creation-of-new-mexicans/253406/>.

A PDF version of this communiqué is available at: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>. Your feedback and input are welcome at: provost@unm.edu or at the electronic town hall: <http://connectu.unm.edu/>.

Sincerely,

Chaouki Abdallah, Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs