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Wednesday Communiqué, 10/3/2012

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WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

October 3, 2012

Improvement Dimension: The ninth dimension of the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) is the Improvement Dimension: “Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement. This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions’ overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year.” The Dimension rationale states: “A central component of excellence in the first year is commitment to continuous improvement. Campuses improve by conducting assessment but more importantly by using the results of assessment to drive institutional change. Campuses also improve by educating themselves through interactions with other institutions, contributing research and knowledge to the existing body of information about the first year, and through exposure to other relevant research and scholarship.”

Efficient vs. Perfect Decision Making: Universities have a different relationship with decision making than most organizations. In general, fast decisions are made at the local level, while the global level makes slow decisions. At universities, the administration would like to move fast, but the university governance structure remains distributed and deliberative. In many ways, governing a university fast and slow is an almost perfect paradigm, but during times of great change it may hinder how the university responds to its challenges. Are we able to make efficient versus perfect decisions? The answer lies in an ancient currency, that of trust. The trust of the faculty, students, parents, and citizens must be earned but once obtained, can be used to safely navigate a university during turbulent times.

President Robert Frank Inaugural Installation: The University of New Mexico Inaugural Installation ceremony for Dr. Robert G. Frank, will be held on Sunday, November 18, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. in Popejoy Hall. You are invited to participate in the faculty processional at the ceremony. If you are able to participate, we ask that you fill out the regalia signup and participation form on the Inauguration website at <http://inauguration.unm.edu> (click on Faculty Signup). It is important that faculty planning to participate in President Frank's installation ceremony fill out this form, even in the case of faculty having their own academic regalia. The deadline to order regalia is Friday, October 5, 2012. Faculty who sign up to participate will NOT need to pick up a ticket to attend the event. Faculty will be seated together in a designated area.

What to Measure: "Too much and too long, we seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our gross national product ... if we should judge America by that - counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and the cost of a nuclear warhead, and armored cars for police who fight riots in our streets. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it tells us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans." **Robert F. Kennedy Address at University of Kansas Lawrence Kansas March 18 1968**

The Value of Higher Education: As W. Buffett stated, “It is better to buy a wonderful company at a fair cost than a fair company at a wonderful cost.” Buffett of course knows the value of companies but the same statement may be made about almost every good and service. What for example is the current and perceived value of a UNM degree? And how do we make it a more wonderful degree at a fair price? My take is that we tend to “overestimate the current reward and underestimate long-term benefit.” By focusing on the short term (earnings in the first year after graduation for example), and by our inability to measure what is truly relevant (the future contribution of creative arts or patents), we risk losing sight of the “important” by continuously dealing with the “urgent”.

Kidney Research Institute (KRI) @ UNM-HSC: The Department of Internal Medicine recently received a \$6 million gift to create a Kidney Research Institute, modeled on the highly successful KRI at the University of Washington. I would like to congratulate Dr. Pope Moseley, Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine of the UNM Health Sciences and his team for bringing the effort to establish this institute at UNM. More information may be found at:

<http://www.renalbusiness.com/news/2012/09/dci-and-unm-health-sciences-to-partner-in-creating-kidney-research-institute.aspx>

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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/>. Please also see the Provost’s Blog at <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>.