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Wednesday Communiqué, 5/9/2012

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WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

May 9, 2012

From My Annual Review: Some feedback on my annual review from the faculty focused on the Honors College. While many were supportive, some expressed two main concerns: the cost of starting a new initiative/college and the issue of elitism and focusing on those at the top versus the majority of our students. Regarding the cost, our analysis (Honors College plan: <http://provost.unm.edu/communique/index.html>) predicts that the Honors College will actually contribute more to the institution than it costs due to the honors students overall performance (higher graduation rates is but one example), and the potential of donations and naming. This conclusion is supported by other institutions experiences as well as our preliminary studies. Regarding the elitism argument, my counter argument is based on the data of how many NM students we lose to neighboring states because we lack a vigorous honors college. My intent is to bring such students to UNM and to infuse more of their intellect and capacities into the general UNM student body. As envisioned, our honors college initiative will be inclusive and beneficial to all our students.

Deans: In an effort to show my confidence in and support for the deans who are carrying an interim title, I recently removed their interim status. Please join me in recognizing the excellent contributions made by James Linnell of Fine Arts, Gary Harrison of OGS, and Mark Peceny of A&S. Although Jim Linnell will not return to campus as Dean, he carries the title until the recently hired Fine Arts Dean arrives on July 1. Searches for the other two positions will be announced in consultation with their respective colleges.

Vice President for Research Search: I will be launching an internal search for an interim VPR. In the coming week, I will issue a formal announcement about the process and form a university search committee to complete the process in a timely fashion.

Digby Wolfe: The Emmy Award-winning comedy writer and former professor of writing at the University of New Mexico died this week at his home in Albuquerque. Digby helped producer George Schlatter develop "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In," a landmark TV series that became an overnight sensation in the late 1960s. He was known for his immeasurable influence on popular culture, both nationally and internationally. His obituary can be found at <http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-digby-wolfe-20120508.0.7978222.story>.

What is a UNM Degree Worth? As much as I keep commenting on the non-material worth of a college degree, the return on investment (ROI) remains a major concern to the citizens of New Mexico and to many families and students. A colleague (Professor R. Jordan) called my attention to an interactive site where 852 academic institutions are compared (http://www.businessweek.com/interactive_reports/bs_collegeROI_0621.html) using a variety of metrics including the ROI. UNM appears on page ten. MIT ROI is 12.9, ASU's and Berkeley's is 10.9, and UNM's is 10.

Online Education: Has been in the news lately starting with the MIT-Harvard EdX initiative: http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/harvard-and-mit-put-60-million-into-new-platform-for-free-online-courses/36284?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en. Another is the NY Times Brooks opinion piece, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/04/opinion/brooks-the-campus-tsunami.html> and the IEEE Spectrum article about the president of Stanford views on the future of online education: <http://spectrum.ieee.org/geek-life/profiles/john-l-hennessy-risk-taker>.

Did Someone Ask the Students? This is the title of a 2-part article that I believe we should be aware of: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/next/2012/05/01/did-anyone-ask-the-students-part-i/>. In particular, the article attempts to answer the following questions: "How did they pick a major, out of a passion or for its [job prospects](#)? How do they [judge the value](#) of [a college degree](#) and weigh it against its rising price tag? What is the purpose of a college

education? Have they ever taken an online class or used online resources, like the [Khan Academy](#), to brush up on certain concepts? Would they consider taking a [massive online course](#) with 100,000 other students if it led to an alternative credential, such as a [badge](#), as well as a job?"

In Praise of Teaching: I was fortunate enough to attend the UNM Teaching awards ceremony on May 2, 2012. The ceremony celebrated the work of our teaching assistants, lecturers, and professors. A common thread of every single awardee was the feedback from their students that good teaching is about caring and advising, as well as it is about raising expectations and standards. The ceremony culminated with the naming of the 2012-2014 Presidential Teaching Fellow, Dr. Leslie Donovan of our Honors program (<http://www.unm.edu/~oset/TeachingAwards.html>).

Spring 2012 Grades: Per the Faculty Handbook, grades should be entered within 48 hours after the final or last meeting date. The registrar office requested to have all grades entered by Friday 5/18/12. Online grading will close at 5pm on Friday 5/18/12.

Sincerely, Chaouki Abdallah,

Provost & Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs

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/>.