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Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates. The six-year and to a lesser extent the four-year graduation rates have been the standard for measuring student attainment and the performance of universities. The highest graduation rate for a public research institution is that of the University of Virginia, which in 2011 stood at 93.8 percent (UNM's is 45.1%). Recent research has attempted to modify this specific metric to account for changes in the type of students (part-time vs. full-time, transfer students, etc.). The report, which can be found at http://www.studentclearinghouse.info/signature/4/NSC_Signature_Report_4.pdf, provides a variety of approaches to account for such changes including: "1) Student completion anywhere, beyond institutional boundaries, across state lines, and over time; 2) Persistence anywhere, not just at the starting institution, for those who have not yet completed but are still pursuing a degree; 3) College outcomes broken out by student age at first entry and enrollment intensity, thus addressing questions about the role of students' varied postsecondary pathways in progress toward national completion goals; and 4) Enrollment intensity based on the enrollment status in all terms of enrollment, and not just the first term."

What Should Be Counted? Graduation rates are but one measure of an institution's effectiveness and productivity. A report by a National Academies panel was given the difficult task "to identify an analytically well-defined concept of productivity for higher education and to recommend practical guidelines for its measurement." The panel immediately recognized the difficulty of its task, and noted that "improving and implementing productivity metrics begins with recognition of their role in the broader performance assessment picture: 1) Productivity should be a central part of the higher education conversation. 2) Conversations about the sector's performance will lack coherence in the absence of a well-vetted and agreed-upon set of metrics, among which productivity is essential. 3) Quality should always be a core part of productivity conversations, even when it cannot be fully captured by the metrics. 4) The inevitable presence of difficult-to-quantify elements in a measure should not be used as an excuse to ignore those elements." The resulting 2012 National Academies Press report, *Improving Measurement of Productivity in Higher Education*, may be found here: http://click.newsletters.nas.edu/ ?qs=630e45d6cc541f634033f288099d132600803bae07588afd525b999ad30f81a4171a93634a0a2e1c.

UNM Budget and Costs: It is that time of the year again when the various UNM committees, as well as the Board of Regents, start formulating the UNM budget. In order to familiarize yourself with some of the larger expenditures, please see the 2012-2013 Introduction & Recap of Budget Summit presentations at http://www.unm.edu/~budget/ guidelines/. For more information on Responsibility Center Management (RCM) and Performance Based Budgeting (PBB), please go to the FY 2013/2014 Budget Development webpage: http://www.unm.edu/~budget/ FY14%20Budget%20Development/.

Blackawton Bees: Can kids conduct high quality research? I was intrigued by the story in the Ted Talk, found at http://blog.ted.com/2012/06/26/science-is-play-beau-lotto-and-amy-otoole-at-tedglobal-2012/, about kids' curiosity and their ability to pose relevant research questions. I have since learned of the related Blackawton Bees project, found here: http://www.lottolab.org/articles/blackawtonbees.asp. I also found the resulting paper intriguing and inspiring: http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/7/2/168.

Deans: It is my pleasure to announce that, following positive feedback by the A&S faculty, chairs, and directors, Mark Peceny will continue in his role as dean of the college of Arts & Sciences until May 2016. In addition, and following a competitive internal search, Professor Julie Coonrod of the Civil Engineering department has accepted my offer to be the dean of the Office of Graduate Studies starting in January 2013. Professor Coonrod will take over from Dr. Gary Harrison, who has led OGS for the last year and a half and will stay in the position through the end of the calendar year.

Event Highlight: You are cordially invited to attend the Faculty of Color Networking Reception on Wednesday, December 5, 2012 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the UNM Student Union Building Ballroom A. This event, hosted by the University of New Mexico's Division for Equity and Inclusion and the Health Sciences Center Office of Diversity and their partners, is an opportunity to network and connect with UNM's faculty of color and create a social and intellectual space for community-building across programs, departments, and campuses. Please RSVP at the following link: http://diverse.unm.edu/foc-reception. I hope to see you there.

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