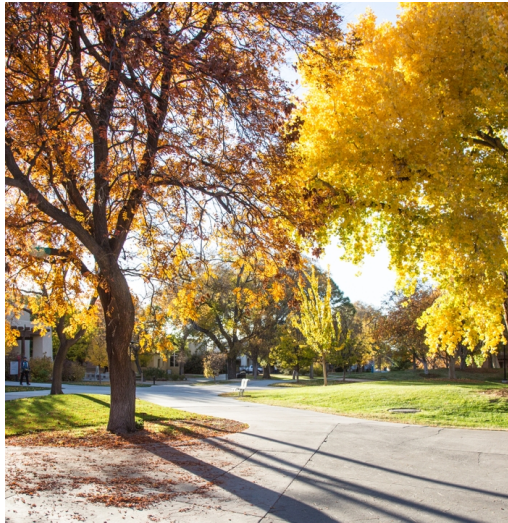


OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ANALYTICS

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RUNNING ANY LARGE ENTERPRISE (ESPECIALLY A UNIVERSITY) IS A HIGHLY COMPLEX UNDERTAKING.

You have many people working together ostensibly toward the same goals, but perhaps with different perspectives on how to reach those goals and how to define successful achievement of them. So how do we really know if we have accomplished anything?

At this point, we must know how to count. Wait, that skill we first learned in preschool? Yep, that one. Sure, counting is pretty simple when you're stacking blocks after naptime. It's also extraordinarily complex in the adult world because you first have to determine what you're counting (and who, and when, and...) by establishing categories and definitions of what it is you're actually counting. As with most things in this world, if you ask ten people about what should be counted, you will receive ten different answers. I often joke that "math is easy but counting is hard."



I read a book recently titled, 'Counting: How We Use Numbers to Decide What Matters', by political scientist Deborah Stone. In this excellent and thought-provoking read, Dr. Stone highlights the ways in which numbers can be powerful in the ways in which they do or do not represent categories. As she describes it,

“Counting, then, entails two mental moves: first classifying, then tallying.”

One example is the common question we field in our office, “How many students are enrolled at UNM?” It’s an impossible question to answer without knowing what assumptions are baked into the question. Is this undergraduate students, graduate students, both? Albuquerque only or branch campuses? Depending on the answers given to these questions, the totals could vary by over 20,000. However, once this categorization is done, the tallying part is much simpler.

When we count things, we should always remember to share what we have counted, and why. What we decide to count may not be perfect, but transparency and consistency are important components of any counting exercise that involves decision making. In the last chapter, Dr. Stone concludes with what is perhaps my favorite sentiment of the book:

“Stay humble. Numbers are the products of our poor power to make sense of our lives. They aren’t truth meters.”

We can and should use numbers to make decisions, while also recognizing that they are but one form of knowing.

Heather Mechler
Director - OIA | hsmechler@unm.edu



**WHAT'S NEW IN THE
UNM DATA
COMMUNITY**

by Charla Orozco

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: 3RD
ANNUAL ART & SCIENCE OF DATA
EVENT**

Save the date and apply to present! The 3rd Annual Art & Science of Data event will take place virtually on Wednesday, January 12, 2022. This event, cohosted by the Office of Assessment/APR and the Office of Institutional Analytics, will empower faculty and staff with training and information on how to leverage institutional data resources to understand their own units and tell their stories more effectively. We invite anyone who uses data at UNM to apply to present. Specifically, we encourage proposals that highlight the accessibility and utility of UNM data in effectively telling our respective UNM stories. Proposals will be accepted through this [submission form](#) until Friday, October 15th. Registration for the event will open in mid-November. Please share with all who may be interested!

WHAT'S NEW IN THE UNM DATA COMMUNITY

by Charla Orozco

OCTOBER 6TH: "THINK LIKE AN ANALYST" WORKSHOP

Data from the event evaluations of last year's Art & Science of Data event sparked the creation of the "Think Like an Analyst" workshop. Possibly the start of a series (based on participant interest), this first workshop will focus on the general principles of data analysis: issues of representation, confidentiality, privacy, and ethics; what to do when data don't support the hypothesis; and the importance of qualitative data in creating a full story. This event will be hosted virtually, from 2:00-3:00 pm on Wednesday, October 6th. We welcome all to attend, please let us know you plan to attend by registering [here](#).

FEATURED STAFF: MONTE-ANGEL RICHARDSON, MSW

by Zacharia Kibuta

Monte-Angel joined OIA as an Institutional Researcher in November 2019. She is originally from San Diego, California. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Global Studies and Political Science, a Master's degree in Social Work, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Social Work and Public Health.

As a data-oriented person, she is intrigued by machine learning, and her dissertation involves predictive analytics.

She also enjoys writing fiction and doing outdoor activities like backpacking and hiking. Additionally, she plans to run in the Lobo Triathlon next year.



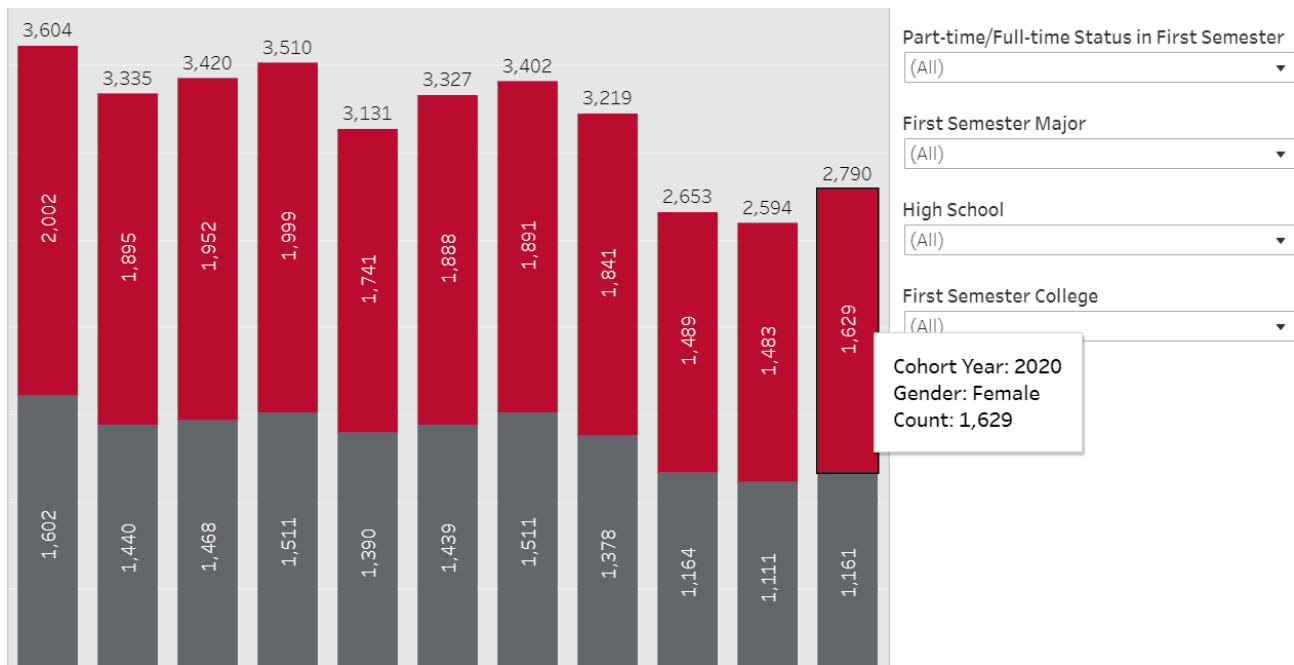
HOW TO GET YOUR DATA

Are you looking for ways to collect data that is pertinent to you or your department? There are several OIA team resources that maybe helpful in getting you the data you need. In addition to the various reports that are available on our [website](#), we also offer several [tableau public dashboards](#), many of which can be filtered to better highlight and isolate the data that interests you. And, if you are having trouble finding what you need, you can also directly communicate your data needs to us via our [data request form](#).

FEATURED DASHBOARD: FIRST-YEAR COHORT TRACKING

by Jing Feng, PhD

The [First-Year Cohort Tracking \(FCT\) Report](#) tracks the progress of first-time first-year students entering UNM Main Campus in each fall semester, who forms a cohort. Every cohort is tracked for twenty semester through their graduation. The FCT report includes six graphs: demographic statistics, high school GPA, ACT scores, SAT scores, graduation rates by semester, and retention rates by semester.



Each graph displays data of each cohort in the past ten years, and can be filtered by a number of variables such as gender, ethnicity, first semester major, college, and time status.

