Cuba Economy Lecture Aug. 21, 2015

Dr. Rafael J. Betancourt, a Cuban economics professor and consultant, will give New Mexicans a rare inside account of recent major economic policy revisions on the island nation, in a presentation at the University of New Mexico Continuing Education Auditorium, 1634 University Blvd. NE, on Friday, August 21, at 2 p.m.

The details of U.S.-Cuba relations have been rapidly evolving since the historic December agreement to normalize relations – but privatization of the Cuban economy was launched years earlier as an internal policy matter.

“Cuba Evolves Toward a New Economic Model,” is the title of Dr. Betancourt’s presentation. He is an economist with 30 years experience in both the business world and academia. He is a professor at Colegio Universitario San Gerónimo de La Habana, the Universidad de La Habana and Instituto Superior Politécnico Jose Antonio Echevarría. He is a consultant at Havanada Consulting Inc., a Canada-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting a socially responsible entrepreneurship and economic structure in Cuba. He spoke in Havana last month to a group sponsored by the Aspen Institute and the Richardson Center for Global Engagement, initiating the contact that led to this appearance here. The talk is co-sponsored in part by the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute and UNM Division of Continuing Education, who partner to offer community education trips to Cuba.

Skeptics of Cuban rapprochement sometimes point to the revolutionary government’s economic organization as something requiring reform before full normalization of economic relations can take place. Dr. Betancourt will detail how significant economic reform is already under way – and how the government struggles between the sometimes competing objectives of private economic risk and reward versus the national policy of nationwide equality.

“After 50 years of revolution we have not been able to produce an equal society – and I don’t know if we ever will,” Betancourt said last month in Havana. But clearly, that objective remains a cornerstone of Cuban economic policy.

Dr. Betancourt’s appearance is sponsored by the UNM Latin American and Iberian Institute, UNM Division of Continuing Education, the Richardson Center for Global Engagement, and La Fundación Educativa Mexicana de Nuevo México.

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