$10 Million Gift To Expand Black Mountain Institute’s Literary Programs

Since its founding in 2006, UNLV’s Black Mountain Institute has loomed large over the cultural landscape of Southern Nevada. Now, a $10 million gift commitment from business leader and Nevada System of Higher Education Chancellor Emeritus Jim Rogers and his wife, Beverly, will allow the prestigious international literary center to elevate its profile and bolster its influence in promoting discourse on challenging issues of our times.

In recognition of the Rogers’ generosity, BMI is being renamed the Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute.

The gift will infuse BMI’s budget with between $500,000 and $800,000 annually for 15 years. It will enable BMI to reestablish and expand its acclaimed City of Asylum program, increase support for existing Ph.D. and fellowship programs, create a new reading room for students and faculty, and enhance BMI’s public programming.

In addition, the gift will create the Black Mountain Institute Prize, a biennial $50,000 award for fiction that will be judged by a panel of highly regarded writers.

“Writers love Las Vegas,” says Carol Harter, founder and executive director of BMI. “They enjoy the city’s energy, and BMI has welcomed writers from all over the world as fellows, speakers and guest lecturers. The Rogers Family Foundation’s generous commitment enhances BMI’s offerings on every level.”

Among the literary figures who have participated in public programs on campus are Michael Chabon, Junot Diaz, E.L. Doctorow, Yiyun Li, Joyce Carol Oates, Jane Smiley, and Nobel Laureates Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott.

From Combat to College

Yellow Ribbon fund provides safety net to UNLV vets

Recently named a “Vetsuccess Campus” by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, UNLV counts nearly 1,300 active duty personnel, reservists, National Guard members, veterans, and their dependents among its student body. “UNLV’s outreach to the growing military and veteran population, and their families, ensures their transition from combat to campus is as smooth as possible,” says Ross Bryant, director of UNLV’s Office of Veteran Services. “We want to help heroes build their future.”

All veterans who were honorably discharged are granted Nevada residency within two years of separation, allowing them to pay in-state tuition and fees. For those who do not meet in-state residency requirements, the federal Yellow Ribbon program and UNLV Yellow Ribbon fund can help cover costs. The federal program provides matching funds up to $100,000 per year, with 100 percent of proceeds going to student veterans to pay expenses not covered by the G.I. bill. The UNLV Office of Veterans Services has so far raised $42,000 in private donations for the current academic year.

With matching V.A. funds, this creates an $84,000 safety net for veterans like Elizabeth Machado.

A former Marine who served as a chemical and biological nuclear defense specialist in Okinawa and at Cherry Point, North Carolina from 2005 - 2009, Machado came to Las Vegas to attend Lee Business School. She is working towards a Master’s degree in accounting, and has a job lined up at Ernst & Young LLP when she graduates in May.

“I left my job as a contractor in California to focus on my education full time,” she explains. “Out-of-state tuition can double the cost of education, so being a Yellow Ribbon recipient has helped tremendously. UNLV’s veteran services office has been wonderful in supporting my efforts to go back to school.”

Other veterans services on campus include individualized on-site support through the UNLV Office of Veteran Services; stepped-up regional recruitment efforts; and monthly training sessions for faculty and staff to help them understand the challenges faced by student vets.

Find out more at unlv.edu/veterans
Welcome from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your on-going commitment to UNLV. Your support energizes our campus and brightens our community.

The brilliant performance by UNLV’s Team Las Vegas at this fall’s international Solar Decathlon competition is proof positive of the strength of academic collaboration. A team of more than 60 architecture, engineering, hospitality, business, and communications students came together to create “DesertSol” — a solar-powered home that beat out every other U.S. university entry, including those from Stanford and the California Institute of Technology, and placed second overall in the world (behind Team Austria) in the U.S. Department of Energy-sponsored contest.

Their triumphant finish boosts the academic prestige of UNLV as it aspires to attain Tier I research university status. It also shines a spotlight on UNLV’s cutting-edge renewable energy minor degree program. The experience of designing, building, and promoting the 754 square-foot home gave these students valuable skills that they can bring to post-graduation jobs that will help diversify Southern Nevada.

Credit for the Team Las Vegas victory also extends to the many businesses that supported the effort through outright and in-kind donations. Early support from NV Energy and Marnell Companies helped kick-start the project and demonstrated the power of corporate philanthropy.

As a tribute to the impact of partnerships between UNLV and the community, the DesertSol home will open to the public at Springs Preserve next spring.

Congratulations to UNLV’s Solar Decathletes for their dazzling success. And thank you to all of you who support innovation and excellence at UNLV.

Sincerely,

John F. O’Reilly ’74
Chairman, UNLV Foundation Board of Trustees

A Monumental Legacy

The legacy of former Runnin’ Rebels basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian will carry on in the form of a new campus landmark. A larger-than-life bronze statue of Tarkanian was dedicated outside the Thomas & Mack this fall. Pictured sitting in Tarkanian’s iconic “ghost chair” is Helen Johnson, with husband and UNLV Foundation Trustee Chip Johnson ’71. The onions are the project’s lead benefactors. The statue was funded entirely by private donations.

Welcome New Trustees

The UNLV Foundation was created in 1981 for the purpose of raising and managing private funds to benefit UNLV. A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the UNLV Foundation is led by a 56-member volunteer Board of Trustees.

We welcome six new trustees to the board in the 2013-14 academic year and find out what motivates them to serve UNLV:

H. Gary Ackerman

Gary Ackerman is a third-generation automotive dealer who started at his family’s business as a lot porter at age 16. He now leads 400 employees as head of Gaudin Automotive Group.

“UNLV has always been the epicenter of the community for academic improvement and athletic pride. My father [the late Don Ackerman] started an anonymous scholarship at UNLV. I can hear him whispering in my ear, ‘You should support UNLV. It’s the right thing to do as a businessperson and a citizen.’ The automotive industry has changed since my father and grandfather’s time. The technician of the future needs a higher education degree, and Las Vegas needs a strong UNLV.”

Michael J. Bonner ’78

Native Las Vegas, UNLV business school alumnus, and attorney Michael J. Bonner is Las Vegas Managing Shareholder at Greenberg Traurig. He concentrates his practice in corporate finance and governance, securities, and gaming. He is former chairman of the Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce and is an Executive Committee member of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance.

“I am driven to support economic diversity in Las Vegas. In order to move forward, we must commit to creating a great research university. UNLV is critical to help us create and sustain the talent required to attract and retain technology and other non-service businesses to our region.”

Jerald M. Dick ’65

A former Rebel basketball player and newly retired business executive, Jerry Dick recently moved back to Las Vegas from Las Vegas (Laguna Beach, California. Although he loves to golf, the accomplished real estate developer is eager to get involved in a city that he has watched grow. He is confident that Las Vegas has a bright future.

“I can relate what we used to do with retail environments to a new vision for campus. You have to work hard to attract people and give them a positive experience. I’ve seen things in other cities that can help bring campus to life.”

Tina Lewis

Businesswoman Tina Lewis is president of HRL Group LLC, a Las Vegas McDonald’s franchisee. The former Californian is excited about living in Las Vegas, where her daughter recently graduated from the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. The community foundation established by Tina and her husband, Harold, focuses on education.

“I am enamored with UNLV and I can see firsthand, through my daughter’s success, the results of a strong UNLV education. Every day I’m learning more about the university. I am looking forward to a new mega-events center and other campus developments, and what they would do to make Las Vegas an even more vibrant community.”

David Ross ’95, ’05

Affinity Gaming CEO David Ross has multiple connections to UNLV. With local roots and a gaming industry background, he received both his BS and MBA degrees from UNLV. He also taught an introduction to casino management course as an adjunct instructor in UNLV’s distance learning program.

“Until the last recession, all of us thought that Las Vegas was bullet proof. Now we know that in order to insure a strong future, we have to prepare future generations to compete globally. Crossover between the business sector and the university brings practical benefits to everyone.”

Lindy Schumacher

Education activist Lindy Schumacher has a background in accounting and is currently CEO of Fulfillment Fund Las Vegas, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping local students achieve the dream of a college education. Her three children are third generation Nevadans who attend Clark County public schools.

“A community’s single most important asset is how it develops its people. All roads lead to the university. My number one priority is to realize a more fair distribution of higher education funding in Nevada. It is time for this university to get its fair share.”
In a spirited celebration of philanthropy, UNLV welcomed Christina M. Hixson - Lied Foundation Trust and Carolyn Hanna into the prestigious Palladium Society at the 2013 UNLV Foundation Annual Dinner.

Ms. Hixson and Lied Foundation Trust were honored with the Palladium Ruby award, which signifies the highest level of giving to UNLV for gifts exceeding $25 million. Their philanthropy has touched every corner of campus, spearheading programs such as the Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies, Rebel golf, and the Hixson-Lied Success Scholars programs, and also funding landmarks that include Lied Library and Lied Athletic Complex. Ms. Hixson is just the second recipient to achieve Palladium Ruby status, the other being the Greenspun family, which was honored in 2009.

Carolyn Hanna was recognized with the Palladium award for her contributions surpassing $1 million. She recently established the Gary W. Hanna and Carolyn Jan Hanna Soccer Endowment, which provides scholarships and other support for UNLV Men’s Soccer.

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UNLV Foundation Board of Trustees Chairman John O'Reilly and UNLV President Neal Smatresk presided over the awards ceremony. Former UNLV President Carol Harter shared the podium to announce a $10 million gift to Black Mountain Institute from Jim and Beverly Rogers [story page 1] followed by a Conversation with Charlie Rose, moderated by News 3’s Kim Wagner.

More than 800 donors, students, faculty, and community leaders attended the November 16th event at Bellagio Resort.
Working in a lab surrounded by human bones doesn’t rattle Anna Osterholtz. The bioarchaeology fellow is conducting research on ancient remains in Cyprus that she hopes will help us learn about how humans adapt to stress.

Anna's research is supported by the President’s UNLV Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, funded by private gifts to the UNLV Foundation.

Why UNLV?
I had several high-profile options for graduate work, but I fell in love with UNLV when I saw the labs and met the faculty. I specifically chose UNLV in order to work with Debra Martin [Lincy Foundation Professor of Archaeology]. When ancient Cyprus became my focus, my committee co-chair Alan Simmons [Distinguished Professor of Anthropology] was invaluable. And I couldn’t have pursued my research without the private financial support UNLV made available to me.

How would you describe your research to a lay-person — say, a childhood friend, or any of us who aren’t archaeologists?
Simply, my research looks at how people interact with each other, their relationships. Everyone’s day-to-day activities leave physical marks on their bones. We can read these marks thousands of years later. I’ll be looking at patterns found in Bronze Age remains in Cyprus. These bone fragments can help us understand how people lived and how they adapted during a time of massive social breakdown. We can learn how their culture buffered them from sickness and biological stress.

Why should all the rest of us have an interest in what you’re doing?
Bones are inherently interesting. We all feel connected in some way to the bones in our bodies. When you analyze ancient remains, the data begins to tell a story. The holy grail of bioarchaeology is to understand that story. Once we have an understanding of what happened in the past, we can understand what is happening in the present. This research will connect the dots between culture and health, then and now. Data from the past can inform thinking on the range of responses that we can express when faced with challenges like climate change and globalization.

Do you think of yourself as more of a scientist, historian, or maybe detective?
I see myself as a scientist. My work is grounded in anatomy and physiology, and then the social sciences get brought in.

What is your greatest challenge?
Trying to learn modern Greek! I’ll be spending a lot of time reading museum documents pertaining to skeletal collections that have languished in boxes since they were acquired in the 1930s and 1940s.

What special protocols are required for working with human remains?
That entirely depends on where you’re working. Generally, you can’t permanently alter them. My research is all what’s termed “non-destructive,” so nothing I do changes or diminishes them.

Do you draw any personal connections to your research?
My father was a medical doctor, and my mother a nurse. In the house where I grew up, a volume of Gray’s Anatomy was always visible. My father passed away within the past year, and I feel that all of my research honors his work and who he was.

When you’re out in the field surrounded by bones, skeletons, burial sites, do you ever get, well, spooked?
Never. Human bones are an evolutionary marvel. I am always respectful and endlessly fascinated by them.