Twenty years ago, during the 1997-1998 academic year, the UNLV School of Architecture celebrated the initial accreditation of its academic programs. The hard work and enthusiasm of the professional and academic communities that helped launch the Architecture Studies program in 1986 were at last bearing long-awaited fruits. The 1997-1998 academic year was also exciting because the UNLV School of Architecture was finally able to move into the brand-new Paul B. Sogg Architecture Building, and had received generous support from John Klai II to inaugurate its promising Klai+Juba+Wald Lecture Series. To showcase the school’s accomplishments of that era, the faculty published Terra Firma, a journal that highlighted the design and research activities of the architecture, landscape architecture and interior architecture and design programs.

In light of our twentieth anniversary, and after serving as Interim Director of the UNLV School of Architecture for the past two and half years (and as a faculty member for the past fourteen years), I am proud to launch Vertex, a compendium of research and design work highlighting the accomplishments of many talented students from all of our academic programs—the UNLV School of Architecture has come a long way since Terra Firma was first published. At present, our professional programs in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior architecture and design are all accredited with the maximum term granted by their respective agencies, with several curricular areas identified as “met with distinction.” Many of our alumni are now accomplished professionals and community leaders making a difference in Nevada and beyond. And to celebrate twenty years of our now renowned Klai+Juba+Wald Lecture Series, we featured seventeen distinguished alumni as our speakers. But perhaps the most important indicator of our vibrancy and success is that we have become a destination school for the students who wish to investigate the exciting urban laboratory of Las Vegas and the intricate environment of the Mojave Desert.

The UNLV School of Architecture has historically relied on the support of the local professional community, and more recently, its alumni, to be able to deliver a strong professional education. Generous gifts from professionals and alumni vested in the school’s success helped us launch the Natural Energies Advanced Technologies (NEAT) Laboratory, the David G. Howryla Design+Build Studio, and the Schoeman Travel Endowment. The combined effect these gifts have had on our students’ education is paramount and transformational.

Today, the UNLV School of Architecture is a diverse and dynamic learning community that capitalizes on its unique regional location to improve the human condition through teaching, research, and service. In line with the College of Fine Arts’ mission, the UNLV School of Architecture also strives to transform our global community through collaboration, scholarship, and innovation. The work and connections made
by our students and academic programs excitingly converge in, and are informed by, our locus in Las Vegas, Nevada. Therefore, I see the UNLV School of Architecture as a “vertex” or the point where academic programs, diverse people and ideas, and an engaged professional community all converge and connect to both develop a better understanding of this exciting environment and to shape a sustainable vision for the future of the unique urban and natural contexts that many of us proudly call home.

In Vertex, you will find a broad range of student exploration and strong examples of our culture of “making.” Design exploration of issues associated to our geographical location, as well as this passion for making at different scales, are both intrinsic characteristics that distinguish the UNLV School of Architecture graduates.

Vertex was organized to showcase some of the UNLV School of Architecture’s most prominent areas of strength. Our multidisciplinary design foundation program is the initial building block that instills in students an ethos of systematic inquiry through making. Appropriately structured processes of experimentation and production using a variety of tools and media help students develop significant spatial understandings through the sequential act of drawing and making. The spatial understandings developed in the design foundation, supplemented by a culture of inquiry through making that is cultivated in our design studios, prepare our students to creatively engage in a rigorous study of relevant disciplinary subjects that range from the design of arid environments to hospitality, and from building technologies (including design-build) to healthcare interior design.

The UNLV School of Architecture’s commitment to excellence in research and design is vastly illustrated in Vertex. I hope this compendium elucidates the high achievements of our students and faculty and incites you to engage with our school and to become a part of its future. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to ensure the success of our academic programs!