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October 1

What we're learning
BOLDLY LAUNCHING VISIONARIES WHO TRANSFORM THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATION, SCHOLARSHIP, AND INNOVATION

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7 Cool Classes
What’s on the syllabus this fall? From witchcraft to stagecraft and Lego to rodizio, here are our favorite “only-in-Vegas” classes.

Rising Star
Former UNLV golfer Shintaro Ban has already competed in the U.S. Open. But he’s not turning pro just yet.

Table Your Tablet
iPad neck is a real health problem, so stop hunching over your screen and learn how to prevent the aches and pains.

In Praise of Doing Nothing
Sometimes simply being is as important to human progress as getting things done in our hypermodern world.
What’s Inside

The Lessons of Tragedy
In the wake of the Oct. 1 shooting, UNLV academics found new ways to help our community explore the issues, adapt to trends, and heal.

Lighting Up the Entertainment World
UNLV’s first entertainment engineering grads are building careers with their unique combo of creativity and technical know-how.

Mentorship Makes the Difference
How Alumnus of the Year Jeremy Aguero pays back the kindness that a UNLV professor showed him years ago.
Save the Date • Monday, December 3 • UNLV Student Union

Summit on Nevada Education

Join us in innovating and expanding existing best practices into next generation practices.

The Summit on Nevada Education welcomes educators, administrators, policy makers, community leaders and others with a direct link to education in Nevada to gather in an open forum to share ideas, challenges and lessons to improve and celebrate education in our state.

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More than 24K degrees conferred from the College of Education since 1967, with alumni serving across Southern Nevada and the globe

UNLV is an AA/EEO institution.
When I accepted the job as acting president, I did so with the understanding that I would not be a “seat warmer.” That is not who I am, and it is not what UNLV is. Our entire history has been about forging ahead when others thought we could not — and would not — succeed.

After 21 years of serving as a professor and administrator at UNLV, Las Vegas is my home, and I am committed to ensuring the university’s continued trajectory toward Top Tier status.

We are a growing university with tremendous aspirations, so it’s natural to have growing pains. We are navigating through our challenges with the knowledge that they are the result of much work that elevated this university to greater heights.

This past year has not been easy, in many ways. Leadership changes — though inevitable — are always unsettling, and Oct. 1 represents the one-year anniversary of a tragedy that indelibly marked us. The outpouring of generosity and love by our university that evening — and for the difficult days that followed — was breathtaking and reflected so much of who we are. In the first few hours after the Oct. 1 shooting, UNLV staff members sprang into action. Police Services, Thomas & Mack staff, and the many professionals on campus with crisis counseling training all helped survivors get through the darkest night of their lives.

And then the UNLV academic community began to do what they do best: applying their resources and skills to better understand our world. Whether they are psychologists seeking ways to help people cope with trauma or historians making sure important stories and data are preserved for the future, UNLV faculty are examining the lessons in the tragedy. I have no doubt their work will prove vital in the years to come.

For more than six decades, the mission of UNLV has been steadfast: to create meaningful, transformative experiences for our students as we prepare them for highly successful and socially impactful lives. Student success will continue to be at the center of our Top Tier efforts. Sometimes the focus on student success is seen as a pivot away from the research message, but it is not one or the other. The student and research missions must co-exist for us to thrive, and make a difference in people’s lives.

Socioeconomic status has long been the biggest predictor of college success. So the fact that UNLV has a high number of students who are the first in the families to go to college or who struggle financially is a motivating force for me and for UNLV. It gives us the opportunity to become a leader in changing that national narrative. Throughout these pages, you’ll find examples of how we are already rewriting that story — with the proof being in the success of our students, our faculty, and ultimately, our graduates.

We have much to be proud of and can accomplish much more together. I want to thank you — our alumni and supporters — for being a critical partner in this journey. Your tenacity, resiliency, passion, and kindness give us the inspiration to move ever forward.

Marta Meana
Acting UNLV President

On July 1, Marta Meana, a psychology professor and administrator at UNLV since 1997, took on the mantle of UNLV’s president. She will serve as acting president through the successful completion of a national search for UNLV’s next president. As dean of the Honors College since 2012, Meana has guided its growth year after year to more than 1,000 students this fall.
You give a helping hand to those whose passion is to help others.

Chee Lim
Edward & Shauna Smith Nursing Scholarship Recipient

YOUR GIFT matters

UNLV Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement
CREATING SMILES

School of Dental Medicine student Alessandro Retis grew up in Peru. Jorge Quiroz grew up in Bolivia. The two of them, along with the UNLV Hispanic Student Dental Association, returned to South America on a mission to Bolivia this August to help treat patients in a town where over-fluoridated water left people with green and brown teeth. “One 13-year-old girl was still reluctant to smile after treatment, until she was given a mirror and saw herself,” Retis said. “She was so happy she couldn’t stop smiling.”

EDUCATION, NOT RESTRICTION, IS KEY TO REDUCING HARM FROM OFFSHORE GAMING

With legal sports betting proliferating around the country, and with more states expected to join the fray soon, it’s worth looking at how other jurisdictions are handling the competition. Brett Abarbanel of the International Gaming Institute takes a close look at why in Australia, where there are plenty of legal options, bettors still choose offshore sports books. Offshore gambling, however, leaves bettors vulnerable to fraud. Abarbanel’s conclusions could offer a playbook for states new to the sports betting game.

MARYLAND PARKWAY’S FUTURE BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

Maryland Parkway, the main artery to the campus’ front door, is undergoing major changes. From the University Gateway complex under construction to a light-rail plan recommended to the Regional Transportation Commission, the coming years could see an entire overhaul of the corridor. Plus, say good-bye to Swenson Street and hello to University Center Drive.

THE SCIENCE OF INSTAGRAM

A biologist’s take on science and art

Tiffany Pereira master’s student, ecology and evolutionary biology

Instagram: @foxandphlox

THE START

I am interested in communicating science to a broader audience. By using #research and #biologistlifestyle and sharing personal adventures and art, I create a profile of a scientist that isn’t just one-dimensional. I hope the illustrations and photos inspire people to look at the world they live in with a fresh perspective.

THE MODELS

My partner and I share our exhaustive collection of plants, reptiles, and amphibians along with the hashtag #frogmom. We care for them in 13 terrariums filled with beautiful live plants. They make wonderful models for my macro lens.

THE APPROACH

My Instagram handle, @foxandphlox, is a nod to my love for the fauna and flora of this world. On the one hand, I define myself as a scientist, so my feed showcases interesting wildflowers and animals from my fieldwork in the Mojave as well as adventures around the world. But, I also define myself as an artist. Scientific illustrations and detailed macro photography let me display the natural world in an artistic way.

FAVORITE

Last year, I hiked Wildrose Peak in Death Valley National Park at night during a full moon. My intent was to make it up to the 9,000-foot summit to see the moonset and sunrise simultaneously. It was my first major hike after a series of medical setbacks. It was emotional and one of the most special moments of my life.
THE COOLEST CLASSES ON CAMPUS
WRITING THE BOOK ON NEVADA POLITICS
Traditionalists may balk — the cadaver lab is a rite of passage for doctors, they say — but the UNLV School of Medicine’s anatomy lessons are formaldehyde-free. Instead, on oversized touchscreens, students explore anatomy through 3D images of real bodies alongside their CT scans and MRIs. It offers an oddly more realistic dive into the human body, according to second-year student Sierra Kreamer-Hope. As an undergraduate at UNR, she spent hours dissecting cadavers. It’s a labor-intensive, not to mention expensive, way to learn anatomy. “If nothing else, this makes learning more streamlined,” she said, “but I think it also helps us make the connection between both form and function. In cadaveric anatomy, everything turns gray because of the formaldehyde. It all looks the same — the nerves, the veins — and tissues just fall apart. You’re not seeing them in color, you’re not seeing what you’ll actually see as a doctor.” — Cate Weeks

PHOTO BY LONNIE TIMMONS III
As a sophomore in 2016, Kevin Ashi and four of his peers – all aspiring physicians – noticed that something was missing on campus. UNLV was among the nation’s most diverse colleges in the country and was launching a new medical school, but there wasn’t a dedicated student organization for Latino students interested in health care. So they started one.

Ashi noted another gap: In Southern Nevada, nearly a third of the population is Latino yet only 3 percent of its physicians are.

Just two years later, the UNLV Latino Pre-Medical Student Association is 45 members strong and growing. It offers networking opportunities and teams up with local organizations for service projects, such as providing translation services at a mobile clinic. A key focus for the group is hosting programs at local secondary schools to promote health care careers.

“Many young people don’t have a guide, and they may not think college is an option because they either can’t afford it or they don’t want to burden their families,” he said. “We need to be a positive voice that they can do it.”

Ashi is a great example of that. The UNLV Honors College student spent his summer in Peru through a research program with the Harvard School of Public Health. He’s back at UNLV this fall for his final semester. Then he’s off to more study abroad before heading to medical school.
Javon Johnson has been at home on stage since he began reciting speeches in church as child and then became an All-American national speech and debate champion. In grad school, he began building a fan base as a poet and spoken word/slam artist. Now the author of *Killing Poetry: Blackness and the Making of Slam and Spoken Word Communities* is helping students understand blackness in social, cultural, literary, and historical contexts.

**HE GREW UP IN LOS ANGELES**

“It was 1980s South Central — crack infested, high gang culture. I believe there are structural impediments that don’t allow people to live their fullest and freest lives, and it creates a space that almost demands a certain kind of hostility. (But) I didn’t know it was terribly bad. I didn’t know I was poor until much later in life. Community played a major role in coming together and taking care of its children. I had a good childhood.”

**HE IS A THREE-TIME NATIONAL POETRY SLAM CHAMPION**

“Whatever success I have been booked as a poet or a speaker, it’s not overnight. It’s been a mountain of work that’s culminated into this moment and more work that will culminate into other moments. It may look like overnight because you may not have known me yesterday, but it is work. Every day I write something. Every day I read something.”

**HE’S NOT AN “ACADEMIC INTERESTED IN ART”**

“I’m an artist who’s interested in academia. That trajectory is the best way to name how I came here. Now I’m here, and they pay me to teach and research about a number of things. I’m still a creative person at heart — sometimes more than the academy would like. The poetry thing was more intentional; the academic thing was more free-flowing.

“Becoming a professor never crossed my mind as a desire. ...The textbooks named what I already knew to be true in my bones. The way in which we discuss poverty, racism, structural sexism, and all these other problematic “isms” in academic texts — these are things that I experienced.”

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**DOUBLING DOWN ON THE AWARDS**

Student groups garner back-to-back national accolades

The La Voz law student organization at the Boyd School of Law was once again named the national law student organization of the year by the Hispanic National Bar Association. The group’s mission is to empower its members and increase diversity in the legal profession through community engagement, education, and mentorship. Its members foster mentoring among high school, college, and law students with local attorneys.

A UNLV student team won the Institute of Management Accountants national case competition. It was the second-straight year that a UNLV team was the best in demonstrating its mastery in applying classroom studies to real-world issues. UNLV’s second team in the competition also made it to the finals. The win comes on the heels of accounting major Simon Zhu taking first place in the 2018 Collegiate DECA International Career Development Conference in Washington, D.C. Zhu is the first student from Nevada to win first place internationally in the competition.

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**THREE THINGS ABOUT …**

**JAVON JOHNSON**

**Director of African American and African diaspora studies**

“Many young people don’t have a guide, and they may not think college is an option because they either can’t afford it or they don’t want to burden their families. We need to be a positive voice that they can do it.”

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**HEAR HIS WORK**

A video of Javon Johnson’s spoken word piece “cuz he’s black” has more than 2.1 million views on YouTube. Visit the [Button Poetry channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/ButtonPoetry).
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The Flashlight

UNLV.EDU/NEWS 13

Doing a Number on Math Education

BY JULIET V. CASEY

One day as a new high school math teacher in the early 1970s, Bill Speer was helping his students solve for square roots. With pencil and paper, they had to follow a long series of complicated steps. They all completed the steps, but one student persistently asked, “Why are you doing what you’re doing?”

Over three days, Speer worked with the student to answer that question. And Speer realized that no one had ever told him either.

“Math isn’t about memorizing a bunch of steps,” he said. “It’s about the meaningful steps that represent something real in life. I believe firmly that there’s a reason for everything in math. It’s not just magic from a guy in a toga.”

But like Socrates, Speer developed a questioning approach to teaching, with “Why?” being the first and constant question he poses to students and encourages them to ask of him.

“This becomes a collaborative process,” Speer said. “That’s a huge difference from what traditional programs do.”

This constant conversation and exploration of the meaning of math in life earned the director of UNLV’s Math Learning Center the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics this year.

Former student Daniel Brahier was among those nominating him for the award. He credited Speer with paving the way for educational reform across the country. The two had worked together in the 1990s to develop Ohio’s first standards for math education.

“It was many years before I fully appreciated how far ahead of his time he was in the teaching methods that he promoted – hands-on, inquiry-based, student-centered – all of the teaching strategies that research backs today,” said Brahier, who is now the director of Science and Math Education in ACTION at Bowling Green University in Ohio.

Since joining UNLV in 1995, Speer has become a constant in improving mathematics standards in Nevada. He served on the statewide review team for the 2010 common core state standards.

His latest project is redefining remedial math for UNLV students. Math is a subject that delays or prevents many otherwise good students from getting their degrees. And Speer can relate: He had spent three semesters on academic probation himself, until he realized that math, and not accounting, was where his talents lay.

At the Math Learning Center, Speer and his colleagues use digital learning programs and other strategies to help students review or see for the first time key concepts they need to place into a higher-level mathematics course.

“We don’t want to just go over what the student has already been over,” Speer said. “If they come to us because they are not ready for college credit math, traditionally – sadly – that problem was dealt with by looking backward, rather than taking a fresh look and approaching things in a new way.”

Kim Metcalf, dean of the College of Education, said work at the Math Learning Center represents the culmination of Speer’s research and vision for the future of mathematics education.

“I can’t imagine anyone who has made more of an impact on their field,” Metcalf said. “He is well-respected and well-liked at the state level and across the country. And there are tens of thousands of people who now teach a certain way, and hundreds of thousands of students who have learned or are learning math in a way that is the direct result of the work and research of Bill Speer.”

PHOTO: LONNIE TIMMONS III

ACCOLADES

Above: Bill Speer, director of UNLV’s Math Learning Center, is the coauthor of Today’s Mathematics, one of the top-selling elementary math textbooks on the market.

“There are tens of thousands of people who now teach a certain way, and hundreds of thousands of students who have learned or are learning math in a way that is the direct result of the work and research of Bill Speer.”

Kim Metcalf
UNLV College of Education dean

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Sure, you’ve got your basic composition, and your statistics, and your garden-variety American history. Any ol’ university can do those. Here are some of our favorite “only-at-UNLV” classes this fall. — Jason Scavone

CULTURE AND CUISINE

Hospitality professor Yen-Soon Kim’s Culture and Cuisine looks at how the food of Asia, Europe, and the Americas ties into the history, culture, and religion of those areas, and how staples and ingredients migrated and transformed from territory to territory. And, oh yeah, students get to eat during class — capped off by a field trip to a Brazilian steakhouse. Not surprisingly, it fills up fast.

STAGE COMBAT

Instructor Kris Pruett’s advanced Stage Combat unit gets the stars of tomorrow ready for the sword fights of today. Starting with unarmed combat, Stage Combat gets students used to working safely with a partner before learning the finer points of fighting. Drawing on classic fencing techniques, Stage Combat teaches dynamic storytelling through fighting. Now if they can learn to do it on skates, they could make a case for the Golden Knights pregame show.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

A first-year seminar run by the Lee Business School, Business Connections offers prospective students a taste of what the major might entail. For John Starkey’s unit, though, it’s a chance to do some good at the same time thanks to his service-learning approach to the class. His spring semester unit raised more than $5,000 for four local charities, including the Trauma Intervention Program to benefit Oct. 1 victims. Fundraising has been done through crowdfunding, individual cash donations, and contacting local businesses. Students choose which charities to pursue, and how to get there. Just like The Apprentice, without the TV cameras or constant infighting.

PHYSICS FOR FUTURE PRESIDENTS

Nonscience majors, rejoice. Jason Steffen’s Physics for Future Presidents covers everything the leader of the free world might need to know, scientifically speaking. From nuclear weapons to renewable energy to terrorist attacks and climate change, Steffen delves into both the practical and the more esoteric, like the physics of a spy getting assassinated via radioactive material. Well, esoteric unless you’re Russian, anyway.

ROBOTICS

“Not now, I’m working with my Legos. It’s important.” For anyone who wants to be able to say that and mean it, Paul Oh’s mechanical engineering elective Robotics teaches students mechanism design, programming, and electronics through hands-on labs — using Legos. It also delves into the ethics of robots in society, so we don’t have a Terminator-style uprising coming out of the Beam Engineering Complex.

MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION

Anthropology assistant professor C. Todd White’s Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion starts from an unorthodox place: Magic is real. Where does it go from there? It goes to folklore, baseball superstitions, Native American spirituality, and teaching the gnostic-minded how to see coincidence as part of a bigger picture and to smile when the universe is laughing at you.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

How do you fight? Whether it’s with family, friends, romantic partners, or colleagues, everyone has a different style. Jennifer Guthrie’s communication studies unit looks at how people come into conflict and the ways to settle it. Students must produce a paper on conflict in their own lives, observed over a semester. Sidetone: A great way to derail any argument is to pull out the pen and paper.
Gold Butte National Monument has become a battleground, with ranchers, conservationists, members of the Moapa Band of Paiute, and politicians on both sides of the aisle all arguing over its use. This photo was taken by Chase Stevens, ‘12 BA Psychology, a staff photographer at the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Our Libertarian Ways

GAMBLING, PROSTITUTION, EASY DIVORCE. Hear those words and think Nevada. But learn a little about the history behind our state's political decisions and you’ll better understand present-day challenges and our libertarian leanings. Professor Michael W. Bowers authored the definitive textbook on the matter — The Sagebrush State: Nevada's History, Government, and Politics. His recently released fifth edition includes insights about the new intermediate court of appeals, the state's emergence from the Great Recession, and how Clark County has steadily gained control of the Nevada Legislature. Here he offers a quick primer on key moments that shaped our state. — Paul Szydelko
1864: UNANIMOUS SCHNANIMOUS
The Nevada Constitution bucked convention by allowing a jury in civil cases to reach a decision by a three-fourths vote of its members. Juries in both civil and criminal trials at the federal level must be unanimous. “This departure from both tradition and practice in the rest of the country is a result of the corruption that took place during Nevada’s territorial period: Mining companies frequently bribed jurors, and the framers of the constitution apparently believed it was more difficult to bribe four jurors than one.”

1864: WHAT? NO LOTTERY?
Though slot machines are in convenience stores across the state, lottery tickets are conspicuously unavailable. The Nevada Constitution explicitly prohibits lotteries. “It may not be the end-all, be-all, but lotteries would contribute to the state’s coffers. Look at the legalization of recreational marijuana: It’s going to put about $55 million [of tax revenue] into the state budget. Is that a huge amount of money [for a state budget]? No, but it certainly helps.” But, he said, the state’s gaming companies have little interest in seeing a lottery.

1959: IMPECCABLE OVERSIGHT
The Nevada Legislature approved Gov. Grant Sawyer’s proposal to remove the Gaming Control Board from under the state Tax Commission and make it the investigative arm of the newly created Nevada Gaming Commission. “County sheriffs initially regulated gaming, and they could not always be counted on to not be corrupt. And even when they weren’t corrupt, they didn’t necessarily know about gaming regulations. It was a hit-or-miss situation.” A move into the state’s tax department brought uniform statewide regulations, “but again, that wasn’t what they were particularly trained to do. The creation of the Gaming Control Board and the Gaming Control Commission were high-water marks. There’s never been a hint of corruption or scandal. Nevada is considered the gold standard for gaming regulation. Other states come here to see how it’s done right.”

Nevadans voted to amend the constitution to create term limits on all state and local officials except judges. “It’s been good and bad. It’s been to the benefit of Clark County because it has stopped superannuated legislators from the rural areas and the North from dominating the legislative leadership positions. You don’t see that North-South split quite like you did before. Although, still, students at UNR are receiving more funding per capita from the state than students at UNLV, which simply makes no sense.”

But competent legislators also are termed out, taking away some voter choice. “Some evidence suggests that term limits have provided lobbyists greater power because you simply don’t have that institutional memory among legislators.”

1996: A BUZZ SAW AGAINST TAXES
Voters approved the Gibbons Tax Restraint Initiative, an amendment to the Nevada Constitution, which requires a two-thirds majority in both houses of the Legislature to increase taxes. “In terms of structural factors, the Gibbons Tax Restraint Initiative is probably the worst thing that happened in the state because it requires a supermajority in both the Assembly and the Senate to raise taxes. That is almost impossible to do.” So state coffers simply don’t have the funding needed for education, highways, law enforcement, and other public functions. “That Gov. Brian Sandoval, working in a bipartisan way, got the Commerce Tax through [in 2015] is a minor miracle.”
Sophomore Erin Davis, a Mountain West Conference scholar athlete awardee last season, plays in an August exhibition game. Rebel volleyball starts 2018 under new coach Dawn Sullivan, with a young squad to match — there’s just one junior and one senior.

The team will get to mature under a more robust athletics department, as Boyd Gaming Corp. has chipped in with a $5 million, multi-year commitment. The investment will go toward a new video board in the Thomas & Mack Center this season and the establishment of a Student-Athlete Excellence Center inside Lied Athletic Complex dedicated to leadership, health and wellness, and outreach. The money also will be used to add a clubhouse to Eller Media Stadium for the softball team.

[PHOTO: LONNIE TIMMONS III]
Rising senior Myranda Bueno was hitting .468 through 12 games last season when in the first game of a tournament in Houston, she took a pitch to the face. The injury left her recovering for a month, held back from a lineup she had started in since her freshman year. That wasn’t her only challenge — she also switched positions in the outfield. But now she’s recovered, adjusted, and ready to go.

**FACING OBSTACLES: MYRANDA BUENO**

Was it hard moving from center to left?
Kind of, but not really. My preference, I’d rather play center. But looking at the big picture of it all, you can’t be selfish. With the new coaches, I trust their philosophy. They always had a reason. And we had a great season.

What’s the best game you’ve had at UNLV?
I think the one that stands out to me as far as this season, one of our first walk-offs. It was the first time we really got to see our coaches interact. We’d been working with them and prepping for the season, but we got to see the passion they have for the game. You could see our third-base coach dancing like a fool. It just brings my love back for the game.

How hard is it to miss games?
It’s definitely difficult. This season I broke my face in the middle of the season. I took an inside pitch. We were in Houston. It was my first at-bat of our first game out there, and I turned to hit the ball. I opened my shoulder and realized the ball was coming at my face instead. It was all just a blur.

Mentally I was ready to go, but physically, my face was broken. You want to be back on the field, but you don’t want to push it because if you’re still hurt, you’re not helping your team any.

I didn’t wear a facemask. I always said I’ve been playing softball for 18 years now. What are the odds I’m going to get hit in the face now? Well, there were the odds. I’m wearing a facemask now.

What was the first album you bought?
Avril Lavigne, whichever “Sk8r Boi” was on [Let Go]. I like anything I can just sing to. I’m not much of a dancer, so if I can turn it up just as loud as I can and belt to it, it’s probably my jam.

When you hit your first home run, did you know you got all of it?
I didn’t. It was my last game of the season, I was like, “You got nothing left to lose,” and it just went. You go in there just wanting to make contact. You don’t go up thinking you’re going to get a home run, but when you do, that feeling is awesome. I was head down, running. They teased me because I hit and I just ran. I looked up and I was like, “Oh, hey, I don’t need to run anymore.”
The Front Nine

Former Rebel standout golfer Shintaro Ban gets a taste of the U.S. Open as an amateur as he starts making plans to play as a pro — but first, there’s some unfinished business.

BY JASON SCAVONE

Growing up in San Jose, California, golfer Shintaro Ban also was a competitive swimmer. But even the most weekend warrior of golfers can tell you that the greens and fairways can drop you right in the deep end, too.

Ban was a standout recruit in 2014, coming to UNLV on the heels of winning the Junior Golf Association of Northern California’s Player of the Year award. But he was foundering with the Rebels. He was hardly playing with the team and was left behind for tournaments.

“I was pretty homesick and it was hard. I thought, ‘Hey, you’re not traveling at all. If you’re going to miss home, may as well go back home,’” Ban said. “But I came here for a reason.”

It was an early reckoning. Ban would soon figure out how to balance school and golf, by making sure he wasn’t up so late that he was tired for practice. He would learn to focus on the weaknesses on his game instead of skating by on the things he already did well, like hitting long off the tee. By his second semester, Ban was an integral member of the team. He would go on to All-America accolades and a spot in Rebels record books with an all-time university low of 62 in one tournament.

Four years and one economics bachelor’s later, on June 14, just before 9 a.m. on a clear Long Island morning, Ban found himself at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club. He teed off between 12-year PGA pro Sung Joon Park and 11-year veteran Tim Wilkinson in the 2018 U.S. Open.

“It didn’t quite sink in until after the first round,” Ban said. “It was like ‘Wow, I played a round in the U.S. Open.’ It was the most fun I’ve really ever had. To be out there experiencing my first day playing my first professional event, it was definitely something special.”

Shinnecock, though, was unforgiving. Some of the top players in the world struggled out of the gate. Ban carded an 81 on the first day, rebounded with a 78 in the second round, but joined the likes of top-flight pros like Jordan Spieth, Rory McIlroy, and Tiger Woods in missing the cut. Former UNLV golfer and Masters winner Adam Scott likewise missed.

“T’m glad I got a good, brutal beat-down.”

Rickie Fowler, who finished tied for 20th, shot an 84 in the third round. So at least, if playing on a course that rough-and-tumble was a lesson, it’s one Ban shared with some of the best golfers on the planet.

“I’m glad I got the experience and a good, brutal beat-down,” Ban said.

The experience was different, but the lesson was the same as it was in his freshman year: After a huge challenge on the course, it’s time to put in the work.

So instead of turning pro right after graduation, Ban has stayed an amateur to fine-tune parts of his game that he saw were lacking compared to pros at the Open. At the Pacific Coast Amateur, he finished 2-over and tied for 28th. At the U.S. Amateur Championship at Pebble Beach, he lost in the round of 32 of matchplay to the tournament’s eventual winner, Devon Bling. Ban expects it to be his last as an amateur.

When he does turn pro, UNLV coach Dwaine Knight expects Ban to quickly establish himself as both a player and a personality.

“The thing about Shintaro I really liked was he has a lot of creativity in a lot of different ways. He loves dancing; he’s an unbelievable dancer,” Knight said. “He’s a fun-loving guy besides being a great player. I think he’s going to have a bright future at the next level because he’s so creative, and people gravitate to him. He’ll endear himself to the fans.”

Delaying the move to the pros did have one notable upside for Ban. It meant he got to play in the Palmer Cup in July, in Évian-les-Bains, France, on the shores of Lake Geneva.

The Palmer Cup is the collegiate version of the Ryder Cup, pitting a team of Americans against their European counterparts. The U.S. squad defeated Europe handily, with Ban going 2-1 in his singles matches and 3-1 overall.

Doing it as a pro in the Ryder Cup proper is still a long way away. Ban will have to scrap his way to a tour card, itself no mean feat. But should he ever find himself representing the United States again, Ban will be ready.

“Palmer Cup was possibly one of the best weeks of my life,” he said. “I love playing on a team, where I’m representing something. I love to entertain. It’s one thing that makes me really excited about golf — seeing a big gallery, you want to perform well in front of them and feel the love.”
When Dan Ayala was recruited away from his assistant job under men’s coach Jerry Tarkanian to take over the Lady Rebels program, he implemented the same style of play that made the Runnin’ Rebels successful. After compiling a 109-23 record over five years, it was no surprise when five of his players went pro. But in the fall of 1978, something new and daring was happening. Inspired in large part by the silver-medal success of the U.S. women’s basketball team in the sport’s debut at the 1976 Olympics, the first pro women’s league formed. The Women’s Professional Basketball League took hold in eight cities, from New York to Houston. Lady Rebels went pro long before there was a WNBA.

Ayala’s young squads could hang with the top programs in college hoops, making Lady Rebels hot commodities in the new league. Liz Galloway, Debra Waddy-Rossow, and Janie Fincher went to the Chicago Hustle; Belinda Candler to the Houston Angels; and Janice Fuller to the Milwaukee Bucks. It was a packed house nearing 8,000. Walter Cronkite reported on the debut. It was loud, buzzy, and dark in the upper reaches of the stadium.

Maybe because Waddy-Rossow shot the lights out, dominating the game with 30 points.

The crowds could run up to 4,000 people a night in Chicago, one of the more popular teams in the league. WGN-TV carried Hustle games in the city, and both Chicago papers assigned beat writers.

“We had a vision we might be able to lay a template for future generations to have women’s professional basketball,” Galloway said. “We were conscious of what we were trying to do, not just for ourselves, but for the future. That was part of our agenda.”

Runnin’ Rebels standout Reggie Theus was playing for the Bulls. Sometimes, they even got to mingle with basketball royalty. The Bulls and their opponents would use the DePaul facilities, where the Hustle played, for shoot-arounds, so Hustle players would come early to check out their counterparts. The first year of the WBL, the Lakers had a promising rookie.

“I’ll never forget my coach told Magic Johnson, ‘I think you’re the greatest, but I’ve got somebody who can beat you in HORSE,’” Waddy-Rossow said. “I had an ‘H’ and he had an ‘S,’ and then he went down low with hook shots, and that’s how he beat me.”

That first season may have been magical, but the second season’s rapid expansion left the league overextended. By the 1980-81 season, four original franchises went under. Waddy-Rossow and Galloway were traded to New England, but Waddy-Rossow quit rather than move to Boston. That team folded before Galloway could get there.

For a year, Fincher tried to keep women’s pro ball going. With a barnstorming team of former WPBL players, she met with Lakers owner Jerry Buss at one point, but the one financial backer she had lined up for the league died, and Buss’ support dried up.

“We finally let it go and went on to real life,” she said.
Debra Waddy-Rossow still holds the UNLV records for most points in a single season (766), field goals (332), field goals attempted (642), and points per game (25.5), all racked up in her 1975-76 campaign.

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Debra Waddy-Rossow

There are 14 Las Vegans who have played in Major League Baseball this year, headlined by wrecking-crow bats like Kris Bryant and Bryce Harper, and big arms like Tyler Anderson and Brandon Kintzler. Now, after a banner MLB draft for the Rebels, including its highest pick since 2015, second-year head coach Stan Stolte’s players are on the clock to join their regional compatriots in the bigs.

— Jason Scavone

On Deck

UNLV baseball produces a bumper crop in the minors.

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ALAN STRONG PITCHER
Round 10 (300th), Tampa Bay Rays
He started 15 games for the Rebels as a senior and pitched to a 3.90 ERA with 86 strikeouts in 90 innings. He reported to Tampa’s short-season Single-A affiliate, the Hudson Valley (Wappinger, New York) Renegades.

Stolte: “He took the next step. (Hall of Famer and UNLV pitching coach) Greg (Mad-dux) did a good job of teaching him how to pitch. He was our main guy from the pitching standpoint, along with Bryan Menendez.”

NICK AMES 1ST BASE
Round 15, Detroit Tigers
He spent only 12 games in rookie ball before advancing to short-season Single-A with the Connecticut Tigers in Norwich.

AUSTIN ANDERSON 3RD BASE, OUTFIELD
Undrafted free agent, Detroit Tigers
He is playing for the Gulf Coast League Tigers in Lakeland, Florida.

NICK RODRIGUEZ INFIELD
Round 22, Seattle Mariners
He is a shortstop for the short-season, Single-A Everett (Washington) AquaSox.

BRYAN MENENDEZ PITCHER
Round 24, Arizona Diamondbacks
He is pitching in Montana for the Missoula Osprey in rookie ball.

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Debra Waddy-Rossow
Research

READY FOR MY CLOSE-UP

In life sciences professor David Lee’s comparative biomechanics lab, researchers are asking the evolutionary questions behind how animals — from this cat gecko to rodents to goats — get around. What they’re learning is informing the design and control of legged robots and robotic prosthetics on humans.

Doctoral student Kit Knight built this “skywalk” with 3D-printed parts and GoPro cameras to compare arboreal and ground-dwelling lizards. Most lizards shimmy on their bellies or rely on forward velocity to propel themselves across a branch without falling, but some of the better tree-climbers use grip, much like humans. By sectioning the skywalk’s “branch” and attaching transducers, Knight can measure both torque and force of the lizard’s limbs individually — data that hasn’t been collected before. “I’m asking the evolutionary question of how lizards began climbing using grip,” Knight said, “but ultimately I want this to help build better robots to go where humans can’t.” He points to the Fukushima power plant explosion as an example. “With this kind of information, I’m envisioning robots that can maneuver down destroyed staircases and cave-like hallways to clean up toxic materials.” — CW

PHOTO BY JOSH HAWKINS
A FIRST IN NEVADA HEALTH CARE

The award
A National Institutes of Health grant through its Center of Biomedical Research Excellence program

The recipient
The Nevada Institute of Personalized Medicine

Amount
$11.4 million over five years

Goal
To expand the use of genomics and genetics in personalized medicine and to expand clinical and educational services in the region

Why it’s a big deal
It will establish UNLV as the only NIH Center for Excellence in the nation focused on personalized medicine. It’s also the first such award for UNLV.

The Nevada Institute of Personalized Medicine won a major grant from the National Institutes of Health this spring, bringing to UNLV the prestigious “Center of Excellence” designation.

Led by UNLV faculty, the program partners with regional institutions to advance research and build infrastructure in this emerging field.

“Society is progressing beyond ‘trial-and-error medicine’ into a new data-driven era where a person’s genetic makeup is used to improve accuracy in medical diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment,” said Martin Schiller, UNLV life sciences professor and lead researcher on the grant. “This program will give us the means to further investigate the impact of personalized medicine and its potential for modern medicine, and to explore the potential for expanded clinical and educational services in Nevada.”

Through mentorship and pilot grant programs, the institute will help create a pipeline of scientists working in the field, eventually expanding clinical services in Nevada.

This is the latest in a series of steps at UNLV to advance personalized medicine. In 2015, the institute was established at UNLV with seed funding from the state’s Knowledge Fund with an eye toward commercializing research to enhance economic development. Research activity from the institute has generated two start-up companies within the past two years.

The institute’s efforts to sift through massive amounts of health data were bolstered in 2015 when UNLV partnered with data company Switch to acquire the Intel Cherry Creek supercomputer, which ranks among the world’s fastest and most powerful computers.

This is just the second program in Southern Nevada to be funded through the NIH program. In 2015, the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health formed a partnership with UNLV to establish a center focused on Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases.

Table Your Tablet

It’s not the hours on the iPad that cause your pain; it’s your bad posture.

BY KEYONNA SUMMERS

Is your iPad being a literal pain in the neck? The answer likely is yes — especially if you’re a young adult or a woman. Persistent pain in the neck and upper shoulders caused by slouching or bending into extreme positions while using tablet computers is a growing problem among Americans, according to a new UNLV study.

Findings, published in The Journal of Physical Therapy Science, show:

“iPad neck” is associated with sitting without back support, such as on a bench or on the ground, or slumping over the tablet while it rests in the user’s lap. The condition is more prevalent among young adults than older adults. Women were 2.059 times more likely to experience musculoskeletal symptoms during iPad use than men.

Those with a history of neck and shoulder pain reported more pain during tablet computer use.

UNLV physical therapy professor Szu-Ping Lee, lead author of the study, said the results concern him, especially given the growing popularity of tablet computers, e-book readers, and other connected devices for personal, school, and business purposes.

“Such high prevalence of neck and shoulder symptoms, especially among the younger populations, presents a substantial burden to society,” he said.

The top risk factor surprised Lee. “Theoretically, the more hours you spend bent over an iPad, the more neck and shoulder pain you experience — but what we

ABOUT THE STUDY
UNLV teamed up with researchers from hospitals and physical therapy centers across Southern Nevada to survey 412 public university students, employees, and alumni. Respondents included 135 men and 275 women who are touch-screen tablet computer users. (No word on how many of those surveyed completed the questionnaire on an iPad.)

“Society is progressing beyond trial-and-error medicine into a new data-driven era...”

Martin Schiller
Life sciences professor

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HOW TO PREVENT iPad Neck
Tips from physical therapy professor Szu-Ping Lee

- Sit with a chair with back support. Lee found that sitting without back support doubles the odds that a person will experience pain. “And perhaps that’s something for building planners to think about: Installing benches or other chairs without back support invites people to crunch down with iPads in their laps, contributing to posture-related pain problems.”

- Use a posture reminder device. Also known as posture trainers or posture coaches, these small, wearable devices adhere directly to the skin or clip on to clothing and beep to let you know when you’re slouching.

- Take a stand. You’re more likely to slump over if you place your device on a flat desktop surface or on your lap. Instead, place your iPad on an angled stand and attach a keyboard to encourage a more upright posture.

- Exercise to strengthen neck and shoulder muscles. This is particularly important for women who experience neck and shoulder pain.

found is that time is not the most important risk factor. Rather, it’s gender and specific postures.”

Flexing the neck forward for long periods of time can put pressure on the spine, causing neck and shoulder muscle strain and pain.

DESPITE PAIN, USERS WON’T PUT TABLETS DOWN

The most frequently reported symptoms were stiffness, soreness, or aching pain in the neck, upper back/shoulder, arms/hands, or head. Most (55 percent) reported moderate discomfort, but 10 percent said their symptoms were severe and 15 percent said it affected their sleep. Yet, only 46 percent of respondents said they’d stop using the device when experiencing discomfort.

Researchers found that the university students, staff, and alumni they studied reported a higher prevalence of neck and shoulder pain than the general population — likely attributed to posture and sedentary behavior commonly observed among people in a university setting. Students especially are less likely to have a dedicated work space and might sit in pain-causing postures such as slouched cross-legged on the floor when studying.

Regarding gender differences, 70 percent of female respondents reported experiencing symptoms compared to just less than 30 percent of men. Interestingly, women were also more likely (77 percent) to use their tablets while sitting on the floor than men (23 percent).

The pain disparity among genders might be explained by size and movement differences. According to the researchers, women’s tendency to have lower muscle strength, shorter arms, and narrow shoulders might lead them to assume more extreme neck and shoulder postures while typing.

“Using these electronic devices is becoming a part of our modern lives,” Lee said. “In order to reduce the risk of developing long-term neck and shoulder problems, we need to think about how technology like a tablet computer affects human ergonomics and posture.”
In the 1950s, scholars worried that, thanks to technological innovations, Americans wouldn’t know what to do with all of their leisure time. Yet today, as sociologist Juliet Schor notes, Americans are overworked, putting in more hours than at any time since the Depression and more than in any other Western society. It’s probably not unrelated to the fact that instant and constant access has become de rigueur. Our devices offer a barrage of colliding and clamoring messages: “Urgent,” “Breaking News,” “Answer needed ASAP.”

It disturbs our leisure time, our family time — even our consciousness. In this 24/7, “always on” age, the prospect of doing nothing might sound unrealistic and unreasonable. But it’s never been more important.

**ACCELERATION FOR THE SAKE OF ACCELERATION**

As incredible advancements enhance our human potential, why does daily life seem so overwhelming and anxiety-inducing? Why aren’t things easier?

Part of the explanation for this irrational state of affairs is something called the force of acceleration. Accelerated technological developments have accelerated the pace of change in our daily lives, according to German critical theorist Hartmut Rosa.

On factory floors, “just-in-time” manufacturing demands maximum efficiency and nimble response to market forces. In classrooms, computer software instructs teachers how to “move students quickly” through the material. Everywhere, procedures are implemented with one goal in mind: speed.

Noticeable acceleration began during the Industrial Revolution. Propelled by its own momentum and encountering little resistance, acceleration has begotten more acceleration, for the sake of acceleration.

To Rosa, this acceleration meets the criteria of a totalitarian power. It exerts pressure on the wills and actions of subjects. It is inescapable, all-pervasive, and almost impossible to criticize. Unchecked, acceleration has consequences.

At the personal level, it diminishes our everyday activities and relationships. It inhibits sustained focus and critical evaluation. It can stress our bodies and disrupt our sleep. It leads to burnout at one end of the continuum and to depression at the other.

Workers receive more emails than ever before — a number that’s only expected to grow. The more emails you receive, the more time you need to process them. Clearly, acceleration demands more work — and to what end? There are only so many hours in a day.

**DOING AND ‘BEING’**

In our hypermodern society, “down time” is equated with waste, laziness, or lack of ambition. But this approach indicates a simplistic grasp of human existence.

Much research — and many spiritual and philosophical systems — suggests that detaching from daily concerns and spending time in simple contemplation are essential to health, sanity, and personal growth. Similarly, to equate “doing nothing” with nonproductivity is short-sighted. Psychological research suggests that doing nothing is essential for creativity and innovation. Inactivity can cultivate new insights, inventions, or melodies.

As legends go, Isaac Newton grasped the law of gravity sitting under an apple tree. Archimedes discovered the law of buoyancy relaxing in his bathtub. And the academic sabbatical also illustrates this understanding that the mind needs to rest and explore in order to germinate new ideas.

Doing nothing — or just being — is as important to human well-being as doing something.

The key is to balance the two. One relatively easy way to find that balance is to simply turn off all the devices that connect us to the internet — at least for a while — and assess what happens. Danish researchers found that students who disconnected from Facebook for just one week reported increases in life satisfaction and positive emotions. Then, find balance through a more mindful, purposeful activity. The Slow Food movement, for example, advocates a form of deceleration by rejecting fast food and factory farming.

Also fight the assumption that those who look very busy are necessarily productive or competent, as research shows that multitasking is typically sloppy. Finally, remember that if our corporate culture promotes compulsive busyness, it contradicts both how most in our society define “the good life” and the tenets of many Eastern philosophies that extol the virtue of stillness.

French philosopher Albert Camus perhaps put it best when he wrote, “Idleness is fatal only to the mediocre.”
Its Teeth Are Soft (2017)
Mikayla Whitmore, ’10 BFA
From the UNLV Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art permanent collection and part of “There is No Right Time” series exploring the mementos of American values in Nevada and California deserts.

When Whitmore, placed a single mirror in an otherwise pristine landscape outside Cal-Nev-Ari, she tilted it away from the viewer, creating a portal rather than a reflection. Her intention was to prompt us to question the space around us, to really consider the landscape for itself. “We are in a selfie-induced society, always looking to objects and places for our next Instagram post,” she said. Technology, along with its contribution to current rifts in society, have led to isolation and distortion — “almost to the point where everyone is looking at the same thing, but not listening or hearing each other.”

EXPLORE HER WORK
mikaylawhitmore.com
UNLV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE FIRST YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS

• The UNLV School of Medicine opened July 17, 2017
• Faculty physicians treat wounded from 1 October
• Dr. Parvesh Kumar, secures largest UNLV research grant renewal of $20 million from NIH
• 24% of our class come from populations traditionally underrepresented in medical schools
• Medical school salutes first Fulbright Award winner, Dr. Katherine Hertlein
• Charter class of 60 students began July 2017. Courtesy of donors, students received full scholarships
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UNLV Medicine operates 21 clinics in Clark County offering 18 specialties:

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<td>Diabetes Center</td>
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UNLV Medicine accepts PEBP Insurance (HMO and PPO Plans).
The Lessons of Tragedy

In the wake of the Oct. 1 shooting at the Route 91 Festival, UNLV academics found new avenues for study, and in the process, they’re helping our community explore the issues, adapt to trends, and heal.

By Jason Scavone
Photos by Josh Hawkins & Lonnie Timmons III
It was a Sunday night.

There was much to do the next day. So Stephen Benning retired early and slept through it.

The horror unfurled surprisingly slowly on television news. For more than an hour, on every channel, the lower-third chyrons would only confirm two dead and anywhere from a handful to dozens injured. As the clock inched into the first minutes of Oct. 2, the scope of what had started just two hours earlier became clearer. Anyone still up was in for a long night, watching the same updates repeat like an unwanted mantra.

By the next morning the magnitude of the chaos and carnage would become apparent. But in that brief window from 10 p.m. until just before midnight on Oct. 1, it was possible, just for a moment, to think that the reports were a sensational overreaction.

“When I woke up and got messages from my parents saying ‘I hope no one you knew was involved in the shooting,’ it didn’t even connect for me initially,” Benning said. “As time went on, it was, ‘OK, this is serious. This is on a scale we’ve never seen before.’”

And an idea began percolating.

As he grappled with the tragedy as an individual, the psychology professor wondered how he might use his expertise to help. By that Friday, Benning announced his intentions in meeting for his Psychophysiology of Emotion and Personality Lab: to survey shooting victims and community members over the course of a year, using narrative psychology. It would be a first-of-its-kind study analyzing the psychological fallout of a mass casualty event.

He wasn’t the only member of the UNLV academic community to spring into action in the wake of the Route 91 tragedy. From psychology and journalism to University Libraries and history, UNLV’s academics have tried to find ways to make sense of the shooting for the people affected by it.

The surprise of gratitude

Benning’s study was fast-tracked through the Institutional Review Board by Monday, leaving him and his team the task of convincing victims and community members to sign up for the study.

They emailed UNLV listsevs, got in front of television news cameras, put out the call in Facebook groups, and posted fliers at Route 91 events looking for volunteers. Around 50 concert attendees and 120 community members eventually responded.

Benning and a dozen or so graduate assistants and colleagues used a technique called narrative psychology — essentially, asking victims and community members alike to write their stories in their own words, starting with just a few prompts. The team measured symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression, and subjective well-being at one month after the event and then 45 days, three months, six months, and one year later.

After six months, Benning started to discover something he hadn’t anticipated at the outset of the study.

“There seemed to be a spike in gratitude in our well-being measures right after it happened,” he said. “Then it sort of settled back down, but overall, people’s well-being didn’t seem to change a whole lot with this. That was a heartening finding.”

People in the Las Vegas community had higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder compared to the general population, and people at the festival had many more symptoms than the community. The general well-being of people in the community had returned to normal after six months.

What Benning found was the biggest help for festival attendees was having strong social support. People who routinely faced criticism in their lives had a much harder time processing the trauma; those with a higher level of support fared significantly better. Surprisingly, though, the positive effects of support took longer to manifest compared to how quickly criticism had negative effects.

“I had expected that, after this kind of tragedy, people might feel overall that there was less meaning in their lives, that their sense of well-being might be decreased,” Benning said. “The fact that there wasn’t that kind of substantial reaction — that if anything, there’s a spike in gratitude — was a pleasant surprise. I thought criticism and support would go at about the same chronology, and I thought it would be relatively quick. I thought social support would really help [quickly] buffer symptoms, but it seems that wasn’t the case.”

After the 12-month follow-up, Benning and his team will index the data to break down the general way these stories are either redemptive or contaminative — do they tell stories about a bad thing that goes good, or a good thing that goes bad?

Already, Benning’s group has presented some of the findings at the Nevada Psychological Association, and one undergraduate researcher, Amanda Mraz, is using the study as the basis of her Honors College thesis.

But poring over all these stories doesn’t come easy, even for researchers.

“It’s not something you can plop down in one day and do. It takes a while to process. When we go and start coding them, I’m not going to say to people, ‘OK here are 200 stories to process.’ You have to give yourself a bit of a brain break.”

This type of study on a mass casualty event has never been attempted as quickly after the tragedy as this one. Even during the Sept. 11 attacks, researchers waited months or sometimes years after the fact to begin their studies.

At the outset, there were researchers who were worried that asking victims to recount the events of the shooting so soon would cause more harm than good. But that turned out to not be the case, and now future researchers have a trove of data on the immediate effects of this kind of trauma, as well as a new way of helping people process it.

“It will allow people to recognize writing about it isn’t necessarily detrimental even right when it happens,” he said.
There's so many things to say, but this paper is so small. May you all be at peace.
Exploring tragedy through big data

Thomas Padilla's first day at UNLV was Oct. 2. The visiting digital research services librarian hadn't even acclimated to his new office before being tasked with helping Special Collections and Archives spring into action.

The preservation arm of University Libraries play a key role in preserving documents related to Southern Nevada for researchers around the world. Special Collections immediately got in contact with the Nevada State Museum and Clark County Museum to figure out a plan to work collaboratively. The other two institutions would worry about collecting physical material. Special Collections focused on collecting material through:

- Its Oral History Center, which has conducted 50 interviews from concert attendees, first responders, and community members and plans to keep interviewing people through late 2019 or early 2020
- An archive of website material from local and national news that is searchable on the Special Collections website
- A survey of Twitter from right before the attack until the days after Padilla was familiar with “Documenting the Now,” a project to chronicle major events through social media that started in the wake of the Ferguson, Missouri protests. He turned to an open-source utility called Twarc to scrape some 11 million tweets that contained “Las Vegas” starting on Sept. 30 and continuing a few days after the shooting.

With that much raw data to work with, finding ways to get one's arms around it is challenging, and it's a task Padilla will be tackling with the aid of a graduate assistant in the coming months.

To start to make sense of it, he turned to the some 800,000 emojis in the data set, creating a visualization that takes nearly 30 minutes to play out.

“One of the things I found in working with a collection of this kind is it's difficult in an emotional sense,” Padilla said. “You're interacting with millions of expressions of tragedy and sorrow, and it can weigh on you. There's just a large sequence of crying emojis and hands praying. It's just one type of way to lose yourself in the emotion that's expressed in the collection.”

Perhaps a bigger challenge than the actual data analysis is figuring out how to properly share the data set with the public. Twitter’s terms and conditions have restrictions on how its data can be used and who can use it. Some universities working on similar projects have shared the data only with their research communities but not with the public at large. Others have shared a list of individual numeric identifiers to individual tweets, but not the tweets themselves.

Padilla, who sits on a Society of American Archivists’ task force on the topic, grapples both with the ethical concerns of how that data can affect survivors and community members and with trying to anticipate how future historians might try to comb through ephemeral records like websites and social media.

“We have to be very clear about why we captured this collection,” he said. “What constraints we faced, what parameters we used, what might be missing in the collection. Just so there is as clear a record as possible about why this collection was created, how representative it is, whether or not there are other things that could be used to fill in the picture. I think that those questions scale from the present into the future.”

Standing in the aftermath

Like Padilla and the rest of Special Collections, Amanda Fortini contended with the urgency of the moment. A visiting lecturer in journalism, Fortini was home in Montana for the weekend. By 6 on the morning of Oct. 2, her editor at The New Yorker was calling. By noon she was on a plane back to Las Vegas.

Working the phone before she stepped off her flight, Fortini had lined up a number of potential sources who were at the festival, but not all of the interviews had come through, and the clock was ticking. The story was supposed to be an essay about the state of the city. Fortini worked through Monday night to get it done.

By Tuesday, her editors in New York wanted to go in a different direction. She worked a second straight night to get the harrowing story — full of agonizing details from those who were in the midst of the chaos — written and posted by noon on Wednesday.

“There was a moment before I wrote the second one where I thought ‘I can't do this. I'm too exhausted,’” she said. “And then I was like, ‘You just do it.’”

It was the first of three stories on the shooting she'd write for The New Yorker, followed by an in-depth look at how survivors were coping for The California Sunday Magazine.

The freshness of the trauma left Fortini, who is returning as a lecturer and a fellow
at UNLV’s Black Mountain Institute, reluctant to teach her *New Yorker* stories in her magazine writing class. Many of her students read them regardless, and they had plenty of questions.

“They wanted to know how it came together,” she said. “How did you locate the sources? How did you get people to tell you their stories in such detail? How did you do it so quickly?” That kind of stuff. They’re interested in that evolution from idea to final piece.”

Ben Edwards, the law professor who runs the Investor Protection Clinic at UNLV’s Boyd School of Law, didn’t work directly with survivors, but his work was just as urgent. The Las Vegas Victims Fund collected more than $30 million to disburse to victims, and Edwards knew those people were at risk of opportunistic financial professionals — or worse.

“In many instances people who portray themselves as financial advisers are actually commission-compensated salespeople,” Edwards said. “Whenever someone has a sudden influx of cash, they’re often targeted by these people and taken advantage of.”

Edwards helped organize the Las Vegas Survivors Project, where victims could seek no-cost financial advice from professionals affiliated with the Institute for the Fiduciary Standard, Garrett Planning Network, the Chartered Financial Analysts Institute, and the North American Personal Financial Adviser Association.

The financial advisers are decentralized, with four in Nevada, six to eight in California, and others scattered around the country.

The project is an outgrowth of the work being done in the law school’s clinics, and it allows Edwards to draw attention to broader issues of financial impropriety and the need for tighter regulation in the sector.

“While this is a particular event we can rally people around for help, there are many folks who are routinely taken advantage of who are no less needy. We don’t have the resources or the political will to impose higher standards on all people giving financial advice,” Edwards said. But the clinic is a start.
The UNLV and Las Vegas communities bore their own burdens after the shooting. As Benning’s study took the pulse of community members who were devastated by the event, history professors Miriam Melton-Villanueva and Deirdre Clemente turned their attention to helping people heal and what they could learn from this example.

Melton-Villanueva, who teaches Mexican history and culture, had the idea of setting up an ofrenda, a ritual altar normally used during Dia de los Muertos to honor the dead. It was among a number of initiatives taken in the past year with an eye on healing, from memorial services to special talks to explore the issues the shooting prompted to the mobilization of faculty, staff, and advanced students in UNLV’s medical, counseling, and mental health programs.

The Barrick Museum hosted the ofrenda starting Oct. 17, beginning with students from Melton-Villanueva’s class placing objects on the altar from the American flag to UNLV hats to candles, boots, bread, and notes. Through word of mouth, other students started to trickle in and add their own offerings, not just to victims of Oct. 1, but to their own dead.

“There were lots of people who were participating in this in the way of celebrating life,” Clemente said. “A lot of people really found that to be a meaningful way of looking at these deaths, that it wasn’t this senseless violence. What we were doing was a more positive way of looking at something that was so ugly and horrific.”

The ofrenda stayed up through Nov. 2 — Dia de los Muertos is Nov. 1 — but it gained the attention of the broader academic community at a conference for public historians hosted at UNLV. They were curious how UNLV would deal with a tragedy that happened in its backyard. Would it confront the issue head on?
Would it examine gun violence directly? How would the university address victims, survivors, and the community? What would be the message and the tone?

From various angles, researchers across campus are examining different threads of those questions. Erika Gisela Abad, a professor of interdisciplinary, gender, and ethnic studies, is delving into the effects that an interactive art installation has had. Through a service-learning course, UNLV faculty and students are documenting the activities that led to downtown’s Las Vegas Community Healing Garden, now run by Get Outdoors Nevada. A research project under the supervision of criminal justice professors Joel Lieberman and Terance Miethe had been surveying community opinions of police surveillance for more than a year before the shooting happened. Now the researchers, led by doctoral student Milia Heen, can contrast perceptions toward drones and body-worn cameras before and after the shooting.

For their part, Melton-Villanueva and Clemente are now preparing a journal article on the experience with the ofrenda along with graduate student Doris Morgan Rueda. It examines the way cities mourn — especially one like Las Vegas, with its reputation as America’s vacation playground and where victims were mostly from outside the community.

“I hope that the lesson is that in such dark and unexplainable things we can find our way back to normal or our way back to acceptance of the current situation through other cultures,” Clemente said. “This is something we all lived in, and it’s something we’re always going to live with. Implementing how we think about life and death is important.”

Even the silver linings of a tragedy like this are hard to swallow. The impact of UNLV’s research done in the wake of Oct. 1 will take years to see as studies are published and followed up on, and the lessons in them are applied in other communities facing tragedy.

But if there’s any reason for optimism, it comes from Benning’s work with survivors so soon after they started to grapple with the enormity of what happened to them, and as they placed the event in context over the course of this past year.

“I hope what would come out of this is a sense just because a bad, awful, terrible thing happens to you, does not mean that you are fundamentally broken,” Benning said. “It does not mean you are shattered. Some people may actually feel better and feel like, ‘Now I have a new purpose.’”

READ MORE ABOUT UNLV’S CONTINUING RESPONSE TO THE ROUTE 91 TRagedy
unlv.edu/Oct1

- How survivor Karessa Royce, a Hospitality College senior, is turning post-traumatic stress into post-traumatic growth
- The ways donors stepped up to support students and community outreach projects
- The one-year reflections of students and staff who helped make the campus a refuge for victims
- In-depth stories of research projects

The Things They Shared

Thomas Padilla, visiting digital research services librarian, compiled lists of the most shared images and URLs tweeted about Las Vegas in the two days after the shooting. They broadly fall into six categories:

**News images.** Screengrabs, like one of CNN showing Sheriff Joe Lombardo in the first hours after the tragedy, spread the latest information. The most-tweeted image, a screenshot from the Al Jazeera’s AJ+ network, was shared 48,005 times.

**On-the-scene photos.** Concertgoers shared their experiences in images that document the peaceful event before the concert, the panic and confusion unfolding during the shooting, and the anguish after.

**Newsmaker reactions.** Most shared photos included President Trump meeting with hospitalized victims, Washington Nationals slugger and Las Vegas native Bryce Harper showing off his Pray for Vegas cleats, and the Golden Knights pregame ceremony. Talk-show host and UNLV alumnus Jimmy Kimmel’s monologue on Oct. 2 was a top-shared URL.

**Ways to help.** One top tweet shows a man giving a thumbs-up at a blood drive. Another shares a screen-capture of blood donation center information. The URL for the GoFundMe page for the Las Vegas Victims’ Fund was shared 30,258 times.

**The Morbid.** These crime scene images of the aftermath reveal the human tendency to gape at grisly scenes.

**Memes.** These were used to offer political commentary. The second-most shared image was a meme based on the show Family Guy to question how racism plays into perceptions of such tragedies.
STEM ... STEAM ...

What’s Next?

The future of education is in programs that reach beyond traditional academic disciplines to broaden the way students think.

BY JASON SCAVONE
IMAGES BY LONNIE TIMMONS III
Kimberly Kendricks was a math professor when the Air Force put out a call for help.

The military service was looking for people who could model gait and bone structure to root out suspects in attacks like bombings and to help predict such threats.

Kendricks, who was then teaching at Central State University outside Dayton, Ohio, had done graduate work in solving kinematic problems for assembly-line robots. Robotic movement is similar to human movement, so she submitted her proposal and got the Air Force’s attention. But the problem was bigger than the math of motion. Soon, Kendricks found herself working in a team alongside kinesiologists, physicists, biomechanical engineers, and computer scientists.

“That was my first exposure to interdisciplinary work and understanding group dynamics and the importance of valuing other people’s disciplines,” she said. “I was very good at working in teams and building teams. And so that’s guided the work I’ve done since.”

Now in her fourth year as UNLV’s director for interdisciplinary collaboratives, Kendricks is drawing on those experiences to steer UNLV through a landscape where education increasingly cuts across departmental lines.

FROM STEM TO STEAM

Judith Ramaley, a biologist who was then the assistant director of education at the National Science Foundation, is credited with coining the acronym STEM for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in 2001.

With students in the United States lagging behind international counterparts in those fields — and with the jobs available in them plentiful, prestigious, and high paying — STEM came to be a dominating force in education. By 2009, President Obama launched the Educate to Innovate initiative, generating a $700 million investment aimed at improving all areas of STEM education, from attracting new teachers to diversifying the student base.

That national attention naturally affected state policies. For example, the Nevada System of Higher Education adopted a funding formula in 2012 that weighs students in science, technology, and engineering course clusters heavier than those in the liberal arts, business, education, and others.

To a large extent, that’s simply because lab equipment in science and engineering is significantly more expensive than the spaces needed for humanities fields. But part of it does come down to a public interest in diversifying the state’s economy. The formula offers a bonus based in part on an institution’s ability to turn out “economic development” graduates.

There was debate, of course, about the value of pushing STEM education both in Nevada and nationally. Concerns ranged from the ability of STEM fields to attract and retain a diverse population to broader concerns about the actual value of an education that skewed too left-brain.
Emily Black knows how to make an exit.

The last time the campus saw her, she was flying across the Thomas & Mack Center, clad in her scarlet cap and gown. It was May 2012, and commencement organizers had enlisted her help to bring attention to the first graduates in entertainment engineering and design. A floating pulley system plucked Black from the sea of graduates and sent her soaring high above the crowd, eventually descending onto the stage as the ceremony’s final graduate to claim her diploma.

The former Rebels cheerleader is behind such scenes now as a design engineer for Show Group Production Services, which does custom rigging, automation, and staging for entertainment clients. “If an artist wants a custom stage or a custom flying system, we’re in charge of coming up with the plan to make it happen, including making it as easy as possible to build, tear down, and transport,” Black said.

She’s helped create a stage-arm saddle and moving video cubes for country music singer Shania Twain’s concert tours and a scale model of Toronto’s CN Tower for rapper Drake’s OVO Fest. She also worked on the halftime show set for this year’s NBA All-Star Game.

“A lot of times you start out with a concept and say, ‘This is going to be impossible,’ and then we eventually get it to the point where it’s something we can actually make — and usually within a tight time frame.”

She said the lab work she did in UNLV’s program made her especially marketable. “Having that hands-on experience — even learning how to drill a hole — put me steps above a lot of mechanical engineering peers.”
A bout four years ago, a growing chorus for STEAM — adding “arts” to the equation — gained its voice. And the acronym morphed from there with programs adding an “R” for “wRiting” or extra “M” for medicine. The mission creep, in many ways, could be seen to come back to a well-rounded, liberal arts education.

So is STEM still the future? Shake up the Magic 8-Ball and you might see “Reply hazy, try again.”

“There is no question that STEM fields have been enormously influential in producing an educated citizenry and workforce,” said Nancy Uscher, dean of the College of Fine Arts. But, the music professor adds, “the fascinating development more recently has been seeing our thought communities — our National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine — become keenly aware of the importance of the integration of the humanities and the arts with the sciences.”

Uscher points to one venerated discipline — architecture — as a field that has long joined art, engineering, and math. The UNLV School of Architecture recently added another field into that mix with its healthcare interior design program. And over in the music department, oboist Stephen Caplan is leading a consortium focused on teaching students the fundamentals and tangible skills and job marketability.

“Once you introduce some art classes to teach a different set of skills, your brain works in a different way,” Genova said. “In general, the study of arts leads to an understanding of nuance. So as students start to go through the EED program, I don’t want to say that they’re better than traditional engineers, but I think that they observe differently, they pick out slight differences in data.”

The projects coming out of the program are wide-ranging. One involved 3-D printing and work with lasers to redesign the kinetic sculptures of Dutch artist Theo Jansen. One involved designing fire egress systems that lit up exit paths in case of emergency. One was an animatronic Harry Potter sorting hat.

Some projects may seem fanciful, but they’re also grounded in research. At the next International Conference on Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology, entertainment engineer professor SJ Kim’s student team will present its work to create an augmented reality theater on the waters of the Bellagio fountains.

The program has hit its stride now that its graduates are building their reputations at the likes of Pixar Studios and Cirque du Soleil. In 2015, alumna Shelby Honea reached an industry pinnacle when she landed an internship, and eventually a job, with Walt Disney Imagineering, the research and development arm for the company’s theme parks. She is now a producer for Universal Creative.

“Recruitment for this fall was phenomenal,” Genova said, expecting the program’s largest class ever. “We now have a track record. The companies hiring our graduates are seeing the benefits of our approach. And the grads themselves have gotten to a point in their careers where they are influencing hiring decisions.”

Michael Genova
Professor, College of Fine Arts
avenues of research so they can apply for bigger federal dollars. “The federal agencies have been emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary teams for a long time. They’re basically forcing people to create these types of teams, and for good reason: It gets people to think more broadly and to answer research questions from multiple perspectives.”

Nonetheless, the STEM focus won’t be left behind any time soon. Psychology professor Rachael Robnett sees STEM fields in the light they were initially regarded — as both a path to bountiful, high-paying jobs for students and as filling a crucial role in the national workforce.

Robnett studies diversity in STEM, particularly when it comes to attracting and retaining women and girls to the bench sciences. She helps identify interventions universities can make to help keep women and minorities involved before they drop out of those majors. There’s still much work to be done to plug STEM’s “leaky pipeline,” as it’s called.

“There just aren’t enough qualified Americans to fill necessary roles,” Robnett said. “There is a lot of concern about needing to pull science workers from other countries. In some ways that’s good; that brings more diversity to the U.S. But it’s also important to keep in mind that there are lots of women and people of color in the U.S. who have the capacity and desire to succeed in STEM, yet they aren’t pursuing these careers because of inequities in the education system and in society more generally.”

We still need scientists, she said, and STEM still needs nurturing.

The final arbiter of the direction that education takes won’t be whatever vacancies happen to be in the workforce at large. It will be what best prepares students to be productive thinkers for whatever fields they choose.

For Croughan, the interdisciplinary approach “is certainly to your benefit when you’re the student. When you are exposed to that breadth of thinking, you come out practicing your field differently and seeking out colleagues who have differing opinions.

“I think of it as the difference between a soloist and a choir singing. A soloist might be fabulous, but it’s just one tone, one style. A choir can go a million directions.”
Jeremy Knowles cops to having been a nerdy kid who “was always tinkering with stuff.” But he also loved theater performance. That led him to go high school at the prestigious Las Vegas Academy of the Arts. It didn’t take long, however, to recognize his acting chops were a notch or two below Broadway.

At UNLV he came up with a Plan B. Knowles was among the first students to plunge into the unconventional entertainment engineering and design program — and among the first to realize that he was in for a challenge. “It’s not just all fun and games and building stuff,” he said. “You have to be good at the engineering aspect of it. But at the same time it was a rewarding program, especially if you like entertainment.”

After graduating, Knowles secured a job with MGM Resorts International’s events department as a special projects artist and then joined Cirque du Soleil’s Michael Jackson ONE show at Mandalay Bay. He ensures all of the show’s flashy light-up costumes are functioning properly, particularly during the signature number, “Billie Jean.”

His freelance projects let him show off more of his own creativity. Among his favorites is an LED trench coat for illusionist Criss Angel as well as glow-stick props for pop star Ariana Grande’s tour. He’s also working on creating a low-cost wireless device to control LEDs, like from a smartphone app. The core skills that requires came from his time at UNLV.

“The program demands that you take a broad range of courses,” Knowles said. “So when you’re out in the engineering workforce, you might not know exactly how something works, but you will have a general idea. UNLV really sets the foundation for you to build off of in whatever job you end up getting.”
Kevin Brekke
'17 BS Entertainment Engineering and Design

If you’re a fan of *American Ninja Warrior*, you may be familiar with Kevin Brekke’s work to flip, twist, and crank contestants.

Last year, the Las Vegas native was one of seven winners — out of 2,500 entries — in a nationwide design challenge for the competition series. Brekke’s creation, dubbed “Crank It Up,” continues to be an upper-body nightmare for Ninja Warrior contestants. It was such a hit that it helped Brekke land a job as a designer with the ATS Team, a Burbank, California-based firm that provides production design, rigging, and stunt work for television and movies.

It’s been a whirlwind start to a career that he’s been eyeing since he designed elaborate haunted houses as a childhood hobby. During his sophomore year at Loyola Marymount University, Brekke discovered that UNLV offered a degree specifically geared toward entertainment engineering. He packed up and returned home. This degree would allow him to apply his natural abilities in math with creative pursuits.

“It was exactly what I was interested in — exactly the type of engineering I wanted to do,” he said. “Then I researched [the program] and found out that it’s a combination of a lot of different types of engineering — everything from civil to mechanical to electrical to structural to computer. We didn’t just focus on one thing, so I feel like I got a well-rounded degree.”

When Brekke joined The ATS Team, he was assigned to the group that works on *American Ninja Warrior* obstacles. He’s had a hand in creating such fan favorite obstacles as the Double Twister, Lightning Bolts, and Ring Turn. But he is returning to Las Vegas once again this fall to work on his original career plan:
GETTING IN THE GAME

Tabitha Engle
’17 BS Entertainment Engineering and Design

Like many kids who grew up in Las Vegas, Tabitha Engle would occasionally pass through a casino on the way to a family dinner or a movie. Over time, she became impervious to the whirring sounds and bright lights of slot machines as she made her way to her destination.

These days? It’s a totally different story. As project coordinator for Scientific Games — a Las Vegas-based company that designs casino, interactive, and instant lottery games — Engle’s senses are on high alert on a casino floor.

“I used to walk through casinos and see the slot machines, but I never thought about the design elements — like who comes up with the concepts and designs them?” she said. “Now I look at all the games and think, ‘Oh, who made that game? That’s one I haven’t seen before. This game seems really popular.’ I constantly notice the details — especially if it’s one of our games: ‘How is this one performing?’”

Initially, Engle thought she would put her entertainment engineering skills to use in the theater world. But an internship with a local troupe cast some doubt. Then came a second internship, this one with Scientific Games. Even though she had never even sat at a slot machine, Engle gained a lot from the internship — including, ultimately, a full-time job.

Working with the Scientific Games prototype team, Engle helps with generating ideas, then helps take the best of those ideas from concept to reality. One of her recent projects, a slot game called Hexogems, is expected to be on casino floors soon.

Engle also assists with the company’s internship program, often recruiting EED students from her alma mater. Her best advice to those internship-seeking Rebels? “Now that I’m recruiting interns, we definitely look at what you do on your own time,” she said. “If you can find the time to do outside projects, something that really interests you, do them.”
Jeremy Aguero
'97 BA Hospitality and '04 JD
Principal Analyst, Applied Analysis
Twitter: @AppliedAnalysis
How Mentorship Makes all the Difference

Jeremy Aguero holds a rare status: He’s a fourth-generation Las Vegan. He’s put his stamp on Nevada in the last decade through countless economic and fiscal policy studies that shaped legislative and development decisions for Silver State leaders. Aguero has won the “Good Government Award” from the Nevada Taxpayers Association and numerous other honors, including UNLV’s 2018 Fred C. Albrecht Outstanding Alumnus of the Year. But getting there began with the moment a UNLV professor took time to mentor him.

—Brian Sodoma

MENTORING IS A DAILY ACT

“There have been several instances during my life where I have benefited from unexpected kindness. Most often, this has come in the form of mentorship. Although, as I have gained experience, I have come to understand that countless acts of kindness — large and small, overt and obscured — have made all the difference in my life.”

EXTEND AN INVITATION

The late Shannon Bybee, founder of UNLV’s International Gaming Institute, was a powerful personal and professional mentor to Aguero. “My undergraduate career was marked by uncertainty. After taking a class or two from Dr. Bybee, he invited me to his office. He asked me about what I wanted to get out of college and what I wanted to do after it. He shared his successes and his failures, unabridged. He helped me find a path and then paved it with encouragement and expectation. Shortly after I graduated, Dr. Bybee made promise him that I would go to law school. I fulfilled that promise. He was right. It has made all the difference in my career.”

TAKE LEADERSHIP SERIOUSLY

“That’s the greatest gift Shannon gave me. He knew what happens if you don’t think about leadership as a service and just see it only as a position — you’ll never get the most out of anything you do.”

SAY “YES” ... A LOT

Aguero’s list of extracurriculars runs the gamut from coaching youth baseball to serving on the boards of organizations like Opportunity Village and Nevada Child Seekers. Plus, he delivers the hard truth about numbers to policymakers and business leaders in legislative hearings and keynote addresses around the state. “When you give an assignment, when you take on an intern, when you agree to teach a class at a college ... I like to say we have a default position of saying ‘yes’ to things in the community and constantly looking for an opportunity to leave the community better than how we found it.”

SET THE TONE FOR OTHERS TO MENTOR, TOO

His philosophy is simple: He wins when others win, whether it’s an employee, a nonprofit partner, or a client. “Seeing people grow and succeed, there’s nothing more fulfilling than that. ... It’s just as important for me, as a business owner, to develop and have people who are happy and productive members of the community at it is to have happy and productive employees of the company.”

DON’T MISS IT

With a new emphasis on bringing students and alumni together on campus, Homecoming Week has been revived with a full slate of signature events, including the Annual Alumni Awards and a campus carnival. Other events include such fundraisers as the Rebels Give campaign, the Andy Katz Memorial Golf Tournament, the Red Rebel 5K Color Run. And don’t forget to cheer the Rebels to victory at Sam Boyd Stadium Oct. 19.

unlv.edu/homecoming

THE KINDNESS OF REBELS

How did a platypus get one of our alums through medical school? Which grad found his passion for biology on the basketball court? And how is a “Missour’ya farm boy” planting the seeds to help the next generation grow?

The UNLV Alumni Association is honoring these Rebels on Oct. 18 during Homecoming week festivities. Read their stories about the moments someone helped them and how they’re paying it forward today.

unlv.edu/news/kindness

ASSOCIATION HONORS

Silver State Award: Mark L. Fine
Achievement in Service: Michael Gordon, ‘08 Master of Public Administration, ‘13 Ph.D. Public Administration
Outstanding Faculty: Business’ Bernard Malamud and Engineering’s Brendan O’Toole and Mohamed Trabia

COLLEGE ALUMNI OF THE YEAR

Allied Health: Dr. John J. Pierce, ‘98 BS Kinesiological Sciences
Business: Caroline Ciocca, ‘07 EMBA
Community Health Sciences: Dr. Charles Bernick, ‘11 MPH
Dental: Dr. Ashley Hoban, ‘09 DMD
Education: Wayne B. Nunnely, ‘75 BS Physical Education
Engineering: Mike Maier, ‘86 BS Computer Science
Fine Arts: Michael Del Gatto, ‘96 BS and ‘99 Master of Architecture
Graduate: Michael Gordon, ‘08 MPA and ‘13 PhD Public Administration
Honors: Paul Moradkhah, ‘03 BA English
Hospitality: David D. Ross, ‘95 BSBA Management and ‘05 MS Hotel Administration
Law: Brenda Weksler, ‘99 BA English and ‘02 JD
Liberal Arts: Jeanne Hamrick, ‘88 BA Psychology and ‘94 MS Educational Psychology
Nursing: Maileen Ulep-Reed, ‘09 BS Nursing, ‘15 MS Nursing Practice
Sciences: K. Bruce Jones, ‘95 PhD Biological Sciences
Urban Affairs: Judy Tudor, ‘94 BSW and ‘97 MSW
RebelAdventures
TRAVEL WITH FELLOW UNLV ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

**Cuba: Art, Culture, and People**
Feb. 17-25, 2019
$5,245

Cuba is vibrant, colorful, revolutionary. Encounter the Cuban people, music, and fascinating history on a meaningful eight-night journey.

**Cruise the Rhine River**
Jun. 24-Jul. 2, 2019
$2,995

Discover the enchanting Rhine Valley on a seven-night cruise. Choose from a variety of included excursions to make this journey your own unique trip. No single supplement!

**Holiday Markets Cruise: The Festive Rhine River**
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The Media Circus

How alumnus Sage Sammons learned to handle the media sideshow through the Golden Knights’ spectacular debut season.

On an early August day, Sage wasn’t even sure what state he was in. Probably Wyoming. Somewhere along the Idaho border, anyway, heading toward Utah. The Vegas Golden Knights were connecting with fans at youth events in the more far-flung parts of the empire. Sammons was riding the team bus, meeting journalists, and coordinating with players flying in and out of events.

Hectic, for sure, but after the Knights’ Stanley Cup Final run? No problem.

When the team began its inaugural season, practice days attracted maybe 15 journalists; by the end, Sammons was juggling requests from some 70 media outlets from as far away as Sweden, China, and, of course, Canada. “Once you get into the playoffs, the media coverage is just a different animal,” Sammons said. “It ramped up every single series, every single week. It’s been crazy, but it’s a fun kind of crazy.”

Like so many transplants, Sammons and the Knights players have turned Las Vegas into their community. “Having a rally point like a professional sports team can help shed that Sin City identity and, from what we’ve seen this year, it put Las Vegas on a platform to show the world that it is a community.”

That message solidified in the days after the Oct. 1 mass shooting rocked the city. Players visited hospitals and joined blood drives. Days later, their first home game started with a tribute to the victims, first responders, and trauma surgeons.

Between starting the season in tragedy and ending in jubilation, Sammons quickly learned how to navigate the deep waters with guidance from the Knights’ vice president of communications, Eric Tosi.

“I’ve had a year of experience going through the Stanley Cup Final,” he said. “I now have my own first-person account of what happened and what to expect. If we have a good year, it’s going to be unique. If we struggle, that’s where it’s going to be on me and my team to find the stories that keep the Golden Knights in the forefront of people’s minds.”

— Afsha Bawany, with Jason Scavone contributing

1970s

Russell B. Leavitt, ’78 BS History, received the Special Achievement Award from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). He is executive chairman of Telgian Holdings, a worldwide fire, security, and life safety consulting and engineering/design services firm. He chaired the restructuring task group for the NFPA’s benchmark standard for the design and installation of fire sprinkler systems. He lives in Phoenix.

Judy A. Cornelius, ’79 BA Criminal Justice, retired in 2011 from UNR, where she was associate director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming. She co-edited a number of books and collaborated in the design and execution of the executive development program for casino executives. Cornelius, who earned a BS in economics from UNR in 1987, is a proud aunt and great aunt. The Reno resident has a retirement gig handing out samples at a store and is amazed at how some people can behave for one-sixth of a free peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

1980s

Jim Luce, ’80 BS Hotel Administration, retired after a diverse career, including sales and marketing positions with Marriott, AmerisourceBergen, and Amneal Pharmaceuticals. He plans to expand his pursuits of skiing, mountain biking, ultimate disc, racquetball, travel, and photography; serve on some boards of directors; and do some consulting. He also intends to pass the level three sommelier certification. He and his wife have three grown children. The couple lives in Newport Beach, California.

Gregory W. Goussak, ’84 BS and ’94 MS Hotel Administration, is an investigative internal auditor for the Clark County Water Reclamation District and an adjunct faculty member at Ashford University and The Women’s College at Bay Park University in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 2009, he earned a doctor of business administration degree from the University of Phoenix. He lives in Henderson.

Herb Santos, ’85 BS Sociology, has been selected as the 2018 Trial Lawyer of the Year by the Nevada Justice Association. A 1991 graduate of the McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific, he lives in Reno.

Gregory M. Smith, ’86 BA and ’98 MA Criminal Justice, retired from public service in August, having served 21 years with the Nevada attorney general’s office and four years with the Clark County district attorney’s office. He is the father of Mark G. Smith, ’16 BA Criminal Justice.

Leon R. Symanski, ’87 BSBA Management, ’94 MPA and ’01 JD, is an attorney at Craig P. Kenny & Associates, practicing primarily in the
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areas of personal injury and workers' compensation. He played basketball for the Runnin' Rebels 1984-87 under coach Jerry Tarkanian. His hobbies include golf, music festivals, reading, sports, and thoroughbred horse racing. He is married to Lisa Gentile Symanski, ’87 BA Communication Studies. The couple lives in Henderson.

Tami Belt, ’88 BA Communication Studies, is the founder of Blue Cube Marketing Solutions. She also published Poetic Justice: Lessons of Love, Life & Relationships through Balboa Press. She has told the stories of companies, nonprofits, and individuals for 30 years through her work and considers publishing this book to be a “full-circle moment.” She says her hope is to inspire everyone to express themselves, no matter the medium.

Ronald Ellis, ’89 BS Hotel Administration, is senior vice president of internal audit for Eldorado Resorts. He has been with Eldorado and affiliated companies since 2010. He is working on a master’s in accountancy degree at UNR. His hobbies are miniature horses, swimming, and watching sports. He and his wife, Frances Pease Ellis, ’88 BS Hotel Administration, have two daughters, ages 15 and 13. The family lives in Reno.

1990s

Michelle Haniel Nelson, ’90 Bachelor of Liberal Studies, is an auditor for Costco Wholesale where she has worked for 15 years. She has taught a variety of classes through Henderson Parks and Recreation and served on its board. She participates in community theater. A graduate of the Henderson Citizens Police Academy, she also serves on several alumni committees for Chaparral High School. She and her husband, Aaron, have been married for almost 30 years and enjoy volunteering for the Komen Race for the Cure, Three Square, and other worthwhile causes. She has four children, the youngest of whom is a freshman in UNLV’s Honors College, and one granddaughter.

Dennis R. Gradillas, ’91 BS Hotel Administration, is vice president of operations for HumanGood, a not-for-profit organization that provides housing, healthcare, and supportive services to older adults. He competes in Ironman 70.2 events and coaches girls fast-pitch softball. He and his wife, Tami, and three young children live in Brentwood, California.

D. Alfred McDonald, ’91 BA Criminal Justice, is celebrating 23 years as a criminal defense attorney. Recently, he became a judge pro tempore in Marana, Arizona, Magistrate Court. He lives in Tucson.

Marilyn Ming, ’92 BA Communication Studies, retired from UNR in 2017 after 17 years as a marketing and public relations specialist. She also worked for a casino as a publicity manager and at a nonprofit as a marketing and development director.

John Santana, ’95 BS Communication Studies, saw his debut novel, Bastards of Young, released in May by Black Opal Books. In it, Nick Karena is lost in Sin City. He holds Los Angeles as some sort of utopia, until he meets a kilt-wearing, hearse-driving, drum-playing college freshman and begins to explore the world beyond the desert island that is Las Vegas. Santana lives in Nassau, New York.

Peter Arecio, ’96 BS Hotel Administration, was promoted to chief operating officer of San Manuel Casino in Highland, California. He joined the casino as chief marketing officer in 2015. Previously, he was vice president/chief marketing officer for the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community’s Casino Arizona and Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Tobias P. Moon, ’96 BS Philosophy, is a partner in the Dallas office of the Husch Blackwell law firm. Moon, who earned his law degree at Brooklyn Law School, advises banks, credit unions, financial technology firms, and online and automobile lenders on federal/state compliance issues in addition to product development and transactional matters. A noted speaker, Moon previously served in positions with major U.S. banks for more than eight years.

Angela K. Brown, ’97 BS Education-Recreation & Leisure Studies and ’10 BS Education-Workforce Education, works as a specialist coordinator assistant in the department of casino management at CSN. She is a spoken word poet and writer.

Timothy Gupton, ’97 BA Romance Languages, was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant for his research project, “Language Innovation in Oibaño Dominican Spanish,” in the Dominican Republic in fall 2018. An associate professor of Spanish linguistics at the University of Georgia, he lives in Athens.

Montgomery Paek, ’99 BA Criminal Justice and ’06 JD, an attorney in the Las Vegas office of Littler Mendelson, an employment and labor law firm, has been elevated to shareholder. He focuses on class actions, minimum wage and overtime, trade secrets and noncompetes, discrimination and harassment, and executive contract disputes. He is married to Mia Paek, ’07 MS Accounting, a CPA and auditor with Nevada Gaming Control. They have one daughter, Miranda.

Wendy Callahan Roksvold, ’99 BA Communication Studies, works at AppleOne as an accounting and engineering specialist. She is a hockey (goalie) mom and a hockey fanatic.

Dawn Nation Ward, ’99 BA Theatre Arts, passed the February 2018 California bar exam. She is licensed to practice law in California, Ohio, and Illinois and a professor of paralegal studies at Cerro Coso Community College. She lives in Ridgecrest, California.

2000s

Shane T. Boehmer, ’01 BS Civil Engineering, works for the Army Corp of Engineers. He spent December and January in Puerto Rico assisting in hurricane restoration for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He recently returned from Afghanistan where he was part of a program that provided structural inspections of existing buildings as well as design reviews for new construction on U.S. military bases. He lives in Millington, Tennessee.

Nancy Olson, ’01 BSBA Finance, recently joined Greines, Martin, Stein & Richland, a boutique appellate law firm in Los Angeles.

Alejandro Vervilos, ’01 JD, works for Aetna as health law counsel supporting Medicaid and Medicare plans. She lives in Phoenix.

Michele Lucero Villafranca, ’01 BSBA International Business, is a tenure-track assistant professor at California’s San Jose State University School of Information. She focuses on cultural diversity.

Eric Bradell, ’02 BS Hotel Administration, retired after eight years as the assistant hotel manager with the Air Force Space Coast Inn at Patrick Air Force Base in Cocoa Beach, Florida. He now lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Amanda Stevens, ’02 BSBA Finance and BSBA International Business, ’08 MBA, and ’15 JD, started Battle Born Capital. The company brokers high-quality, short-term real estate loans for its investors, secured by trust deeds on property in the Las Vegas Valley.

Megan Lane Neri, ’03 BA Communication Studies, is the director of communications for UNLV’s Lee Business School. Previously she worked at Imagine Communications, a full-service marketing and communication firm, where she began as an intern during her last year at UNLV.

Melissa Waite, ’03 BA Psychology, ’07 JD and ’07 MBA, joined the Las Vegas office of Dickinson Wright. Her practice focuses on licensing, compliance, and transactions with clients from the liquor, gaming, auto dealership, and transportation industries. She has become involved with emerging legal issues for medicinal and retail marijuana establishments. She is a member of the Alumni Leadership Circle and the Dean’s Council of the William S. Boyd School of Law.
Audrey J. Beeson, ‘04 BA Political Science and ‘07 JD, graduated from the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine University School of Law with an LLM in alternative dispute resolution. She has been selected as a mediator for the statewide juvenile dependency mediation program. Previously, she was a mediator-outsource provider for Nevada’s Eighth Judicial District Court.

Sonya Parrish Boun, ‘04 JD, is “of counsel” at Jackson Lewis. She lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Jeanne Williams Lambertsen, ‘04 JD, is a family law associate attorney with Webster and Associates. Raising, training, and showing whippets is her hobby.

Marisa Rodriguez, ‘04 BSBA International Business and ‘13 JD, an associate in the law firm of Weinberg Wheeler Hudgins Gunn & Dial, has been recognized in the 11th edition of Nevada Business Magazine’s Legal Elite. Her practice concentrates on complex litigation in construction, premises liability, product liability, labor and employment, transportation, and catastrophic injury.

Justin Veilleux, ‘04 BS Computer Engineering, is pursuing an MBA at UNLV. He has been with FEA Consulting Engineers for more than 10 years. He holds professional engineer certifications in both mechanical and electrical engineering. His projects have included Resorts World Las Vegas, the Cromwell Hotel Las Vegas and its Giada’s restaurant and Drai’s nightclub, TopGolf Las Vegas, Downtown Grand Casino, Tivoli Village, Mandalay Bay Convention Center expansion, and MGM Grand Convention Center expansion.

John Piro, ‘05 BA Criminal Justice and ‘10 JD, celebrated his sixth year as a public defender and now serves as chief deputy public defender for Clark County. He was part of the 2018 Leadership Las Vegas class. In April, he completed his first triathlon. He is married to Leslie Nino Piro, ’06 BA Political Science, ‘09 JD.

Linda Manley Darling, ’06 BS Education, is a stock market investor. For the last three years, she has been traveling across the United States and Canada. Her hobbies include attending the theater and Tri-City Americans hockey games. She lives in Kennewick, Washington.

Evangelin “Evie” Lee, ’06 JD, joined the Aerospace Corp. in April. She focuses on government contracts, real estate, and construction law. Previously, she was deputy general counsel at an international humanitarian organization and a litigator for a construction and government contracts law firm. She is a member of the state bars of Nevada, Maryland, Michigan, and the District of Columbia. She lives in Santa Monica, California.

Stephanie Sibley, ’06 BA Psychology, is with Realty Executives Southern Nevada Properties. In 2008, she and her ex-husband founded the Sibley Family Foundation. In 2011, she was inducted into the Cleveland Clinic 1921 Society. She received an award from the Clark County Pro Bono Project for her support in seeing that all people have access to attorneys. She has served on the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth Board and the Nevadans for Background Checks Advisory Board. As a Keep Memory Alive board member, she’s chaired its committee for the annual Power of Love Gala. In 2009, she founded Nevada Legal Support Services, which has grown into one of the largest process serving companies in the state. She is a workout fanatic and hiker. The parent of three children, she lives in Henderson.

Erika “Rikki” Tanenbaum, ’06 Master of Hotel Administration, joined San Manuel Casino in Highland, California, as its chief marketing officer. Her job involves helping transform the casino by driving growth and using customer-focused relationship marketing. Previously, she led marketing teams at MGM Resorts International, Walker Digital Gaming, Caesars Entertainment, and Landry’s Golden Nugget Casinos.

Melissa Corral, ’07 BSBA International Business and ‘14 JD, began working as an immigration attorney at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada in April.

Danielle Crouch, ’07 BS Kinesiology along with her partner, Alan Katz, opened Jammyland Cocktail Bar and Reggae Kitchen in the downtown Las Vegas Arts District. House in an old auto garage, Jammyland has big patios with a stage for live performances as well as a smoking patio with a thoughtful cigar selection. She previously worked on the Strip and in New York, and she ran a cocktail bar in California. She lists wining, dining, hiking, driving, and exploring as her hobbies.

Aaron MacDonald, ’07 BA Political Science and ‘11 JD, is a lawyer at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. Soccer, flyfishing, snowboarding, traveling, and cooking are his hobbies.

Amanda Litt, ’08 BA Communication Studies, is an attorney. A 2011 graduate of the Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, she opened the Litt Law Firm with her father in 2013. Her cases include family law, personal injury, elder abuse and neglect, business formation, contract matters, and landlord/tenant disputes. She and a partner started the nonprofit Children’s Literacy Project in Las Vegas. She sits on the business board of the Las Vegas-based startup Urban Seed, a food production science and technology company. Her hobbies include running, reading, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

Bryan S. Moody, ’08 BA History, joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 2016. He carries a diplomatic passport, is a contracting officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development, and was stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. He is married to Katerina Madarkova Moody, ’16 BA Psychology, who also carries a diplomatic passport. She is completing a degree in neuroscience at King’s College in London. The couple has two daughters, Scarlett and Caroline. Bryan Moody says they are a long way from Southern Nevada but never will forget their Las Vegas roots.

James Robertson, ’08 MBA and ’08 JD, a partner at Downey Brand, was named 2018 Top Lawyer by Sacramento Magazine. Attorneys throughout the region participated in the voting, recommending colleagues in more than 50 legal disciplines.

While changing careers is nothing new these days, Gustavo Lopez’s shift has had a little more flourish than most. Lopez, ’04 BS Architecture, went on to get his master’s degree at Washington University in St. Louis before launching his architectural career in Seattle. A study abroad session, however, had taken him to Barcelona, Spain, where he discovered flamenco and began studying guitar on his own. In 2014, he released his first album, Punto Lejano. He landed a prestigious Fulbright arts fellowship to study at the Cristina Heeren Foundation of Flamenco Art in Spain in 2017–18. He recently launched a website with his interviews of flamenco artists.
Ryan Brunty, ’09 BA Journalism and Media Studies, is a Las Vegas-based visual artist. In 2012, he founded Depressed Monster, a lifestyle brand that was the first of its kind to donate a portion of proceeds to mental health agencies to fight the stigma around the conversation of mental illness. He developed the company after the passing of his grandfather led to a self-portrait character that came to be known as Yerman. The character can be found on murals throughout Las Vegas and was featured in popular television shows such as America’s Next Top Model. Brunty shares his story through speaking engagements with such organizations as the Clinton Foundation, Jed Foundation, The Moth, and PeaceLovel. Depressed Monsters has raised thousands of dollars for mental health agencies.

Gabrielle Angle, ’10 JD, has a new job as a compliance analyst with Scientific Games.

Edward Bobbett, ’10 MS Hotel Administration, is enjoying his second year in Boston after being promoted to assistant director of rooms at the Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor. He also is a captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserve at Westover Air Reserve Base. He lives in Revere.

Michael S. Gobaud, ’10 BA Philosophy, ’14 JD, started Gobaud Law, a personal injury law firm, in 2017. His hobbies include power lifting, dance, drums, atheist activism, and comedy.

Mikayla Whitmore, ’10 BFA Art, is an artist based in Las Vegas who was selected as the best photographer in the city by Desert Companion. She completed artist residencies at both the Cosmopolitan (2015) and the Neon Museum (2016). Her work has appeared at the Torrence Art Museum in California; the Humble Arts Foundation in New York; and in two of UNLV’s museums, the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery and the Marjorie Barrick Museum [see one of her works, p27]. Commercial clients include Vice, Thrillist, The Wall Street Journal, and ESPN. Road trips, rock hunting in the desert, and thrift store treasure hunting are among her hobbies.

Alicia Kliner, ’11 JD, and her husband welcomed a son in 2017. The family lives in Arlington, Virginia.

David Klink, ’11 JD, is an attorney who is opening a second office location in Glendale, Arizona, focusing on plaintiff’s personal injury law and healthcare licensing board representation for doctors and nurses. He and his wife have an 18-month-old daughter, Evie, and are expecting their second child in October. They live in Phoenix.

Lisa Segler, ’11 Master of Public Health, married Kristofer Segler, ’17 BS Electrical Engineering, in January. In March, she became director of senior hunger programs at Three Square Food Bank. She is president-elect of the Nevada Public Health Association and will serve a three-year term. In 2017, she graduated from Las Vegas’ premier leadership program, Leadership Las Vegas. She is pursuing a doctoral degree in public health at UNLV. Her hobbies include volunteering with the Junior League of Las Vegas; traveling with her husband; and taking their dog, Charlie, to the dog park. The couple lives in Henderson.

George C. Sovich, ’11 BS Architecture, is vice president of Friedmutter Group in Las Vegas. In 2013, he earned a master’s degree in architecture from USC. Golf and hiking are his hobbies.

Thomas W. Stewart, ’11 BA Political Science, ’13 Master of Public Administration and ’16 JD, is an associate at the law firm of Marquis Aurbach Coffing. He previously served as a law clerk to Nevada Supreme Court Justice Mark Gibbons.
Kenneth Dalton, professor of accounting, died in April. He came to UNLV in 2014 and was teaching accounting information systems. The California native earned his doctoral degree in accounting from the University of Kansas.

Lawrence Golding, professor emeritus of kinesiology, died May 14. A UNLV distinguished professor, he joined the faculty in 1976. The South Africa native served as executive director of the Southwest Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and was editor-in-chief of the ACSM Health and Fitness Journal. In 2016, he was inducted into the YMCA Hall of Fame. He retired from UNLV in 2013 at the age of 87.

John Horvath, professor emeritus of criminal justice, died May 20. He died on his 81st birthday, having celebrated with a shot of Maker’s Mark whiskey and Frank Sinatra’s version of Fly Me to the Moon. He came to UNLV in 1970 to join its newly created criminal justice program, planning to stay just a few years. He retired in 2003.

Teresa Jordan, professor emeritus of educational leadership, died June 3. She joined the UNLV faculty in 1990 and retired in 2011. She served as both interim dean and associate dean of the College of Education and as chair of the department of educational leadership.

Helena Lagos, a student majoring in international business with a minor in global entrepreneurship, died April 9 in an airplane crash in Arizona. The Honduran native was executive director of the Rebel Venture Fund, a student-run group that invests in businesses throughout Southern Nevada. A world traveler, she was trilingual.

Robert Mendenhall, a prominent donor, died June 2. His family led the funding campaign for the Mendenhall Innovation Program and the Mendenhall Innovation & Design Laboratory in the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering. He was the founder of Las Vegas Paving Corp. and helped fund both the Mendenhall Innovation Program and the Mendenhall Innovation & Design Laboratory in the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering. He held more than 50 patents and was inducted into the Nevada Inventors Hall of Fame by the Lee School of Business and into UNLV’s Academy of Engineering. UNLV bestowed an honorary doctorate on him in 2006.

P. Owen Benito, ’12 JD, is an intellectual property attorney who is a California candidate for the U.S. Senate. Surfing is his hobby. He lives in Pacifica, California.

Nadine Edwards, ’12 BS Hotel Administration, works for the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. A member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard, she is preparing for deployment in November. In the span of three months, she was promoted to the rank of captain in the U.S. Air Force and graduated with her master’s degree in instructional design from the University of Massachusetts-Boston. She and her husband, Josiah, recently completed a 6,000-mile road trip in their renovated 1997 RV. They live in Alexandria, Virginia.

Colin Seale, ’12 JD, is the founder and CEO of thinkLaw, a company that teaches critical thinking skills using legal cases. Fairy tales and nursery rhymes are used to teach students in kindergarten through second grades because there are many shades in children’s literature. The company operates in 11 states, including Nevada, and has impacted more than 200,000 students since launching in 2015.

Christian “Dane” Terry, ’12 BS Gaming Management and ’16 BSBA Finance, works for a commercial real estate firm with a focus on retail properties. He represents buyers/sellers, landlords, and tenants. His hobbies are golf and baseball. He also enjoys trading in the markets, primarily equities and derivatives.

Jamie Bichelman, ’13 BA Psychology, is a public information officer and department spokesperson for a government agency in Carson City. He is wrapping up a master’s degree, has learned a new language, and has become an advocate for a vegan and animal cruelty-free lifestyle. Proceeds from his photo shoots go to organizations assisting victims of domestic violence. He enjoys running and hiking.

Ann Goldes-Sheahan, ’13 JD, is the equal justice coordinator for the State Bar of Montana. She is married to Brandon Sheahan, ’13 DDM. The couple lives in Helena.

Marjorie Vielka Landron, ’13 BA Interdisciplinary Studies, is the CEO of The Healing Tree Wellness Center, a behavioral and mental health center; CEO of The Healing Tree-Regenerative Therapies, a stem cell and IV hydration clinic; and CEO of Power Moves, BT, a nonprofit designed to raise funds for people in need of medical advancements that are not covered by insurance. She also is co-partner of Information Opportunities, a consultation firm focused on catering to business needs in insurance, medical, or behavioral necessities. She also has earned a master’s degree in social work and is a doctoral student at Arizona State University. She received a Rising Star award in 2016 from the National Association of Social Workers. She enjoys Reiki, meditation, and playing poker.

Mary Leon Vail, ’13 MBA, recently accepted a six-month volunteer assignment with Bankers without Borders to work with a social enterprise, EcoZoom, based in Kenya.

Sarah Beeman Bussmann, ’14 Master of Health Care Administration, is vice president of clinical program integration for P3 Health Partners. She is active with the School of Community Health Sciences Alumni Chapter and recently participated in its service event at Three Square Food Bank. Working in partnership with the Nevada Public Health Association, the group networked while completing more than 600 boxes of food for senior citizens.

Melissa Polsenberg Chytry, ’14 JD, is an associate attorney at Hurtik Law & Associates. She and her husband, Stephan Chytry, ’02 BA Communication Studies, welcomed a baby girl in July 2017. The family lives in Henderson.

Steve Williamson, ’14 BS Hotel Administration, is an event designer at By Dzign.

Brittany Birnbaum Young, ’14 JD, is an attorney with Craig P. Kenny & Associates.

Lee H. Gorlin, ’15 JD, began working for McCormick, Barstow, Shepard, Wayte & Carruth as an associate attorney late last year.

Michael Reed, ’15 JD, works for Watton Law Group, a consumer bankruptcy firm, as debtor’s counsel. He lives in Layton, Utah.

Jordan Hollander, ’16 LLM Gaming Law and Regulation, recently was elected to serve as the chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association, Casino Law Section for the 2018-19 term. He lives in Branchburg.

Tongyu Zhang, ’16 BS Hotel Administration, joined TAL Education Corp. in Beijing, China, as a specialized consultant. Previously, he worked as a duty manager at both the Marriott and Starwood hotels in Beijing. He enjoys working with students interested in studying abroad. He is studying English interpretation via an online degree program at Beijing Foreign Study University.

Mike Branum, ’17 JD, accepted a senior associate position with Gallian, Welker, and Beckstrom in Saint George, Utah. On April 25, he married Lisa Marie Dunn. They spent three weeks driving around southern Germany for their honeymoon.

David Schugar, ’17 BA Philosophy, says philosophy, guitar, and golf are his hobbies. He is the father of Lauren Schugar, ’02 BA Communication Studies.
"In order to reach my full potential, I continuously challenge myself and push my limits. How else am I supposed to know what I am capable of if I do not try?"

-Crystal Panganiban, Marketing Major
Christopher Wicker  
’85 BS Geology

“(The late) Lonnie Spight, at the start of my first physics class, wrote an algebra equation on his chalkboard. He then told the class, ‘If you could not solve it, it is because you do not understand either algebra or English. Both are necessary to succeed in this class.’ He encouraged those students to take those classes first then return ready to learn physics. About 15 students walked out. Dr. Spight did a great service by making sure we were prepared for the rigors of his course. Since that day, I always made sure my soldiers, and now my students, know exactly what skills they must be proficient in before attempting any mission, project, or lesson.”

Wicker teaches Junior ROTC in Taylor, Michigan. He retired from the U.S. Army after serving as the chief of market intelligence for U.S. Army Recruiting Command. He commanded a battalion of 890 soldiers in Iraq and the garrison of White Sands Missile Range, and managed the construction of a large base camp in Northern Afghanistan in 2012. He raised two girls in 10 different states and in Europe. Building motorcycles, kendo, and ballroom dancing are among his hobbies. In a 2016 Strongman competition in Kentucky, he won the 175-pound division.

Constance Burrell-Escobar  
‘93 BS Hotel Administration

“As Henry Melton [’78 BS Hotel Administration and UNLV Football Hall of Famer] taught hotel marketing and was kind enough to mention scholarships I should apply for. I received those funds until I finished my bachelor’s degree. I pay the kindness forward every time I speak with youngsters on their way to college. I advise them to talk with professors and be inquisitive about finding opportunities within the college experience.”

Burrell-Escobar is a school librarian in Phoenix. She is studying for a master of special education degree at Grand Canyon University. Previously, she worked in various hotel/restaurant management positions in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. In her spare time, she runs a local Boys & Girls Club kitchen, enters writing competitions, and exhibits at art shows. She has two children, Justin, 13, and Nicole, 11.
Luke Cavener

’05 BA Political Science
’05 BA Journalism and Media Studies

“[Political Science] professor Jerry Simich went to bat for me as a sophomore when I got an internship with Sen. John Ensign’s office. I had contacted the senator on my own, so the department wasn’t keen about my dropping classes and honoring credits for the internship. Jerry argued that I should be rewarded for my motivation. His kindness resulted in a transformative experience that has forever changed my life. Now I try to bring on interns whenever possible.”

Cavener is director of government relations for the American Cancer Society’s Cancer Action Network and a member of the Meridian (Idaho) City Council. He also serves as a mentor to the Boise Young Professionals and works with high school students through the Meridian Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council. He and his wife, Adrean, have two children, Gunner and Lincoln.

Salvatore Semola

’81 BS Hotel Administration

“I worked full time while attending UNLV to help pay for school. Someone informed me about a financial assistance program supported by donors, and I was fortunate to obtain a stipend of $500. While that may not seem like a lot of money, I was always grateful. Now that I can return the favor, I do and I encourage all alumni to give back whether it be financially or with your time.”

Semola oversees the operation and master plan for Gun Lake Casino in Michigan. Previously, he was president of Cornerstone Gaming and served as an adjunct professor at UNLV. He established the Salvatore P. Semola Scholarship for hospitality. He lives in Wayland.

Lisa Griffith Story

’84 BA Communication Studies

“Journalism professor Barbara Cloud gave me some tough love. She graded me particularly hard, and when I confronted her and noted other students were not being held to the same standard, she said that was because she knew I was skating through her class. She was correct and it taught me to push myself harder in my profession.”

Story is the communication services manager at the Las Vegas Valley Water District and Southern Nevada Water Authority. She appeared in a documentary about her uncle, Walter Peca (aka Reca), titled D.B. Cooper: The Real Story, and is mentioned in a book on the same topic by Carl Laurin. Épée fencing is her hobby. Both her daughters also have attended UNLV. Kaili Story, ’11 BA Dance, obtained her MFA from Northwestern University earlier this year and is the lighting supervisor for Hubbard Street Dance in Chicago. Sydney Peca Story is a senior theatre major and the recipient of a Child of Alumni Scholarship.
Two decades ago, 48 states in the union could boast of at least one law school within their borders. The two that couldn’t? Alaska and Nevada. But at 8 a.m. on a sweltering Monday in August 1998, that number was sliced in half when the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law welcomed 77 full-time students to its Introduction to Law course. (Another 65 part-time students would take the class that night.)

Alas, there was no ceremonial ribbon-cutting outside the new law school’s building. Because, well, there was no actual law school building. For the first several weeks, the charter class was shoehorned into rooms on the main campus while a somewhat more suitable home was readied across Tropicana Avenue.

The recently vacated (and highly antiquated) Paradise Elementary School looked like anything but paradise when renovation crews began a rapid makeover. They removed playground equipment, turned the cafeteria into a library reading lounge, and replaced the desks, chairs and, yes, even urinals that were sized for kids.

The 1950s buildings remained the law school’s home for four years and two graduating classes. Under the leadership of founding Dean Richard Morgan, Boyd in its early years attracted high-caliber applicants and top-notch faculty, despite the less-than-impressive environs.

Some 20 years and nearly 2,400 graduates later, the school boasts the nation’s top legal-writing program and 10th-ranked dispute resolution program. What’s more, Boyd offers the country’s only masters of law degree in gaming law and has turned out multiple alums now impacting Nevada as legislators and judges.

In August 2002, UNLV’s Division of Educational Outreach moved onto the Paradise Campus as Boyd took over the much more spacious and newly renovated buildings of UNLV’s old library. To the 361 current full-time students and 47 full-time faculty now at the school, it’s the ideal modern setting in which to study the complexities and permutations of the law. To those who first rolled the dice on Boyd back in 1998, well, they’d probably still call the place paradise.

— Matt Jacob

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