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UNLV Magazine

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On a More Personal Note:
A Profile of UNLV President Carol C. Harter

Back to School:
UNLV's Innovative Teacher-Education Programs

Checking Out the New Lied Library
Thank you to all alumni and friends who contributed to UNLV through the Fall 2000 Rebel Ring Phonathon!

UNLV appreciates your outstanding response to calls by current students – your growing support benefits the University greatly!

Alumni and friends generously pledged more than $106,000 to strengthen academic programs, provide student services, and fund scholarships for the coming year. Your support will also help UNLV plan and prepare for its new Summerlin campus.

Thank you for contributing to the future of UNLV!

For questions about the Rebel Ring Phonathon or Annual Fund, please contact the UNLV Foundation at (702) 895-3641.
The Roads Less Traveled

UNLV alumnus Ron Kachel could have chosen the hotel industry career he had mapped out for himself. But his love of the outdoors, his entrepreneurial spirit, and his desire for adventure took him down a different path.

BY LAURIE FRUTH

Check It Out!

UNLV's new Lied Library has opened its doors. With its striking architecture and cutting-edge technology, the $55.3 million facility is being hailed as the new heart of the campus and a valuable community resource.

BY DIANE RUSSELL

On A More Personal Note

We know her as the first woman president of UNLV. But what do we know about Carol Harter herself? In this candid account of her life, Harter talks about the individuals who encouraged her, the challenges she faced, and the opportunities that led her to the presidency of UNLV.

BY SUZAN DIBELLA

Back to School

UNLV has doubled the number of its College of Education graduates in just five years, in part due to several innovative teacher-education programs. Find out how these programs helped four Southern Nevadans go back to school—first as students, then as teachers.

BY BETTY BLODGETT
UNLV Appoints Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka to Faculty

Nobel Prize-winning playwright Wole Soyinka has been appointed to UNLV's recently established Endowed Chair of Creative Writing, a position created through a donation from business leader Glenn Schaeffer.

Schaeffer's donation and pledges, which will help UNLV establish one of the finest creative writing programs in the country, will create an Institute of Modern Writing.

In addition, fellowships for superb writing students, a lecture series, prizes to school teachers and talented high school students, and programs at UNLV for local high school students, will be provided as part of the donation.

"Bill was always there to speak during Career Days," said Fred Albrecht, vice president of university and community affairs, Elizabeth Donley of the Greenspun College of Culinary Affairs, and Jay Brown, said that "This is excellent news not only for those of us at UNLV, but for the citizens of Nevada as well. Our program will help provide physical therapists for rural and underserved areas throughout the state."
UNLV is offering several new degree programs, including three new doctorates. The doctoral degree program in special education is designed to prepare its students for leadership positions in the special education field, including university faculty positions. It features an intensive research component.

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UNLV alumnus Ron Kachel could have chosen the hotel industry career he had mapped out for himself. But his love of the Southern Nevada outdoors, his entrepreneurial spirit, and his penchant for adventure took him down a different path—and into some serious success.

BY LAURIE FRAUH

WHEN RON KACHEL MOVED TO Las Vegas to attend UNLV's William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, he thought he had his future pretty well charted. He figured he'd graduate from college with a degree in hotel, land a job with a major property in Las Vegas, and then steadily work his way up the corporate ladder. That was the plan—and for a while it seemed as if everything was falling into place.

He received his hotel degree in 1993 with an emphasis in travel and tourism and landed a job at the newly opened MGM Grand Hotel. A short time later he took a position as sales manager at the New York, New York and began building a reputation around town as an enthusiastic and energetic group sales organizer.

But while all outward appearances suggested that he was becoming the hotel professional he had planned to become, in his heart Kachel knew that the path he was on was not for him. So just three years after graduating from college, he chucked his plan, said goodbye to his weekly paycheck, and set out to build his dream—a tour business specializing in off-road excursions into the Southern Nevada desert.

He knew the odds were against him; new businesses fail as often as they succeed, and Las Vegas already had a number of established tour companies offering trips to Red Rock Canyon, Valley of Fire, and Hoover Dam. But Kachel believed that visitors to Las Vegas were looking for more than just a bus trip to Hoover Dam or a quick jaunt out to Red Rock. He wanted to offer visitors what he himself had longed for when he came to Nevada: an opportunity to experience the beauty and solitude of the Southern Nevada desert.

"I grew up in New York, surrounded by people and buildings," Kachel explains. "So when I moved here, I couldn't wait to explore the wide-open spaces of the desert. I spent hours in my Jeep exploring trails at Red Rock and Valley of Fire. I'd get lost, find my way out, and, in the process, discover hidden treasures—pictographs, interesting rock formations, great views.
spent his days as tour guide, driving the 28-mile route, answering questions about the area, pointing out interesting rock formations, and passing for picture-taking. His evenings were filled with preparing brochures, studying financial statements, and planning marketing strategies.

The days were long, but Kachel says that having to take responsibility for nearly every aspect of the business taught him some valuable lessons. For example, he says that his own tour guide served him well when his business expanded and he was able to hire people to lead the tours.

"It sounds like an easy and fun job, but it really is hard work and not everyone is cut out for it," Kachel explained. "You're driving for eight to 12 hours a day, dealing with a range of personalities and people, some of whom don't have a lot to say. You have to be able to talk to your customers."

A love of the outdoors or even knowledge of the area is not enough. Kachel recalls one tour he led for a family of four. "The only one who spoke English was the 6-year-old son. So I spent eight hours talking to a 6-year old, praying that he was translating something close to what I was saying."

Another lesson Kachel learned is that people lining up to experience the first tour he developed: a 28-mile trek through the Moapa Indian Reservation, the Hidden Valley, and the Valley of Fire, all located to the north of Las Vegas.

But Kachel says the first year was a challenge for the entire family. His mother, Mary, his wife, Loretta, and his son, Tim, helped him with reservations and billing. But even with their help, Kachel found himself working 18-hour days just to keep the business going. He

spent his days as tour guide, driving the 28-mile route, answering questions about the area, pointing out interesting rock formations, and passing for picture-taking. His evenings were filled with preparing brochures, studying financial statements, and planning marketing strategies.

Today, Kachel oversees an operation that serves approximately 1,400 customers a week, employs 22 guides, and offers a broad range of tours to a number of locations, including Hoover Dam, the West Rim of the Grand Canyon, and the Hualapai Indian Reservation.

Kachel's business handles approximately 1,400 customers each week. Tours are conducted seven days a week by 22 specially trained adventure guides. Thirty additional employees handle the day-to-day tasks of running the Henderson-based office while Kachel tends to the business of expanding the operation into new markets, including several in other countries. He is working to better establish the ATV Action Tours offices he recently opened in Australia, Italy, and Germany. And when he's not traveling the world, Kachel is busy dreaming up new tours and ideas to entice customers. He's currently investigating the possibility of offering "premier class" service on various tours and providing extended day tours to the Grand Canyon and other locales.

Kachel says he is often asked how big he wants his business to get.

"I don't have a good answer to that question. I know I don't want to get too big. I know people won't have a good experience on a tour of 60 people. I don't want to compromise on customer service."

And for those who crave a bit more excitement, his business offers whitewater rafting and wave-running -- two of the more vigorous tours offered. But the bread and butter of his operation is not the off-road adventures; the more traditional and sedate trips to places such as the Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam are.

"To be competitive in this business, you have to give the customers what they want," Kachel explains. "If we had stuck with the four-hour tours to the Valley of Fire, we wouldn't be here today."

Being in tune with what the customers want has enabled Kachel to build a business that has surpassed his early goals. And his efforts have not gone unnoticed. In the past few years, two new tour businesses offering off-road adventures have opened. But Kachel isn't worried.

"They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," he says. "Competitors create a greater awareness of the service, and that's good for all of us." Further acknowledgment of the business's success has come in the form of two honors Kachel has received from the state of Nevada. In 1997 and again in 2000, he was awarded the Nevada State Tourism Development Award for his success in promoting tourism in the state.

Although he is obviously proud to have received the awards, Kachel is too modest to boast about them. But those who work with him say these awards are a tribute to his hard work, business savvy, and sense of adventure.

"I'm just pleased to be able to promote the beauty and wonder of Nevada to the rest of the world," he says.

Kachel adds that he's just lucky to have a family who supported his dreams, lucky to live in an area rich in history and resplendent in vista, and lucky to be able to make a living doing what he loves. —

MAGAZINE

When he's not working in one of his recently opened offices in Australia, Italy, or Germany, Kachel spends time in his Henderson-based office dreaming up new tours and ideas to entice customers.
Students are busy working on laptop computers in an academic library designed specifically for the electronic age and featuring hundreds of computer workstations. Members of the public are browsing through the row upon row of books, looking for the ones that will provide the information they seek.

Faculty members are obtaining research-related items from the cutting-edge robotic storage and retrieval system.

People are camped out in easy chairs, open books resting on their laps, taking a moment to enjoy the view of nearby mountains.

First-time visitors are stopping as they enter the front doors and pausing to gaze up into the heights of the impressive five-story atrium.

Today, these are the sights Dean of Libraries Ken Marks sees when he walks through UNLV's new $55.3 million Lied Library.

For Marks, these sights are truly a dream come true.

For months and months preceding the Lied's opening in January, Marks walked through the structure on nearly a daily basis, checking and rechecking the innumerable details that go into building and furnishing a
The dramatic entrance of the new Lied Library features an enormous wall of windows that runs the entire height of the five-story atrium.

And what he sees is a facility that he believes ranks among the best. “In terms of physical plant, the physical facility, the library is one of the best in the country,” Marks says. “I think this makes a strong statement about the university’s commitment to academics. And certainly I think that’s been confirmed by the actions that the president and the provost have taken in terms of providing us with additional staff positions and other support.”

While the James R. Dickinson Library has done a yeoman’s job of serving as the place in Southern Nevada to do academic research for the past 40 years or so, it has been more than stretched to its limits for many years, says Marks, who arrived at UNLV in 1997.

Built for an age of card catalogs and typewriters, the Dickinson was remodeled and expanded over the years and was adapted to accommodate an era of computers and e-books. But it was a strain for the old, two-building, 160,000-square-foot Dickinson, which first opened as a small one-story facility in 1961.

At UNLV, as at most universities and colleges around the nation, the library staff faced and met many challenges as it worked diligently to try to make the aging physical plant serve the needs of today’s students.

At a time when UNLV librarians and administrators were wondering how much longer they would be able to make the library continue to accommodate rapidly changing technological demands, the Lied Foundation Trust, through its trustee, Christina Hixon, offered UNLV $15 million to build a new library – on the condition that the state provide the majority of funding for the project.

The state took the Lied Foundation Trust up on its offer, providing $40.3 million toward the project. Today, the result is not only a new building, equipped with the latest in library technology, but a new academic hub for the university and for Southern Nevada.

When ground was broken in 1998 for construction of the Lied, UNLV President Carol C. Harter pointed out that a university’s library is, in many ways, its heart. “No other single building is as important to the academic, scholarly endeavor,” she said. “The Lied Library will be used by faculty and students, as well as by members of the community, to advance their education and conduct research. With the assistance of Christina Hixon and the Lied Foundation Trust, as well as the unprecedented support of the governor and the Nevada Legislature, we are building a library that will help UNLV reach its goal of attaining national recognition for the quality of its research, creative, and scholarly activities.”

Marks says that one of the most valuable aspects of the Lied is that it is designed to handle the needs of scholars – be they students, faculty, or community members – not only now, but well into the future. “I think one of the hidden aspects of the Lied is that it’s a building designed for the electronic environment, and it will be years before we have to begin to worry about, ‘Are we able to handle the changes in electronic technology?’ My guess is that the Lied Library will be sufficient for the campus for maybe 30 years plus. And who knows what the environment 30 years from now is going to be?” Marks asks. “The one thing we can guarantee: It’s going to be different from what we’ve got today.”

Getting to “today” wasn’t always a smooth path for the Lied Library.

Along the way were a variety of problems – including the discovery of water beneath the construction site, the discovery of mold in the building caused by water seepage, and the finding that some parts of the building had not been properly designed in terms of their weight-bearing capacities.

But, Marks says, each of those problems was solved during the construction process. And, Marks – who is no stranger to large library construction projects, having overseen the construction and renovation of a 300,000-square-foot library at East Carolina University in North Carolina and having worked on other major library projects – says that problems are to be expected when one is working on such a large project.

There’s no construction project that doesn’t have its challenges. It’s just the nature of the beast,” he says. “The odds are not in your favor that you’re going to go through a job without some kind of problem.” But now that the construction problems have been solved and the building is open, let’s take a verbal tour, courtesy of Marks, of that new heart of the university known as the Lied Library.

Designed by Leo A. Daly Architects of Omaha, Neb., and Welles/Puglise Architects of Las Vegas and built by Tibesar Construction Co., the architecturally interesting building is three stories high on its south side and five on its north side. An enormous atrium rises from the ground floor to the full five-story height.

In addition to the impressive atrium, the feature most likely to catch the attention of those entering the library, Marks says, is the information commons.

“This is a grouping of 96 workstations that are available to any registered library user who comes into the building,” he says. “Our community users will be able to get access to the on-line catalog and to the Internet, while students, faculty, and staff can get access to the on-line catalog, the Internet, electronic databases, full text databases, campus computing resources, and, in some instances, access to multimedia resources.”

On the first floor of the south side of the building is the administrative office. To the north on the same floor is another Research and Information section, this one containing government publications, bound periodicals from 1992 to the present, the microform collection, and current periodicals.

Upstairs on the third floor are the Honors College, the graduate study area, and the faculty study area. The circulating book collection fills most of the floors three through five on the north side. Special Collections also occupy part of the third floor.

“Special Collections contains unique, rare, and difficult-to-find materials about Las Vegas, the gaming industry, Nevada, and the Southwest,” Marks explains. One of the primary ways in which UNLV students will benefit from the new library is in terms of the number of electronic resources available to them. There are 250 of them – roughly five times the number in the Dickinson Library where demand was so great that students often had difficulty finding an open workstation.
The new library also boasts a media distribution center through which electronic media, such as videos, can be transmitted into specially equipped group-study rooms, he says. A class may, for example, request that a particular video version of the play be shown in a reserved group-study room at a given time. The library staff will then broadcast the video into that room allowing users to convert microfilm images to electronic ones. The users can then cut and paste, send to rumor and opinion, the information into the computer.

A class studying Hamlet, for example, can request to receive the video in a study area of the third and fourth floors over winter break. The robotic retrieval system does is house the library's regular book collection, Marks explains. The patron then checks the on-line system for the item you're looking for, there's the greatest likelihood of what is called "serendipitous discovery," he says. "You're looking for one book, you find another nearby that provides just what you're looking for."

The man behind the name

The Lied Automatic Storage and Retrieval (LASR) System houses little-used materials in a readily available, space-saving manner.

Well trained to help people understand how you discern what has value and what doesn't," he says, adding that he hopes the community comes to look upon the Lied as a resource providing access to information and knowledge not available elsewhere. "While it's a given that the Lied Library will be the heart of UNLV academic programs, the library has a major role in the community as well," Marks says. "The Lied Library is a community resource providing access to information and knowledge not available elsewhere. It's a high school student, business person, or retiree who the Lied Library can be a resource for all members of the community."

Marks says one of the many positive aspects of the Lied Library is its dedication to serving the public - a goal that Harter mentioned in his comments at the time of the groundbreaking.

One way in which the Lied Library can benefit the community, Marks says, is in the role it can play in the economic diversification effort.

It's fascinating to be in an academic library in Nevada at a time when there is great concern about the economic development of the state," he says. "I think it's fair to say that if you look at Silicon Valley, if you look at the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, or if you look at Route 128 in the Boston area, all of those very dynamic economic growth areas are characterized by superb research libraries. They also happen to be affiliated with superb research universities, but the role that a library plays in economic development as a core function, I think, commonly overlooked. Clearly, access to the most current information has a value. People often forget that. They forget to quantify it because it's difficult to do so. But nevertheless, it's a factor."

"I'd like to think that the Lied Library is going to allow us to have a more important role in the community as it has been placed with UNLV for the past million dollars, that his entire estate was to be placed in a charitable trust for educational purposes and for the benefit of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas."

The Lied Foundation Trust has helped fund numerous projects of the Lied Library and Community College of Nevada. "I'm pleased that the Lied Foundation was able to help finance a project that will benefit so many people in the state of Nevada," Hixon says.

Hixon, who has served as a trustee on the UNLV Foundation Board for the past 10 years, has directed more than $20 million toward a number of the College's building projects, scholarships, and educational programs, including the Lied Athletic Complex, the Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies, several new science laboratories, and the Rebel Golf Foundation.

The Lied Automatic Storage and Retrieval (LASR) System houses little-used materials in a readily available, space-saving manner.
On A More Personal Note

We know her as the first woman president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. We've heard about her credentials and her years of commitment to higher education. But what do we know about Carol Harter herself? In this candid personal account of her life, Harter talks about the individuals who encouraged her, the challenges she faced, and the opportunities that led her to the presidency of UNLV.

BY SUZAN DIBELLA

Having been at the university for more than a decade during the tenure of the largely male administration of former President Robert Maxson, I just wasn't expecting such good fortune as to have a woman named president. I called a colleague.

"How did this come about?" I asked, still incredulous. After all, I had lived in Nevada for 33 years at that point and had noticed that women in high places were not exactly ubiquitous.

My colleague's brief explanation confirmed that a search had indeed progressed and resulted in the appointment of this seemingly dynamic woman from SUNY – Geneseo, an institution unfamiliar to most of us.

"Surprised, eh?" my colleague asked, amused at my uncharacteristic disconnectedness.

"Astounded and pleased," I responded. "What else do we know about her?"

Though the typical factual information about our new president—her credentials, her administrative experience, her work as a scholar—was soon known, the question of what else was to be learned about Carol Harter lingered.

Like many members of the campus community, I've read a great deal of material about her ideas, programs, and accomplishments since she arrived here in 1995. But aside from knowing that she had maintained a long-distance marriage for her first five years here, several of my colleagues and I seemed to know little about the woman herself. It seemed likely that others shared our curiosity about her life. So, we decided to do something so patently obvious that it's almost embarrassing that we didn't think of it sooner: We asked her about herself.
Heater accepted her first administrative post in 1974 – about the time this photo was taken – when she became ambassador for Ohio University.

W hat finer her master’s degree in 1967. Harter was recruited once again to continue her studies at what had become by then State University of New York at Stony Brook. While she was drawn to the doctoral program in part by the same benefits to her family that she had recognized years earlier, she did understand that she would have less flexibility in her schedule at the doctoral level.

"I had to live in a dorm. I had to go to class. I had to go to work. I had to do everything."

She approached the completion of her doctorate, professor Hagopian again intervened.

"Harter,” he said, “stop being a housewife. You need to become a professor.” Again, my response was, “Who, me? An professor?“ There were hardly any women professors around at that time. I was so unprogressive that the notion seemed somewhat farfetched. But I really began to think about it.”

The decision for her to pursue a career in
Academia was a difficult one for Harter. It was at that point that they realized there would be some serious life changes in store for the family if Carol were to take that route. However, Mike himself had hoped to obtain his Ph.D. and realized that by following her to another institution, he could do so. They had also hoped that their boys would be able to stay in a quasi-rural environment.

When she received a job offer from Ohio University, they felt it was a wonderful opportunity in many ways. Mike got a job teaching in a local high school, and soon the Harter's were able to buy a house of their own for the first time.
Crowley's Parting Poetics

What? Former UNR President Joe Crowley in a UNLV sweatshirt! What madness is this?
No, it’s not one of those reality-challenged photos you see on the covers of the tabloids at the supermarket Crowley did indeed don a Rebel-red sweatshirt at the Big Game last Friday meeting as UNR president to pay off what he fondly calls a "non-wager" (thus avoiding the term "bet") with UNLV President Carol Harter.

The non-wager was established several years ago in an effort to make the annual football game between UNR and UNLV a bit more interesting for the presidents of the two institutions. As a part of the non-wager, the president of the losing institution is required to write a poetic tribute to the winning team and president, and then read it at a regents meeting. Also, the winning institution may paint the tribute poem in its magazine and student newspaper.

Two years ago, after a UNLV loss to UNR, Harter penned her tribute to Crowley and the Wolf Pack in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet. Last year, Harter and Crowley agreed to pass the non-wager because it was football coach John Robinson's first season at UNLV.

This year, after a 38-7 UNLV victory at Sam Boyd Stadium, Crowley—who, since retiring from UNR in December, has become a lobbyist for the University and Community College System of Nevada—offered the following poetic salute to Harter and the Rebels. Before his presentation, Crowley noted that Harter placed the UNLV sweatshirt he is seen wearing here in his hands approximately 30 seconds after the football game ended.

Ballad of the Battle at the Boyd
By Joe Crowley

Oh, the Scarlet and the Gray, they have taken it away:
That honor on a flagless sleeve,
That banner they’d been proud of,
And they took it away from me.

Well, we’re the pride of the valley,
Launched on the backs of students.
And they scored the winning tally
While the Wolf Pack stood stunned.

All in all, though, they were nothing,
Rebel football marked occasions,
Leaving us to face the future feeling
Down in the mouth.

But the Pack had been winning
For so long it felt like losing
To actually growing
At the suffering of the South.

Next, along came Pioneer Crowley,
And she had it in a clause
That they’d only play the matter for a
Certain stretch of years.

Squaring them on the grid would wear all,
She would with old Crowesy flag
Of the realm in show her trust in
And would end up in an Across.

Then she found her new coach, J ohn,
Said to him, “I have a new coach, John, I have a new coach, John.”

And probably a comedy.

For those awaiting more detail about the life and times of Carol Harter, she notes that there’s more to come. Her first novel, like her presidency at UNLV, is a work in progress.  

Coach John had had so much fun;
They took apart that guy so fast,
So they had to lead him.

So the Silver and the Blue,
They are whispering in their knew.

They made lavishing sticks sit the Williamson-era,
He is looking pompous and puffed.

All his revenues seemed secure,
As he wrote this embattled ballad
To assuage his raging grief.

Hey, he’s had his tasks to pasteur,
Knives should have fed them last year.
And his colleagues, Dr. Harter! We不够
More than one, “Where?”

Come carrie’s printing press is growing
With the word now your way knowing.
Even though she used to knowing
That the North will rise again.

Oh, the Scarlet and the Gray,
They have taken it away:
That honor on a flagless sleeve,
That banner they’d been proud of.

Well, they took apart that guy so fast,
So they had to lead him.
UNLV's nationally accredited College of Education continues to be one of the fastest-growing colleges on campus. Each year it attracts more and more students who want to be part of its innovative teacher-education programs.

In just five years, the college has seen the number of its graduates double from 300 to more than 600, all of whom are qualified to be licensed to teach. These graduates are in high demand. Within the next 10 years, the U.S. Department of Education predicts, the nation will need more than 2.2 million new teachers. And nowhere are these new UNLV graduates needed more than in the Clark County School District - the sixth largest and fastest-growing school district in the nation.

UNLV's College of Education has doubled the number of its graduates in just five years, partly through the introduction of several innovative teacher-education programs. Find out how these programs changed the lives of four Southern Nevadans who headed back to the classroom - first as students, then as teachers.

BY BETTY BLOGDETT

UNLV's College of Education is not just charming out quantity. He says the college's innovative programs are producing well-prepared teachers who are ready to handle the rigors and challenges of today's classrooms. One indication of the quality of its programs is the college's accreditation by NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Under NCATE criteria, the college must meet tough performance standards for its graduates. "Performance-based accreditation is based on results - results that demonstrate that teacher candidates know their subject matter and can teach it effectively in a real classroom," Hall says, adding that UNLV and UNR are the only two institutions in the state that are NCATE-accredited.

Hall says, "We have incredibly dedicated and talented faculty in the College of Education who are working hard to meet this important responsibility of preparing new teachers, and they are doing this with few additional resources," Hall says. In fact, he adds, since the 1992-93 academic year, the number of students in the College of Education has increased by more than 80 percent, while the college's budget has increased by only about 20 percent. The dollar-per-student ratio has dropped some 30 percent.

Hall says that if given more financial resources, the college could expand upon its teacher-education programs; however, he notes, there is still no waiting list of students working admission to the college. The larger issue, Hall says, continues to be finding creative ways to attract more people into the profession of teaching.

"I'm continually impressed with the caliber of students who are enrolling in our teacher-education programs," Hall says. "They are highly motivated to become the best teachers they can be. More importantly, they are choosing to become teachers for the right reasons."

And, Hall adds, the students themselves are often the best advocates of the programs the college offers. Their stories, as well as those of alumni, speak volumes about the benefits and quality of the programs, he says, as well as the results they produce.

So, what do the students and graduates have to say about the programs? UNLV Magazine asked four of them to discuss their experiences in the teacher-education programs in which they participated: the Special Education Cohort, the Graduate Licensure Program, the Urban Teaching Partnership, and Paradise Professional Development School. Though these programs were designed to attract nontraditional students to the profession of teaching, it's clear these four individuals didn't need much encouragement. Their backgrounds may differ greatly, but they all shared a common goal as they entered their programs: becoming teachers in order to make a difference in the lives of children.

Sheryl Cohen
Special Education Cohort Program

Sheryl Cohen knew she had a special knack for communicating with and teaching children with special needs, especially teen-agers. She wanted to put her skills to work as a special education resource teacher, but lacking the financial means to go back to college full time to earn a teaching degree, Cohen went to work instead as a school bus driver for the Clark County School District.

"Although I was a college graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology and years of experience working with children, I had to have that license to teach," she says. "So I figured being a school bus driver would at least be a foot in the door with the school district." Cohen had been a bus driver for two years when a friend told her about the Special Education Cohort program. This partnership between the school district and UNLV condenses two years of special education requirements into an intensive one-year undergraduate training program that results in a license to teach in a special education resource room.

It is targeted to school district employees who work as teacher assistants, long-term substitutes, or, as in Cohen's case, support personnel. To get into the program, participants must complete university core requirements, have at least a 2.5 GPA, and pass the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST). Employees have to pay for their own tuition and books, but while in the program, they continue to receive their paychecks from the school district. "I couldn't believe what I was hearing," Cohen remembers. "It was the answer to my prayers. I knew I wouldn't be easy, but here was my opportunity to become a teacher. I had to go for it.

Helping children to learn and to grow as individuals has always been an important priority to Cohen. While attending Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, she worked at a day care center and later a football program. After graduating college in 1999, Cohen held a variety of jobs before moving to Anchorage, Alaska, where she was hired by a recreation center to run programs to benefit children in the community. A big fan of basketball, Cohen began a youth basketball league that became very popular. "It went beyond my teaching basketball," she says of her role in the league. "I became a teacher, mentor, and counselor to these young people. My goal was to emphasize the importance of school in these kids' lives. For example, in order to be a part of the basketball team, they knew that they had to be serious about school and their grades."

Cohen says it was during this time that she came to realize that her calling in life was to be a teacher helping young at-risk students with special education needs. And although she didn't know it at the time, Cohen says it was also good preparation for the Special Education Cohort program.

UNLV education professor Kyle Higgins, who helped to initiate the program in 1997, says participants usually come into this program with some previous experience working with special needs children. "This group of cohort students has extensive experience working with children with disabilities," Higgins says. "Many of them have worked for years as assistants in
the special education resource classroom. For one reason or another – be it finances or family concerns – they were unable to get their teaching licenses. A program like this gives them that opportunity.”

Cohen, along with 21 other participants, began the program in fall 2000. The group of students is considered a cohort, so they begin the program together as a group, take all of their courses together in a block, and will all graduate at the end of the summer with bachelor’s degrees in education. They will be fully licensed as special education generalist resource room teachers, ready to take over their own classrooms by the beginning of the school year in August.

“When we first started out, we were saying, ‘How are we ever going to get this done?’” Cohen says. “But the College of Education faculty is so good and so dedicated in teaching us what we need to know to be successful teachers in the classroom. It’s an amazing program, and we’re realizing we can get it done.”

The cohort nature of this program contributes to the participants’ success, Cohen says. “We become a family, supporting and helping one another.”

Cohen says the real accomplishment of the program comes from the participants themselves and what they as teachers will be able to bring to their classrooms.

“I know when I graduate this program and enter my classroom as a special education resource teacher I will be able to bring my students a sense of empowerment and motivation.” It’s that simple. Because if I can go through a program like this – meet these challenges – then I’m sure I can help my students meet the challenges they are facing and help them to succeed in life as well.”

Ken Witty
Graduate Licensure Program

It wasn’t until after he had spent 14 years building a successful career in the real estate business that Ken Witty finally pursued his longtime dream of obtaining his master’s degree in education and becoming a teacher.

Witty had intended to get his master’s degree in education after he received his undergraduate degree from DePaul University in Chicago in 1985. His goals were sidetracked, however, after he took an elective course in real estate. He found he possessed a talent for the profession and eventually became licensed as an agent. While still in college, he was heavily recruited by brokers wanting him to go to work for them. Witty says he ended up doing so much better financially in real estate than he had ever expected that he decided to stay in the profession after graduating college instead of going to graduate school.

About eight years ago, Witty and his family moved to Las Vegas to start a real estate business. In a relatively short amount of time, Witty and his wife, Patty, were running a highly successful business, generating millions of dollars in real estate sales for their company.

But, even while building his profitable real estate career, Witty says he never forgot his original goal of becoming a teacher. One day a few years back while he was sitting in the office, his older yearning to become a teacher hit him hard.

“It turned to my wife and said ‘You know, I don’t need to be doing this as much as I am, I have time to go back to college and finally get my master’s degree in education.’”

Witty says the big question for him was how to go about it. He had heard about several different programs being offered in town, but an employee in his office recommended UNLV’s Graduate Licensure Program, in which he could earn both his teaching license and a master’s degree in education at the same time.

“He said, ‘Ken, you really have to do this. Their education program at UNLV is so phenomenal. Going through this program will make you such a good teacher.’”

“What he said made sense to me,” Witty says. “I knew there were easier routes that I could’ve taken, but I went straight for quality. I decided I’d rather spend a little extra time getting my degree if I was going to learn more and be a better teacher.”

Witty did some research and learned that UNLV’s Graduate Licensure Program was, indeed, exactly what he was looking for. The program, which was first offered in 1993, provides participants who hold bachelor’s or graduate degrees in fields other than education a way to earn master’s degrees while obtaining teaching licenses in elementary, secondary, or special education. It is designed to lead to the preparation of teaching license in three to five semesters of full-time study. The participant is left needing only about four classes to complete the master’s degree.

In order to get into the program, a participant must apply for admission to the Graduate College, have a minimum GPA of 2.5, and pass the PPST. Currently lead are 475 students enrolled in the Graduate Licensure Program.

Education professor Jane McCarthy, who oversees the program, says teachers who have master’s degrees tend to place higher on the pay scale and often have an even greater sense of confidence in their teaching abilities.

Witty entered the graduate program in the spring of 1998. He received his teaching license in 1999 and is now in his second year of teaching in his own fifth-grade classroom at Mountain View Elementary.

In December 2000, Witty finally realized his long-sought after goal when he graduated with his master’s degree in education.

“Now that I’m in charge of my own classroom, I can fully appreciate just how good UNLV’s College of Education faculty and curriculum were in preparing me to be a teacher,” Witty says. “Those of us living here in Las Vegas have quickly become such a quality teaching program and a great university right here in our own backyard.”

Tonia Holmes-Sutton
Urban Teaching Partnership Program

Teaching is truly in Tonia Holmes-Sutton’s blood. She comes from a family of teachers. Her father is a science teacher at Horizon North High School in Las Vegas. Her grandfather taught school for 12 years before becoming a minister; her grandmother is a retired teacher who taught for 38 years. In addition, Sutton has several aunts and uncles involved in the teaching profession.

Sutton planned to become a teacher herself. After graduating in 1992 with a liberal arts degree in social sciences from Hawaii Loa, a private liberal arts college located on the island of Oahu, she intended to go to law school before going to college and getting her master’s degree in education. But her plans changed after she got married and moved to Florida. When she became pregnant in 1996, Sutton and her husband decided to move to Las Vegas to be near family. After her daughter was born, she wanted to find a job that would give her the flexibility to spend evenings and weekends at home with her child. That’s when her thoughts turned again to teaching. She found the perfect flexibility she was seeking when she was hired to work as a substitute teacher for the school district.

“I wanted to be with my daughter as much as I could,” Sutton recalls. “As a substitute teacher I could choose the days I wanted to work and the school where I wanted to be. In addition, I figured this would be a great way for me to decide if teaching was something I really wanted to do forever. What I discovered was that I really enjoyed teaching and that teaching was something I was good at.”

But without a teaching license my only option was to be a substitute teacher.

It was Sutton’s father who told her about an article he had read in the local newspaper about a new Urban Teaching Partnership program being offered at UNLV. The program, which was the first offered in 1998, was designed for people like Sutton who hold degrees in fields other than education, but who want to teach. Students in the program receive their teaching licenses after completing an intensive one-year program of study, which includes an on-site teaching internship at a participating school. Each intern is paired with a primary mentor teacher at the school. The requirements for getting into the program include having a GPA of 2.5 or higher, passing the PPST, and committing to wait for the program to graduate from the County School District in a diverse, urban-school environment at an at-risk school.

“I was so happy when I heard about it because this was the perfect type of program I was looking for,” she says.

Sutton entered the program, along with 29 other participants, in July 2000, and in May, she and her classmates will graduate. At that time, the College of Education faculty will begin a research project designed to review and evaluate the program. Hall says, adding that while the research is conducted, the program will be placed on a one-year hiatus. According to Hall, the primary purpose of the research project is to refine the program and to identify its most valuable components so that they can be integrated into the regular curriculum. Hall adds that an improved version of the Urban Teaching Partnership will be offered once again after the review is complete.

Sutton is glad to know that the college is committed to advancing this type of program.

“There are so many advantages in going through a teacher preparation program like this,” Sutton says. “First, by spending a whole year interning with a mentor-teacher in an urban, at-risk school setting, we learn to build important teaching skills that will help us to have the confidence to lead our own classrooms when we become licensed teachers ourselves.”

“And secondly, this gives someone who thinks she wants to be a teacher a first-hand look and opportunity to decide, ‘Is this really what I want to do?’ You really have to care about what you’re doing to be a good teacher. You have to believe that as a teacher you can make a difference in your students’ lives.”

“Most of all, this program is teaching us that this profession is a lot more than an 8 a.m.-to-3 p.m. job with weekends and holidays off; it’s a constant, round-the-clock job. The more I get involved in the job, the more I realize that being a teacher is not something I do—it’s who I am.”

continued on page 32
March 2001

1-3 Opera Theatre: The Marriage of Figaro. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2877.
1 & 3 Men’s Basketball: UNLV vs. Colorado State - March 1, Wyoming - March 3. 7:00pm both days. TMC, 895-2787.
1-4 Theatre: Secret Playwriting Competition Winner The Student of the Woodpecker. Call for times. BBT. 895-2787.
1-17 Art Department: MFA Exhibit - Sierra Stento-Anderson. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
3 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. UNR. 1:00pm. FTC. 895-3207.
4 Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
6 Concert: Marijoes Trio in Rezidal. 7:30pm. Free. BBT. 895-2787.
University Forum Lecture: “Health Investments for Women: A Saving Account for Quality of Life.” 7:30pm. MBMA, 895-3401.
9 Master Series: Boulder Symphony Orchestra. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
10 Concert: United States Army Band. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
12 Baseball: UNLV vs. UNR. 3:05pm. WS. 895-3207.
14-21 Art Department: BFA Exhibit. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
20 Men’s Tennis: UNLV vs. TCU. 1:30pm. FTC. 895-3207.
21-31 Art Department: MFA Exhibit - Sheria Guesnies. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
22 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. Ohio State. 2pm. FTC. 895-3207.
23 Men’s Tennis: UNLV vs. New Mexico State. 1:30pm. FTC. 895-3207.
Performing Arts Center’s Best of the New York Stage: Rockapella. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
24 Concert: Las Vegas Philharmonic and Peter Schickele. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
25 Men’s Tennis: UNLV vs. Utah. 11am. FTC. 895-3207.
Concert: UNLV Jazz Ensembles I, II and III. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
27 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
28 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. Stanford. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
30-31 Baseball: UNLV vs. BYU (MWC). Call for times. WS. 895-3207.
30-31 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. Utah - March 30, 2pm. BYU - March 31, 10am. FTC. 895-3207.

April 2001

1 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. San Diego State (MWC). 10am. FTC. 895-3207.
Theatre: The Balcony. 2pm. JBT. 895-2787.
3 Concert: UNLV Symphonic Band Spring Concert. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
3 & 6 Softball: UNLV vs. UC-Riverside - April 5. BYU - April 6. Noon, DH both days. RD. 895-3207.
4-8 Theatre: Annual Spring Teen-Minster Play Festival. Call for times. PHT. 895-2787.
4-14 Art Department: MFA Exhibit - Curtis Fairman. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
5 University Forum Lecture: “Zion National Park: Back To The Future” (slide-illustrated). 7:30pm. MBMA, 895-3401.

May 2001

1-5 Art Department: Annual Juried Student Art Exhibit. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
6-7 Nevada Ballet Theatre: Nevada Ballet Season Finale. Call for times. AHCH. 895-2787.
11 Women’s Tennis: UNLV vs. Fresno State (MWC). 2pm. FTC. 895-3207.
Concert: UNLV Community Band Concert II. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-3733.
12 UNLV Honors Convocation: 6pm. Location TBA. 895-1267.
15 Opera Theatre: Shining Bright. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
23-30 Art Department: Annual Juried Student Art Exhibit. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
26 Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra Concert IV. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
University Forum Lecture: “Sherlock Holmes and His World of Drug Use.” 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
27 Concert: University Choral Ensemble Spring Concert. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
27-29 Dance: Dance Arts Concert III. Call for times. BBT. 895-2787.
27-29 Baseball: UNLV vs. BYU (MWC). Call for times. WS. 895-3207.
29 Master Series: Moscow Festival Ballet. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
30 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra Concert III. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
30 Opera Theatre: The Balcony. Call for times. JBT. 895-2787.
30 Master Series: Moscow Festival Ballet. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
30 University Forum Lecture: “Jazz Improvisation: What Are Those Musicians Doing, and How Do They Do It?” 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.
3-6 Theatre: Cabaret. Call for times. JBT. 895-2787.
4-6 Baseball: UNLV vs. New Mexico (MWC). Call for times. WS. 895-3207.
5 Concert: Las Vegas Philharmonic Concert V. 8pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
10-31 Art Department: BFA Exhibit. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
11 Boyd School of Law: Inaugural Law School Commencement. 10am. AHCH. 895-3671.
12 Commencement: 9am & 2pm. TMC. 895-3229.
13 Performing Arts Center: Spring Season Finale with Rosemary Clooney. 2pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
19-20 Nevada Opera Theatre: Die Fledermaus. May 19, 8pm; May 20, 2pm. JBT. 895-2787.
20 Concert: Musical Arts Orchestra and Chorus Concert II. 3pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
25 Concert: Desert Chorale’s Annual Memorial Weekend Concert. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.

June 2001

1 Concert: UNLV Opera Gala Concert. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-2787.
1-16 Art Department: BFA Exhibit. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3893.
2-3 Music Department: Annual piano sale. 10am. BBT. 895-3736.
9 Nevada Ballet Theatre: Academy of Nevada Ballet Theatre Annual Recital. 7pm. AHCH. 894-6244.
We'd like to hear from you!

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Kevin Overbey  
Elementary Teacher Education Program at the Paradise Professional Development School

Having recently retired from dancing, his first profession, Kevin Overbey is now in college preparing to embark upon a new career – this time as an elementary school teacher.

Overbey spent 20 years dancing with numerous professional ballet companies, primarily in the Southeast. He taught ballet as well, and he even ran his own ballet school for two years. In 1992, Overbey moved to Las Vegas to join the Nevada Dance Theatre, now known as the Nevada Ballet Theatre. He danced several seasons with the ballet company and also danced for a time with Jubilee!, the production show located at Bally’s Hotel and Casino. During that time he also met and married a fellow Nevada Ballet Theatre dancer.

A few years ago, Overbey started thinking seriously about retiring as a professional dancer and becoming a teacher. He was especially interested in taking on the challenge of learning how to teach in an elementary school located in one of the lower socio-economic areas of the city where many of the students don’t speak English as their first language. He found the opportunity he was looking for when he enrolled in the UNLV College of Education’s Elementary Teacher Education Program at the Paradise Professional Development School.

The school opened in August 1998 as part of a partnership between UNLV and the school district. The undergraduate, three-semester program gives UNLV students majoring in elementary education the opportunity to learn their profession by working directly with the children and teachers at the district’s Paradise Elementary School.

In order to be eligible to enroll in the program, students must have completed university core requirements, as well as a certain number of College of Education prerequisite classes. When students complete the program, they receive their teaching licenses, as well as limited endorsements in teaching English as a second language.

“This program appealed to me for several reasons,” Overbey says, adding that the opportunity to study methods in teaching English as a second language was especially attractive.

Working to become bilingual himself in English and Spanish, Overbey enjoys interacting with people from different cultures. He has a special appreciation for how difficult language barriers can be to overcome; during his career as a professional dancer, he worked closely with fellow dancers who came to the United States from all over the world.

“In the ballet world I met so many diverse people – South Americans, Russians, Eastern Europeans, French, Spanish – who came to the United States to dance. I watched them struggle to learn to speak English and to adjust to being in a foreign culture. I understand how difficult it can be to learn in a new environment.”

With student populations in Clark County classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, Overbey feels his previous experiences working with people from different ethnic backgrounds – as well as the training he is currently receiving at Paradise – will be beneficial to his students.

UNLV’ education professor Maria Meyerson, who oversees the Professional Development School Program, believes it is the extensive collaboration between all of the participants – the principal, the teachers, the college faculty, and the students – that makes this program a success.

Classes are held at either the Paradise Elementary School or next door at the Bennett Professional Development Building – both located on UNLV’s campus. Beginning with their first semester, the elementary education majors interact with the teachers, principal, and children of Paradise Elementary. They become an important part of the school as they learn teaching practices not only from UNLV faculty, but also from Paradise’s experienced teachers.

The classroom teachers at Paradise Elementary School serve as mentor-teachers to the 16 UNLV students who are enrolled in the program.

The program is set up so that the students alternate their days between receiving college classroom instruction from College of Education faculty and spending time observing and teaching in the elementary school.

“The way the program is designed, the students are able to really understand what goes on in a school. They can see the connection between what they are being taught by the university faculty and how those techniques are actually applied by teachers in the classroom setting,” Meyerson says.

Overbey says being in the Paradise Professional Development School program has given him a wealth of ideas he plans to use when he takes charge of his own classroom after he graduates from UNLV in August. He hopes to obtain a teaching position with the Clark County School District.

“With the hands-on training I’m receiving now, I know that from the first day I walk into my classroom I will be ready to meet the challenges of helping my students overcome language barriers or whatever other barriers might have kept them from learning,” he says.
Harvey Mann says “the world never stands still.” But neither does Harvey. His US Army division liberated Dachau during World War II. He was present during Mexico’s devastating earthquake in 1987. And he was the donor for the first bone marrow transplant in Chicago. UNLV’s program for seniors opened the door for Harvey’s higher education. At age 79, he graduated with a Business Administration degree in marketing, class of 1997. During his lifetime, Harvey’s seen most of the world. Through his new career in research at the UNLV Business College, he’s ready to explore the rest of it.

Call 38-REBEL (387-3235) for enrollment information and a free course schedule.

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