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TAKING OFF

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Downtown Rebels

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FROM THE PRESIDENT
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CLASS NOTES
Big-dollar Downtown Project initiatives — such as the Container Park — tend to grab local headlines, but small businesses run by UNLV graduates also are percolating downtown. See “The Upstarts,” page 28. [Aaron Mayes/UNLV Photo Services]
Editor’s Note: In February, Donald D. Snyder was appointed acting president of UNLV by the Nevada System of Higher Education, filling a role vacated by former President Neal Smatresk. Snyder, a former gaming and banking industry executive, co-founded Bank of Nevada and previously served as a top executive for the Fremont Street Experience and Boyd Gaming. A prolific fundraiser, he also played an integral role in creating The Smith Center for the Performing Arts.

I have long believed in the indispensable role UNLV plays in our state’s economic and cultural development. We cannot have a great community without a great university, one that is intimately connected to the needs of its community and beyond.

I first became involved with UNLV more than 25 years ago as a donor and Foundation Board of Trustees member, serving as chairman of its board and eventually as co-chair of UNLV’s groundbreaking Invent the Future campaign, which raised more than $537 million for the university. In 2010, I joined UNLV as an employee, first as dean of the Harrah Hotel College and then as executive dean for strategic development.

Now as president of UNLV, I am both humbled and invigorated by the opportunity to lead the university during a pivotal time. I hope to bring insight to the position as a longtime Las Vegan, a businessman, and a university administrator.

To best serve this community, UNLV must be considered — unequivocally — one of the top research universities in America.

To best serve this community, UNLV must be considered — unequivocally — one of the top research universities in America. A direct relationship exists between a city’s business and industry and its Tier One institutions. Such institutions are drivers of economic development in their states. They improve the human infrastructure of their regions and produce the workforce needed for companies to thrive.

Our new drone studies program is a perfect example of the power of a Tier One university. The story on page 20 shows how UNLV research already enhances student education, aligns with the governor’s economic development plan, and attracts grant and private industry investment — ultimately creating new businesses and diversifying our state’s economy.

As the Board of Regents searches for UNLV’s next president, I will focus on outlining a successful path to Tier One (more specifically designated as “Carnegie Research University—Very High”). The strategic initiatives likely to emerge from this include: first, a new medical school; second, research and economic development; third, the campus master plan, which will include a new stadium on campus; and fourth, student achievement and success. I hope as alumni and friends of the university, you will offer your support to these important initiatives.

Don Snyder
UNLV President

Learn more: Follow the presidential search and UNLV’s progress on its Tier One goal, the medical school, and stadium project through our weekly enewsletter. Subscribe at news.unlv.edu/newsletters.
A recent art installation in the Wynn Las Vegas atrium combines engineering and art into a stunning floral display. The flower-decked animated carousel and hot air balloon welcome guests at the main entrance of the hotel and join an ever-changing visual landscape that greets thousands of visitors every month.

This important collaboration began when Steve Wynn, chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts, approached world-renowned event designer Preston Bailey, through Roger Thomas, executive vice president of Wynn Design and Development, to create a dazzling spectacle for the atrium as part of the resort’s continued commitment to public art.

Local architects and designers, Wynn Design and Development and Forté Specialty Contractors, implemented Bailey’s designs. Forté Specialty Contractors was preparing to delve into its talent pool for help attaching tens of thousands of flowers when Tim McGarry, ‘82 BA Political Science, co-owner of Forté, had an idea. How about using art students from UNLV? He approached Vice President for Advancement Bill Boldt, who connected him with Aya Louisa McDonald, chair of the art department, to see if students could be identified, recruited, and quietly put to work on the project.

“I wasn’t even told what the project was,” McDonald explained. “UNLV’s studio art program gives our students the skills and the intellectual strengths to become great designers, and this was an excellent opportunity for them to gain professional experience with some of the top designers and design firms in the world.”

Fifteen advanced art students, both undergraduate and graduate, were recruited to participate in the project. More than 3,500 hours of labor and 110,000 flowers went into completing the installations. The carousel stands 13 feet tall and 16 feet wide, and weighs 6,000 pounds, while the hot air balloon stands 20 feet tall and weighs 4,000 pounds.

Each flower was painstakingly attached to its section of the whole but the students had to wait until the unveiling Nov. 25 to see their work in its entirety.

“The students obtained real-life job experience, added to their portfolios, and earned some money. They were responsible, dedicated, and maintained the confidentiality of the project. In addition, they contributed their knowledge and instincts to the final product,” explained McGarry. “We are fortunate to have access to the talent and skills of these young people just down the road at UNLV.”

According to the students, the best parts of the project were learning how to work as a team, gaining professional feedback, and feeling the pride of doing something for the Wynn that is viewed by visitors from around the world. Overall, the students declared the project to be a magical opportunity.
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The Tools
(Clockwise) Benny, Boise, George, and Petey, all certified therapy dogs from the nonprofit organization Love Dog Adventures.

The Users
(Clockwise) Undergraduate students Scott Roberts, Jacob Hill, Emily Tipsord, and Lexi Smith.

Puppy Love
Canine kisses turn out to be the cure for procrastination-induced crankiness at the Lied Library as semester finals loom. Students fill the space — cramping for tests, cranking out research papers, and finishing their group projects.

To get students to let go of a little angst, UNLV Libraries launched the Paws for Study Break program. The sessions with certified therapy dogs attracted 921 students this spring. It’s a quirky example of how the Libraries helps students learn more effectively, outreach librarian Rosan Mitola said.

Lexi Smith spent 45 minutes with the pups. “It gave me a chance to not think so much about math and other things that are currently weighing me down,” the freshman said. “It was an unexpected and fun way to cap off a stressful week.”
School of Medicine plans moving forward

A NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL for Southern Nevada took another step forward in May with the hiring of Dr. Barbara Atkinson to serve as its planning dean.

Atkinson will oversee preliminary academic planning, direct fundraising activities, and establish a community advisory committee to align the proposed UNLV School of Medicine’s mission to the region’s needs.

A statewide steering committee of higher education and community leaders currently is guiding the process, which also includes expanding the University of Nevada School of Medicine in Reno. The Nevada System of Higher Education will submit a joint budget for medical education to state legislators during the 2015 legislative session.

Atkinson is emeritus vice chancellor of the University of Kansas School of Medicine. As dean of the school and then executive vice chancellor of the Kansas City medical center campus for much of the past decade, Atkinson refocused the school to better serve regional needs. She led the opening of a new campus in Salina to address the state’s physician shortage and the expansion of the Wichita campus from a two-year to a full four-year program. In 2012 the University of Kansas became just the 67th school nationwide to earn National Cancer Institute designation.

“There is no doubt we need to enhance health care capacity in Southern Nevada … we can turn this vision into reality.”

Dr. Barbara Atkinson, planning dean, UNLV School of Medicine

“Barbara is a dynamic leader with a unique mix of research, academic, and administrative experience,” said John Valery White, UNLV executive vice president and provost. “She successfully revitalized and expanded the University of Kansas School of Medicine during a state and nationwide recession by garnering community, state, and philanthropic support. We’re confident in her ability to develop a comprehensive vision for the UNLV School of Medicine that will serve the health care and workforce needs of Southern Nevadans.”

Under Dr. Atkinson’s leadership from 2002 to 2012, the University of Kansas School of Medicine also adopted an innovative, modern curriculum; its medical center campus opened a state-of-the-art research building and medical office building; and significant gains were made in overall research funding.

Atkinson said she was drawn to the planning dean position by the commitment to forming the new school shown by UNLV and the Nevada System of Higher Education. “There is no doubt we need to enhance health care capacity in Southern Nevada, and I believe that by fusing the passion of Nevada’s higher education leadership with an increasingly engaged medical and business community, we can turn this vision into reality.”

She was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in 1997, and in 2010 was appointed by President Barack Obama to the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. In 2011, the University of Kansas Medical Center honored her by establishing the Barbara F. Atkinson Professorship in Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.

—TONY ALLEN

Business By the Book

The UNLV Alumni Association’s Rebel Business Network is connecting small business leaders to the free resources available to them at the UNLV Libraries. Its Business by the Book workshops are funded by the UNLV Libraries Advisory Board and are open to the public. Upcoming workshops include:

Keeping Connected: Building Your Business Network, June 11 — This workshop will focus building your network using library resources to identify and research potential business partners and service providers.

Keeping Up With Your Customers, Aug. 13 — Learn how to use research to identify your customers and find tools you immediately can use to promote your business.

Keeping Up With Social Media, Oct. 8 — Measure the impact of your marketing tools and find information that immediately can be applied to help you reach customers.

More: Space is limited. Register online at connect2.unlv.edu or call 702-895-2277.
Two UNLV students selected to study and teach overseas as Fulbright Scholars.

BY AFSHA BAWANY

Cheryl Anderson, a doctoral student, is heading to Turkey to study human remains while undergraduate Bradley Davey will bone up his teaching skills in Germany. Both were selected to spend nine months abroad as cultural ambassadors under the prestigious Fulbright Scholars program.

STORIES IN THE BONES
The story of how the ancient people of Anatolia lived is being unearthed at the ancient site Kaman-Kalehöyük, located south-east of the Turkish capital of Ankara. Cheryl Anderson, a doctoral student of anthropology, has been examining the human skeletal remains there for the past three years.

“One of things I like about being an archaeologist is having the opportunity to directly examine the past through the materials uncovered in the present,” Anderson said. “When I am examining bones from an archaeological project, I am aware that I am studying people who lived thousands of years ago. It is really exciting to ... try to reconstruct what their lives were like.”

Anderson, whose UNLV master's degree work focused on bioarchealogy, will carry out the research for her Ph.D. under the mentorship of Debra L. Martin, a UNLV Lincy Professor of Anthropology, and Lev-ent Atici, a UNLV anthropologist who introduced Anderson to the Kaman-Kalehöyük site. “Cheryl Anderson is particularly interested in the unfolding of human history as it relates to inequalities and how that is connected to poor health and early death,” Martin said. “These are relevant questions for the ancient world, but have importance in thinking about the contemporary world as well,” said Debra L. Martin, a UNLV Lincy Professor of Anthropology.

RENAISSANCE MAN
For Davey, combining studies in a foreign language with science is just natural chemistry. Davey started his academic career at the age of 21, first focusing on chemistry and pre-med at the College of Southern Nevada and then at UNLV. He conducted studies with science mentors from the Desert Research Institute but found his current path in an introductory German language class. He struck up friendships with German exchange students and then studied abroad in Germany. As a Fulbright Scholar, he will participate in a diversity program aimed at giving non-English-speaking students a perspective on American culture, education, and politics.

“Brad Davey is truly what we traditionally refer to as a Renaissance man,” said Marta Meana, dean of the UNLV Honors College. “He is as comfortable with organic chemistry as he is with the translation of German poetry.”

Davey earned his a BA in German with a 4.0 grade point average in May and has been working with The Lincy Institute at UNLV on educational access policy issues, something close to his heart. At age 5, Davey lost his father to suicide. He had an admittedly difficult relationship with his mother, and at age 16 he dropped out of high school and was on his own. Eventually neighbor Kyle George, ’08 BS Chemistry, encouraged him to go back to school.

“I avoided college for a few years, not because I didn't want to attend, but because I just didn't think I could do it,” Davey said. “A lot of students from my background feel the same way. I can share my story to say that any student can feel a sense of not belonging, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can do this.”
Harter retires after 19 years

The president emerita and executive director of the Black Mountain Institute is considering writing a book.

When Carol Harter became president in 1995, UNLV was just 19,000 students strong and so many of our landmarks — Lied Library, Shadow Lane campus, and current Student Union — had yet to be built. She served 11 years as the university’s president followed by eight years helming the Black Mountain Institute (BMI), a literary organization she helped establish.

As her biggest achievements, she cited the founding of BMI and of the William S. Boyd School of Law, one of the major schools formed under her tenure. “The Architecture School, the Dental School, and the School of Law really put us on the map as a major university. You have to have those kinds of professional schools to achieve that.”

Harter is grateful to have wrapped up her career as executive director of BMI — now officially known as the Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute. It recently received a $10 million pledge from Jim and Beverly Rogers. Jim, a prominent businessman, served as NSHE chancellor 2004-09.

Harter will stay involved in BMI this fall while BMI searches for her replacement. Pointing to the full audiences at BMI events, she said the institute has brought “high-quality intellectual discussions to Las Vegas and that is something that people care about. There (has been) pent-up demand for that.”

She also is proud of BMI’s sponsorship of the City of Asylum program, which provides refuge to writers persecuted in their homelands. The program is being reinstituted through the pledge from the Rogers Family Foundation. The gift also will increase support for BMI’s existing Ph.D. and fellowship programs and enhance its public programming. And, it will be used to establish a literary prize that carries with it $50,000 — one of the largest monetary awards for fiction in the U.S.

Harter and her husband of nearly 53 years plan to do something their careers seldom allowed — travel extensively. She also is considering penning her first creative work to go along with her two academic books.

“I can’t decide between a novel, a book about women in leadership, or a memoir. More people than not suggest the memoir,” she said, adding, “For that, I’m going to have to wait until an awful lot of people are dead.”

—DIANE RUSSELL

Read more: Abbreviated from a May 2 article that ran online at news.unlv.edu.
Two corporate gifts helping make future home for the Hotel College a reality

In February, a $2.5 million gift from Konami Corp. officially launched the campaign to raise funds for the construction of Hospitality Hall, an academic building for the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. In April, Las Vegas Sands Corp. announced a $7 million donation for the building and to create an executive education program.

“Industry partnerships are essential to keep the Harrah Hotel College at the forefront of hospitality and gaming education, and to ensure we’re preparing our graduates to compete and succeed globally,” said President Donald Snyder, who served as dean of the Hotel College from 2010-13.

Hospitality Hall will feature sweeping views of the Las Vegas Strip and serve as a bridge to the hospitality and gaming industry. Early designs call for about 95,000 square feet of classroom, laboratory, and meeting space. The design will encourage interaction and a sense of community among students, faculty, and industry professionals. It will be located in the center of campus, west of Beam Hall, which the college currently shares with the Lee Business School.

The cost is estimated at $50 million, with a proposed $30 million in public funding and $20 million in private support. In 2010, the Caesars Foundation provided $2.5 million to drive the project’s initial planning with the state providing additional funds during the last legislative session. UNLV expects to present a public funding request during the 2015 legislative session, which could lead to project completion in late 2017.

Harrah Hotel College has been at the heart of hospitality education for nearly 50 years, shaping the future of the hospitality industry in Las Vegas and around the globe. The Las Vegas Sands’ gift also will create a proposed international executive education center.

“You are setting the global standard in hospitality and gaming education and development of the industry’s future leaders and scholars,” said Stowe Shoemaker, dean of the Hotel College. “These endeavors are
Through a combination of what at times seemed to be very personal anecdotes and at others straight-ahead business adages, hospitality industry giant Sheldon Adelson told an audience of more than 1,000 on campus that success requires you to change the status quo.

Adelson, along with Las Vegas Sands Chief Operating Officer Michael Leven, appeared May 5 to kick off the “Conversations on Leadership” series, which will be a hallmark of a new executive education center at the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. The proposed center is being funded through a multimillion-dollar gift from Las Vegas Sands Corp.

Adelson recounted his childhood growing up in Dorchester, Mass., to interviewer Arte Nathan. His later success, he quipped, could be considered a rags-to-riches story, “but we were so poor we didn’t even have rags.” His first job was selling newspapers in Boston, which he soon leveraged into “owning the corner” and having others working for him. A common theme of his business ventures has been to find an opportunity that will change the status quo, and then do something new and different.

For Adelson, changing the status quo in Las Vegas meant catering to the needs of the convention customer. His Sands Expo and Convention Center, built in 1989, was the first privately owned and operated convention center in the U.S. In Singapore, he built the Marina Bay Sands, still considered the most expensive building in the world.

“Most people get a business idea and try to raise the money to do it,” he said. “They might end up sacrificing the idea to fit the budget. But the most important thing for success is to develop the product or service and then get whatever money it takes to complete it.” Acknowledging that he now has the money to fund his projects, he added, “I don’t have to compromise my ideas.”

Adelson and his wife, Dr. Miriam Adelson, have been creating a significant philanthropic legacy, with much of it focused on medical research. The self-made billionaire emphasized that to be successful, you have to take risks and accept that most people will inevitably fail. “Risk is reward and reward is risk,” he admonished. “You can’t be an entrepreneur unless you take risks — and that’s just opening the door.”

He added, “If I didn’t do something different, success would have evaded me.”

— MARIAN ALPER
David G. Schwartz’s latest work offers a fascinating sketch of one of Las Vegas’ greatest characters, Jay Sarno, and a reminder of the importance of sharing stories.

SINCE MY LATEST BOOK, Grandissimo, came out, people have asked me why I wrote it. The simple answer is that Jay Sarno was the most interesting person in Las Vegas history not to have a book already written about him. But the process of researching and writing it reminded me of how important it is to preserve our past — even the parts that don’t seem immediately important.

Sarno moved to Las Vegas in 1965 and died in 1984. In his 19 years here, he changed much about the city, building Caesars Palace and Circus Circus, the casinos that dominated at the high and low ends of the Strip for the next generation. In 1974, he was accused of offering the largest bribe in IRS history, a charge he ultimately beat with the help of attorney Oscar Goodman. He conceived of the Grandissimo, a 6,000-room resort with attached shopping and theme park rides — something that sounds pretty typical today, but was considered ridiculous in 1979. In other words, he saw exactly where Las Vegas was heading in the 1990s.

I started my research in the usual places — checking what other people had written about him, looking at newspaper accounts, and delving into the promotional and publicity files in UNLV Special Collections to augment my understanding of what was going on at his casinos. This gave me a general outline, but I noticed that some areas of his life, particularly the IRS bribery case, had gone nearly unremarked on by others. Strange, I thought, when the trial had been
front-page news in Las Vegas. And, while what was readily available gave me a sense of Sarno's accomplishments, it didn't tell me much about him as a person. That's why I decided to do a series of oral history interviews to re-capture the parts of Sarno's life that otherwise would be lost. I spoke to about three dozen family members, college friends, and associates in Las Vegas, each of whom had different observations to offer. I could sketch a picture of a much more complicated — and interesting — character. Friends recalling good times, family members reliving decades-gone arguments, business associates remembering nearly forgotten details of deals — it all added something.

Between the time I started the project and the time that I published the book, four of the people I interviewed passed away. If they had not been so generous with their time, some invaluable slices of Sarno's life would have been lost.

For example, his was no ordinary golf club bag; he used a display model the size of a trash can, just so he'd be sure to have exactly the right club at the right time. A lot was at stake here — he often bet thousands of dollars on each hole. This wasn't a guy to do anything in a small way. He saw a woman walking across the lobby of Miami's Fontainebleau hotel and decided, right then, that she was the woman he'd marry. Against all odds, four days later Joyce accepted his proposal. We don't often think that our daily lives will be of interest to anyone, but the way someone plays golf, or proposes marriage (in Jay's case, at least), can say a lot more about them than their professional work.

Seeing Jay Sarno gradually fleshed out as an individual hammered home the importance of conducting and maintaining oral history interviews with a wide cross-section of Las Vegas residents. This city has changed a great deal in the past 40 years, and we take for granted that there are plenty of people around who can chat with us about our recent past. That's not, however, always going to be the case, which is why we must continue to work diligently to ensure that the legacy of this important generation is preserved.

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**Mad Men and Working Women:** Feminist Perspectives on Historical Power, Resistance, and Otherness
BY ERIKA ENGSTROM
Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2014

In this work, communication studies professor Erika Engstrom and her co-authors explore the historical context for the Mad Men TV series and issues that women continue to face today. Here Engstrom gives us her take on how key female characters have stood up for what they want.

**Peggy Olsen:** Peggy is an everywoman, competent and living on her own terms, but climbing the ladder and finding a partner — “having it all” — is a challenging journey. She hasn’t found someone who will support her work and not be insecure of her success.

**Megan Draper:** Don thought he had found his ideal in Megan: a sensitive caretaker for his children and an equal on his arm in the workplace and at home. But she had other plans. This final season should reveal if Megan will stay committed to her career path, with or without Don.

**Joan Harris:** Joan thought she had made once she married a doctor, but realizes he is not her equal, dumps him, and goes back to work. While her path to getting ahead differed from Peggy's, they also shared each other's battles.

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**What’s Your Story?**

David G. Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research at UNLV Libraries, now is researching the Stardust Resort’s transition to Boyd Gaming after skimming scandals in the early 1980s. If you have stories about the Stardust, Boyd Gaming, or Las Vegas from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, contact him at dgs@unlv.gaming.edu.
UNLV Rodeo Team’s coaches on wrangling recruits and rustling up sponsors.

BY CHERD WHITNEY

Quick, which athletic squad is UNLV’s most decorated? Basketball, with its 1990 national title and multiple All-Americans? The golf team, winner of the 1998 NCAA championship, and two individual national titles? Decent guesses, but, no. The answer: the rodeo team, winner of 15 individual and team national titles in its 24-year history.

One constant during that time is Ric Griffith — he calls himself “a rodeoer all my life” — the program’s head coach.

Rodeo is not a club sport; it’s an official UNLV collegiate sport and is part of the athletics department. But it doesn’t receive funding the way other programs do. Sponsorships and donations from local businesses and individuals in the community provide most of the team’s budget, including a limited number of scholarships for student-athletes and modest coaching stipends. Griffith and assistant coach Bryce Barnes (who just got a raise to $10,000 a year) both have dayjobs as farriers.

“I’ve worked my life around the rodeo so that I have the freedom to do the coaching part,” said Griffith. He also breeds and trains barrel racing horses on his ranch at Craig Road and Buffalo Drive and runs a headstone-crafting business, Griffith Final Dates, which give him the flexibility to set his schedule around the team.

“What does a rodeo coach do? “It’s very similar to the other sports,” Griffith said. “It goes all year — coaching, recruiting, talking to kids.”

In January, as students come back from winter break, the team kicks into high gear and coaching turns into a full-time job. Then it’s months of chasing down annual sponsors, getting awards ordered, and contracts signed. “By April it’s very consuming,” he said.

When UNLV once again hosted the West Coast Regional Finals Rodeo April 26-27 at the 4,400-seat South Point Arena & Equestrian Center, Griffith and Barnes wore many cowboy hats: coach, host, event organizer, horseshoer, gate changer — whatever needed to be done.

The two coaches basically lived at the South Point Hotel that weekend. But despite their 20-hour work days, Barnes said, “Once the rodeo actually begins, it feels much easier.”

South Point owner Michael Gaughan is a key donor for the program. His hotel’s equestrian center features a 250-by-125-foot arena floor with climate-controlled
UNLV junior Tyler Baeza, a saddle bronc rider, will be heading to Casper, Wyo., in June for the College National Finals Rodeo. Head coach Ric Griffith said Baeza would have won the regional title if he hadn’t missed half the season with a back injury.

“Michael Gaughan has been such a huge supporter,” Barnes said. “He just said, ‘Whatever you need, you just let me know.’”

Practice sessions are held at the Rockin’ K Arena in northwest Las Vegas on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The team’s 15 student-athletes compete in 10 rodeos each season. The team standings come from the top six men and four women in each competition. The men compete in saddle bronc, bareback and bull riding; tie-down roping; steer wrestling, and team roping. The women compete in barrel racing, breakaway roping, and goat tying.

The South Point regional finals were the last step before the College National Finals Rodeo, which will be held June 15-21 in Casper, Wyo. The Rebels did not qualify for the national title team competition.

“We had a really young team this year,” said Griffith, whose team usually ranks in the Top 10 nationally. “That changes the scenario. I call it the high school jitters. (The talent level at regionals) was a big eye-opener for the young kids. But they learn a lot.”

The coaches will enter next season with big hopes for a more experienced team, which will include junior saddle bronc rider Tyler Baeza, who will compete for a national title next month in Caspar.

Barnes is optimistic about the next couple of years. “It’s an exciting core group that will be competitive for a long time.”

Joining that group will be new recruits, some of whom will come from the junior college ranks. Griffith and Barnes get around 200 applicants each year for those 15 roster spots and watch the video highlight reels to pare down the prospect list.

Since the program lacks resources for recruiting trips, the tournaments are key to attracting top talent to the program.

Four junior college teams competed in the West Coast Regional Finals, giving Griffith and Barnes an up-close look at dozens of prospects. UNLV also competes with other four-year schools, including Fresno State and Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo for steer wrestlers and barrel racers.

Of course, both prospective and current student-athletes must make the requisite academic progress. “Just because a student goes to a junior college, doesn’t mean he or she has aspirations of going to a university,” Barnes said. “There are only a certain number who can meet the academic requirements and have the motivation for it.”

And Griffith is a stickler on the subject: The cowboys and cowgirls know studies come first; rodeo comes second.

Barnes said about 85-90 percent of UNLV team athletes move on to professional rodeo at some level. “That doesn’t mean you’ll see them at next year’s National Finals Rodeo,” Barnes said. “But we’ve had some kids come out of UNLV who did.”

When the NFR rolls around again in November, Griffith and Barnes will be there to fulfill one of their many roles: fund-raising. “The NFR is big for us,” Barnes said. “It gives us a major opportunity to talk to other rodeo people and people in the community.”

UNLV’s Pro Champions

**Ross Coleman**
10-time PBR World Finals Qualifier

**Nora Hunt**
PWRA World Champion Breakaway Roper (2002)
PWRA World Champion Tie-down (2003)

**Cody Jesse**
NFR Average Winner (2003)
Reserve World Champion (2003)

**Joe Ketterm**
NFR Qualifier (2001)

**Justin McBride**
PBR World Champion (2005, 2007)

**Colin McTaggart**

**Marcus Michaelis**
NFR Qualifier (2007)

**Nellie Williams**
NFR Qualifier (2010)

**Preston Williams**
Team Roping Champion (1997)
INFR World Champion All-around (1995, 2005)

PBR: Professional Bull Riders
NFR: National Finals Rodeo
PWRA: Professional Women’s Rodeo Association
INFR: Indian National Finals Rodeo
While most university research trips focus on scientific breakthroughs, an expedition on geomicrobiology also offered new discoveries in high school teaching.

UNLV biology professor Brian Hedlund and chemistry professor MaryKay Orgill brought seven Clark County high school teachers along on a recent research expedition to China. The high school teachers spent three weeks last summer exploring small Chinese towns and collecting water and soil samples as a part of a $3.75 million National Science Foundation grant to encourage large international collaborations.

Hedlund is leading the team of more than 50 researchers from universities in the U.S. and China on the grant to identify the microscopic organisms living within the Tengchong Geothermal Field in Southwest China’s Yunnan province. These microorganisms have not been cultured or studied in any significant way.

But the grant also offered the opportunity to turn the high school teachers into field researchers. Orgill, an expert in chemistry education, was curious about the impact that the experience would have on the teachers’ perceptions of scientific practices and if it would prompt them to make changes in their classrooms.

Local high school teachers trek to China alongside UNLV researchers to immerse themselves in science. Their results: New approaches to educating Southern Nevada’s students.
“It is one thing to learn about how science works from a book or a class. It is an entirely different thing to know what science looks like because you have experienced it yourself,” she said. “That personal experience with science research gives the teachers the background they need to design meaningful science learning experiences.”

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

The teachers’ role began well before the trip. They attended monthly online meetings in which university researchers jointly planned the studies that would be carried out during the trip. They also took three weekend field trips to Nevada hot springs to learn about the ecology and practice techniques for gathering and analyzing samples.

Once in China, they presented at a scientific conference at Yunnan University, observed a middle school science class, and talked with their Chinese counterparts. This experience helped them see the differences between Chinese and American educational approaches.

Mike Bycraft, a geosciences and physics teacher at Green Valley High School, said the classroom visit was particularly impactful. “It was a wonderful experience to see my counterpart teach a lesson and then to have a relatively frank discussion afterward with teachers and administrators. It was comforting to see that all teachers, regardless of country, share similar problems and experiences in their careers.”

After the scientific conference in Kunming, the team traveled to Tengchong and then to Ruidian, two locations with multiple hot springs to study. There, the teachers joined with existing research teams from universities in China and the U.S. It was a wonderful experience to see my counterpart teach a lesson and then to have a relatively frank discussion afterward with teachers and administrators. It was comforting to see that all teachers, regardless of country, share similar problems and experiences in their careers.”

After the scientific conference in Kunming, the team traveled to Tengchong and then to Ruidian, two locations with multiple hot springs to study. There, the teachers joined with existing research teams from universities in China and the U.S.

“I found working within the context of an actual field experience to be memorable,” said Aaron Dehne, a chemistry teacher at Clark High School. “The experience was unfiltered and stark when compared to my past experiences in research. As a member of a team, I felt compelled to meet and excel at my job.”

APPLYING THE RESEARCH

The field experience is now changing classrooms back in Southern Nevada. Bycraft, for example, said his school field trips were not always strongly connected to the content in his classroom. Because he realized how essential the monthly planning meetings were to the success of the China trip, Bycraft has created explicit pre-field trip activities so students develop related content knowledge and are involved in the trip planning.

Jennifer Conder is a biology teacher at Southwest Career and Technical Academy. She noticed the emphasis researchers placed on asking questions and planning investigations, so she is now prompting her students to be more inquisitive and giving them more freedom to plan the experiments they carry out.

Now that they are home from China, the teachers continue to be involved with the Tengchong project. Each teacher is preparing an article about the changes he or she implemented in his or her classroom teaching for a journal for high school science teachers. They also presented to other teachers during the Southern Nevada Science Conference in February.

In his presentation, Nathan Williams, a biology and physical science teacher at Las Vegas High School, talked about how he saw the Tengchong researchers engineer solutions to problems they encountered in the field and how students could benefit from participating in that same engineering design process.

The benefits of the trip were not one-sided, UNLV’s Orgill noted. She is studying the effects of such programs.

“The research groups were able to collect more data than they had on previous trips to China because of the contributions of the teachers. The teachers were also able to introduce the researchers to technological applications that made gathering and sharing collected data easier,” Orgill said. “On a personal level, I learned a lot about teaching and how to better interact with my students as a result of the discussions I had with the teachers in this project.”

Other participating high school teachers included Kris Carroll, a K-12 regional science trainer; Tony Whitney of Western High School; and Cindy Kern, then a science teacher at Green Valley High School and now an assistant professor at the University of New Haven.

CHEMIST ERNESTO ABEL-SANTOS IS WORKING ON A COMPOUND that could aid your intestinal tract when antibiotics have wiped out some of the “good” bacteria. His compound, known as CamSA, stops the germination of Clostridium difficile (C. diff). While this bacteria is commonly found in the human gut, it can become a problem when the competing bacteria usually present have been wiped out by antibiotic treatment. It is particularly dangerous for patients with suppressed immune systems who are in a hospital, nursing home, surgery center, or similar environment. In the United States alone, C. diff is responsible for approximately 500,000 sick patients and 20,000 deaths each year.

The professor first investigated his anti-germinant compound in mice. He found that his compound does basically the same job that competing gut bacteria normally would do — it keeps the C. diff spores from germinating and, as a result, prevents infection.

Abel-Santos is working with a company in Boston to move CamSA through preclinical trials. He is pursuing a patent for his discovery and worked with Lee Business School entrepreneurship students to develop a business plan to launch a company to market the product. That student team won second place in the Southern Nevada Business Plan Competition in 2013. He also is in negotiations with a venture capital firm and seeking a Small Business Innovation grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Battling Bacteria
As media pundits debate climate change, politicians decide which projects to fund, and American universities work to attract students to technical fields, George Rhee hopes more scientists hone their communication skills. The author of *Cosmic Dawn: The Search for the First Stars and Galaxies*, Rhee shared his own scientific quests during UNLV’s University Forum and TEDx lectures this spring. He also organizes the Russell Frank Astronomy Public Lecture series, which draws a mix of curious minds from the general public.

CONFRONTING SCIENCE

**George Rhee, physics professor**

**My love of astronomy** — and wanting to share it with others — began when I was a teenager. I attended a weekly series at CERN (Geneva, Switzerland), the site of the large Hadron Collider. These lectures were called “Science for Everybody” and were led by a remarkable man named Rafel Carreras. His enthusiasm for astronomy was contagious.

I thought I would like to be like him and just be curious for a living.

Some colleagues were skeptical when we started our physics and astronomy lectures. It’s Vegas, they’d say. We can’t compete with all the entertainment offerings here.

But our lectures now fill the auditorium and some 30 people stay after to ask questions.

It’s fun when audience members compare what they believed before to the new things they’ve just learned. It’s not a matter of bulldozing over someone’s point of view but of just raising questions and advancing the thought process.

**Web extra:** George Rhee’s TEDxUNLV lecture delves into the process of astronomical discovery, the history of science, and Winnie the Pooh. Watch it online at news.unlv.edu/confronting. For more on UNLV’s lectures, visit unlv.edu/calendar.

**I change my viewpoint** all the time on science issues.

**Science operates at the frontier of the known and unknown.** Science is the constant process of confronting our conjectures — the way we think the world ought to be — with experiments that tell us the way the world actually is.

What changes minds, or at least my mind, is numeracy. With real, quantifiable measures you can have a more rational discussion.

**Having lived in Nevada for a number of years, I’ve been very anti-nuclear energy.**

But I recently read a book on renewable energy. It showed the casualties of nuclear versus coal, and how much more dangerous coal mines actually are. I realized that I might be wrong, that nuclear might be a safer solution after all.

During one of our astronomy lectures, a speaker put up an equation. I’ve always had the prejudice that you’d lose your audience with algebra. But this guy said, Now, I’m going to show you the real stuff, and it engaged the audience. They wanted to see the math.

The audience wants to be respected. They should be communicating if you’re talking down to them.

In the hallway earlier today we were talking about the (National Climate Change Assessment) and the lack of appreciation for the urgency of this issue in media coverage. We talk endlessly about how to deal with that gap. It’s a volatile subject. And I don’t have an answer other than to keep talking and to keep sharing our enthusiasm for the science.

As just a man on the street — I’ve never studied secondary education practices — I suspect the lack of science understanding has to do with what we pay teachers. I’d like to see teaching become just as attractive to those gifted and passionate about math as high-paying jobs in private industry laboratories.

Communication is also key to how we get university research funded. Astronomy is expensive. The successor to the Hubble Telescope will take $5 billion dollars of taxpayer money. That’s not much compared to bank buyouts, but it’s certainly more than can be funded by private industry. So we have to build public support for our work.

Fortunately, in astronomy we have images — amazing, mind-blowing images — to help explain our work.

Almost everyone is interested in astronomy at some level. People look up at the stars and want to know more.

When I started teaching at UNLV in 1993, we didn’t know of any planets outside our solar system. Now we know of more than a thousand.

Telescopes are time machines, so we push back further and further in time looking at fainter and fainter images. All of this brings us closer to answering the question of when and how the first galaxies and stars were formed.

**Where we came from** — that’s a question all of us ask on some level. I feel so fortunate that my job is to help answer it.
You’re not a scientist if all your ideas are confirmed by your research. You’re not truly stepping into the unknown.
Dig This

Fabian Hardy, a graduate student in geoscience, tries to capture the night sky in a remote part of Esmeralda County. Hardy was part of a UNLV research team sent to excavate the skull of a gomphothere, an elephant-like creature that once roamed the area.

The dig was planned by Josh Bonde, ‘12 PhD Geoscience, who is now a Visiting professor, and geoscience professor Stephen Rowland. They timed it to spring break so Hardy and four fellow students as well as alumna Margarita Rodriguez, ‘12 BA Geology, could learn from the experience.

The skull is now safely housed at the Las Vegas Natural History Museum, where Bonde’s team will carefully remove its sandstone. Once the specimen is stabilized, they’ll compare its measurements to other known Gomphotheres. Their goal is to better understand how the ecosystem then led to the one we have now.

[Aaron Mayes/UNLV Photo Services]
TAKING FLIGHT
UNLV RESEARCH, A NEW FAA DESIGNATION, AND STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS OFFER CLEAR SKIES FOR NEVADA’S GROWING DRONE INDUSTRY
BY BRIAN SODOMA
UNLV students Greg Friesmuth and Jinger Zeng test their startup company’s drone, designed for indoor applications.
All Greg Friesmuth wanted for Christmas as a sixth-grader was a Lego Mindstorms kit. The kits for building programmable robots were new and pricey at the time, so he was thrilled when he unwrapped three packages of them. He tinkered with those robots, building and rebuilding them throughout high school in Riverside, Calif. When he followed his sister to UNLV for college, he already knew he wanted a career in robotics. Here his ideas quite literally took flight.

Under the watch of professor Woosoon Yim, Friesmuth dove head first into the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also sometimes referred to as “drones.” As head of UNLV’s Intelligent Structures and Control Laboratory, Yim had just landed a federal research grant in partnership with Sandia National Laboratories to develop an autonomous system for doing the hazardous job of measuring radiation levels inside a domed nuclear power plant. Friesmuth stepped up to design and build a drone to carry sensory equipment.

“It was an up and coming thing,” Friesmuth said about the research work. “I knew (flying UAVs) was going to be popular, and I kind of latched onto them as my specialty.”

His timing couldn’t have been more perfect. The prototype developed with the help of Yim has spawned Skyworks Aerial Systems, a UNLV student-based startup that is winning over investors and showcasing the talent available in the state. “I guess (those Legos) turned out to be the best investment in my future my parents have ever made,” he quipped as he adjusted a bolt on his prototype.

They also turned out to be a great present for Nevada’s economic development efforts.

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**THE ‘SKY’ IS THE LIMIT**

In January, Nevada was named one of six states by the Federal Aviation Administration for drone research and development, thanks in part to the College of Engineering’s existing research in the field. The governor’s office of economic development, UNLV, and industry partners now are working to make Nevada a hotbed for UAVs. According to national reports, there is the potential for drone research and development to become an $89 billion industry with a local economic impact of $2.5 billion to $8.5 billion.

UAVs show particular promise for use in sites that pose imminent danger to humans, such as in mines and other confined spaces. Yim, who is a technical advisor to Skyworks, eyes the Las Vegas Strip, just two miles away from campus, for entertainment engineering applications. “I think people mostly see it for military uses, but there is a lot of other potential. Look at the Bellagio fountains — I could see hundreds of drones making patterns in the sky too.”

Skyworks’ focus is on indoor technology and doesn’t rely on GPS systems like many of the current systems do. Further product development could improve the level of heat resistance of its products, potentially saving the lives of firefighters unaware to what specific dangers lurk inside a burning building.

Skyworks is a prime example of the role UNLV plays in statewide economic development, said Gene Wong, an angel investor associated with the local Vegas Valley Angels investment consortium. He’s become a business mentor to Skyworks team because he believes that such small startups elevate the Silver State’s economy. “I really see the main infrastructure for all this as being the university — with student-led startups creating a robust entrepreneurial community which will also attract out-of-state technology companies,” added Wong, a member of the College of Engineering Advisory Board. “You’ve seen things like this in places like Boulder (Colo.), Austin (Texas), Utah.”

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**A MAJOR MINOR**

UNLV’s economic development role also encompasses the development of the state’s human capital. UNLV recently approved a minor in unmanned aerial systems (UAS) to supply the budding
drone industry with highly qualified professionals. UAS includes all associated communication, navigation, and support equipment needed to build drones. Launching this fall, the 21-credit program starts with core classes in design and application; simulation and testing; and law, including the hot-button topic of privacy rights. From there, students can take one of four tracks: autonomous system design, control systems, communication systems, or human-computer interaction. “With 2,000 engineering students, even if only 1 or 2 percent of them are interested, we’ll be turning out 20 or 30 future professionals,” said Rama Venkat, dean of the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering.

Before launching, the college consulted with local startups, the governor’s office, and area business leaders to ensure that the graduates the program turns out meet the state’s workforce needs, Venkat said. “We didn’t create this sitting in a vacuum. We wanted to ensure the program is relevant to the startup community.”

With so many potential uses still being explored, Venkat expects to see more student-led UAV business concepts, like Skyworks, incubated in UNLV’s engineering labs over the next few years.

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HISTORY ON OUR SIDE

One of the greatest areas of research and development in the drone world lies in sense-and-avoid technology. This allows a UAV to maneuver and avoid objects on its own, without a human controlling it. Developing these technology solutions could come easier for

FROM STUDENT PROJECT TO STARTUP COMPANY

WHILE GREG FRIESMUTH’S DRONE was conceived in a UNLV engineering lab, his new company was incubated with help from across campus. Friesmuth showcased his prototype unmanned aerial system design in the College of Engineering’s 2013 senior design competition. The capstone project and competition are required for engineering students, who must design and build a prototype product, with an emphasis on its marketability. The event attracts private industry executives, government officials, and other dignitaries, including Andrew Hardin.

As director for the Lee Business School’s Center for Entrepreneurship, Hardin keeps an eye out for faculty and student projects with strong commercialization potential. He also teaches an MBA course for entrepreneurs and used Friesmuth’s drone as a case study. The MBA students developed a business plan and named the company Skyworks Aerial Systems.

Friesmuth, an undergraduate set to complete his studies in December, recruited Jinger Zeng, a mechanical engineering master’s degree candidate and the project engineer of UNLV’s award-winning Solar Decathlon house. As company founders, the duo then recruited several other students — Rakitha Perera from electrical engineering, Jameson Lee from mechanical engineering, and Geoff Gardner from computer science — to join the team.

With Zeng now leading the business development, Skyworks Aerial Systems took the top prize in the 2014 Dominic Anthony Marrocco Southern Nevada Business Plan Competition, earning nearly $85,000 in cash and in-kind business services. Skyworks also won first place the Innovation Challenge business plan competition, held in Chicago by the North American Professionals & Entrepreneurs Council. It competed against teams from Northwestern University, MIT, and Cornell, among others.

This summer, the team is focused on raising capital for the company, with a goal of $500,000 to $800,000.

“I think people mostly see it for military uses, but there is a lot of other potential. Look at the Bellagio fountains — I could see hundreds of drones making patterns in the sky too.” Woosoon Yim, mechanical engineering professor

Photo: R. Marsh Starks
UNLV, which has a longer history in UAV research than many may know. “We have been flying UAVs for about nine or 10 years now,” said William Culbreth, a longtime engineering professor. Culbreth explained how a 2007 research grant funded through the Air Force Research Laboratory with earmark funding directed by U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, put Nevada on the map for drone research. UNLV faculty members from computer science and from electrical, computer, and mechanical engineering led a number of projects through the grant. Culbreth’s involved using a novel diesel engine on a UAV. Students involved with the research also saw career benefits. “Of the students who worked on the project with me, two completed their Ph.D.s and work at NSTec (National Security Technologies LLC) and the Los Alamos National Laboratory. One is finishing his Ph.D. and works for NSTec,” Culbreth added.

Yim, a 26-year veteran of UNLV, has landed several National Science Foundation (NSF) grants for research on the smart materials and controls of machines that move in reaction to their environments. His work to develop “fishbots” for military applications led to research in shock-absorbing materials for combat zones, and then to robotic catheters for medical applications. The grants helped Yim expand the base of knowledge in his sliver of the robotics world. But, he points out, they also are a key to advancing the university, and by extension, the state. “My work is far away from the stage of making money at this time,” he says. “However, NSF-sponsored research is very important for economic development. Technology companies look to universities when they want to see the future; they look to see who has received NSF grants in particular areas to see what’s coming in the future.”

“With 2,000 engineering students, even if only 1 or 2 percent of them are interested, we’ll be turning out 20 or 30 future professionals.”

Rama Venkat, dean, Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering

LAB-SPEAK: UAV, UAS, OR DRONE?

ROBOTICS EXPERT PAUL OH hears it all the time. And he can’t really blame the public for not understanding the acronyms — UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) and UAS (unmanned aerial system) — and the word “drone.”

A drone is akin to the remote-controlled hobby planes that have been around for decades. UAVs, and in particular their UAS operation systems, involve imbedded intelligence piloting the device. Much of UAS development centers on the technology to sense a situation, make a decision, and act upon it — like a pilotless plane flying through the forest that must avoid trees, people, and objects, the researcher explained.

With 2,000 engineering students, even if only 1 or 2 percent of them are interested, we’ll be turning out 20 or 30 future professionals.
It’s hard to argue the significance of the Downtown Project’s $350 million investment in Las Vegas’ urban core. New businesses are popping up beyond Fremont Street and cultural offerings of all kinds are pulling locals to the

The Shaper

Michael Downs | ’93 BS Hotel Administration, ’05 EMBA | Operations, Downtown Project

AFTER A CHILDHOOD TRIP to the Hilton Towers in Chicago with his grandmother, Michael Downs was “enamored by beautiful grand hotels.” So he came to UNLV to learn how to run them. His most recent seven-year run at the Bellagio had him overseeing a resortwide room remodel, meticulously done in three-floor stages to keep the dust and noise from guests. A couple decades of hotel experience had helped Downs see that project from different angles, executing on larger outcomes while attending to the details. Now, he is on to an even grander effort.

He and longtime friend and Zappos founder Tony Hsieh had discussed working together many times in the past. It finally happened in January 2013, when Downs joined operations at Downtown Project, a $350 million urban revitalization project backed by Hsieh. Downs’ job is to “activate” the real estate assets the Downtown Project buys, which can include design, construction, leasing, and plenty more.

Walk down East Fremont Street and nearby areas and you’ll see plenty of his handiwork, including the Container Park and the Gold Spike renovation. The Downtown Project has about 300 initiatives under watch right now.

Downs considers himself lucky to be part of a team of visionaries. “We’re just making sure that everything we do is either first or unique to the market, or is the best to market. Those are our three guiding principles,” he said.

Downs also highlights the importance of his team’s use of the Holacracy program in its decision-making. The new system, also embraced by Zappos, ditches management and hierarchical structures. So the roughly 70 people at Downtown Project have their work organized around the people instead of having people plugged into a traditional top-down structure. “For the first few months it was a transition for all of us. We kind of give the keys away to the team,” he said.
WHILE STUDYING PHILOSOPHY and art history at UNLV, Jennifer Herrington Cornthwaite spotted a business opportunity. She had come across quite a few art students and graduates without an outlet to show their work in town. So after graduation, she sidelined her law school plans and opened a gallery in downtown's The Arts Factory. “I just knew I had to create something for myself,” she said. “I figured I’d do what I love and, if I fail, I’m young and I’ll figure something else out.”

The Northern California transplant did eventually close that gallery. But she learned some lessons and applied them to her new ventures, ones that had a hand in kicking off downtown redevelopment efforts in earnest.

In 2010, she turned the old Fremont Medical Center into a haven for creative entrepreneurs. It now houses Cornthwaite’s The Beat Coffeehouse and Emergency Arts, a collective for a wide range of businesses run by artists, writers, fashion designers, and architects. The site can be seen as somewhat of an incubator for small creatively driven enterprises, many of them sole proprietors.

Now, as a co-owner of Future Restaurant Group — along with her husband, Michael Cornthwaite — she is a partner in other restaurant ventures and employs about 50 people. Their venues include Inspire News Café and Theater and Oscar’s Beef • Booze • Broads steakhouse in The Plaza. The latter is a partnership with former mayor Oscar Goodman.

The Cornthwaites also are backers of the Huntridge Theater revitalization efforts. The long-shuttered venue — which hosted such major national music acts as the Smashing Pumpkins and Green Day while they were up and comers — is a historical and cultural symbol for many longtime Las Vegans.

“With what’s going on [downtown], we’re hoping there are more positives than negatives. Nothing’s perfect. We’re all just trying to do the right thing,” she added.
James P. Reza, ’89 BA Political Science

Reza started his career as founder of Scope magazine, which later became the Las Vegas Weekly, and then turned his business skills to the salon industry. In 2008, he and his wife, Staci Linklater, moved their business, Globe Salon, from the suburbs to Soho Lofts at Las Vegas Boulevard and Hoover Avenue. Reza remembers building the space with certain safety concerns in mind. “Our clients were used to a high-end environment,” the Las Vegas native said, noting that about 60 percent of them still come from the suburbs. “We had to make an impression on people wary of coming downtown.”

Now, his patrons are coming downtown for more than a haircut. He and his wife are considering another salon concept and eyeing restaurant opportunities. “That’s part of what we love. Naturally, people get information from their hairdresser. Our staff is like a concierge service for downtown. Three or four years ago it wasn’t like that.”
YOU COULD ARGUE that no one else really had a chance to win the mayor’s race against Carolyn Goodman in 2011. Under her husband Oscar’s previous three terms as mayor, she had seen redevelopment efforts pick up steam. She believed in the area’s progress and didn’t want to see it eroded should the city’s next mayor want a much different course. “To be truthful, that was the only reason I ran,” she said. “I knew the wonderful momentum council and staff created … and I said, ‘Let’s continue this.’”

And being mayor was a natural next step for her own city development projects, in a style very different from her showman husband’s. As founder and then president of The Meadows School for 25 years, Goodman was adept at wrangling supporters, building systems, and keeping operations running smoothly.

Now, she sees to it that the city’s doors are open to business leaders and anyone outside the city who has a curiosity about Las Vegas. And when the microphone is on, she will promote or defend, as the case may be, the merits of her city with anyone. “I do believe in the power of the bully pulpit. You use the power, the influence,” she said, to push for progress. She spearheaded efforts to enact the Nevada Film Tax Credit, curb underage drinking downtown, and encourage collaboration among the city’s nonprofits.

While she is encouraged by the business and community development happening downtown, she is concerned about safety issues in the area. “I’m a huge advocate for more cops,” she added. “Without safety you have nothing. Nobody’s going to come here, and nobody’s going to do business here. Safety, to me, is the single most important issue.”

Big-dollar developments tend to grab the headlines but small businesses run by UNLV graduates are also percolating downtown.

Pj Perez, ’07 BA Journalism & Media Studies

Perez recently gave up his Southern Nevada Water Authority job to focus all his energy on Creation Forge. The printing company complements his Pop! Goes the Icon comic book publishing company, which he launched in 2007.

Through his years in the publishing industry, he learned of the many printing challenges first-time authors face. “Basically you’d either have to go to printers who would do really great work but would take forever to do it or they’d do really great work and overcharge for it,” he said. “Most printers do comic books as an ancillary service and don’t offer enhancements like copy setting, design consulting, marketing assistance, and those value-added services.”

The veteran of downtown has long frequented its arts scene. Now, he says, the area is perfect for engaging both his creative and business sides.

Photo: Curtis Joe Walker
Terence Carroll, '04 BS Computer Science

Carroll, an independent software engineering, operates Downtown Project’s “Work in Progress” building on Sixth Street. His many clients have included a local slot machine manufacturer, credit card processing company, and GameFly, a video game-by-mail service provider similar to Netflix, to name a few. While he has thought of leaving the city at times, the pay-it-forward mindset among the downtown tech crowd has anchored him for now. “For a long time, I feel like the tech scene was very much scattered across the valley. In the past you’d see these tech groups come up, but it was mostly everybody trying to do a lot of business networking — it wasn’t a true community where everybody helps each other,” he said. “Now there’s a central point where people come together and meet other like-minded people.”
Brandon Wiegand, ’12 BS Business Administration

As a child, Wiegand always asked to drive downtown to see the neon lights. Now he’s helping local businesses turn on their lights. Wiegand, executive vice president of acquisitions and sales for Focus Property Group, has focused his real estate efforts on downtown for the past three years. He admits that there are plenty of challenges in operating downtown these days, like landowners who lack the capital to improve their decaying properties but who are unwilling to sell at a reasonable market rate. “There are a lot of places in town where it’s easier to make money right now. But there isn’t anywhere that I’m more excited or passionate about.”

SPEND AN HOUR WITH BRIAN
Paco Alvarez and your chance of sweeping a Las Vegas Jeopardy category significantly increases. You might hear about the exploits of Keely Smith, Louis Prima, or our county’s namesake, William Andrews Clark. You might hear how gambling and quickie divorces were born out of economic necessity or how the first gaming license ever issued in the Silver State was to a woman.

Alvarez has earned the distinction of being one of the city’s greatest cultural advocates and historians. He is devoted to educating journalists and everyday citizens on the cultural opportunities in Las Vegas.

He entered college as an architecture major but found anthropology better satisfied his curiosity for understanding the events and people that led to the quirky city we have today.

As a curator, Alvarez has overseen collections from Liberace, Siegfried and Roy, and the Neon Museum, among others. One of his proudest moments came when he helped the Neon Museum acquire the old Stardust Hotel-Casino sign. “That is literally an enormous piece of history. It’s 300 feet high,” Alvarez said.

Today, he works for Zappos, where his primary role is to take care of company archives and collections. But he’s also a go-to for both company headquarters and downtown tours. His tours became legendary years ago when he gave them in his free time to the journalists he came across as a curator for the Las Vegas News Bureau. “I always wanted to show them a side of downtown a lot of people wouldn’t know about,” he added.

Today, Alvarez is also proud to share insights about the Zappos culture. “You have companies that can copy our products, but you can’t copy the culture. Ultimately, it’s that culture that has been our secret formula.”

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Web extra: For more on the influence of UNLV architects on downtown Las Vegas, look for the “Designing Downtown” feature coming in July at news.unlv.edu.
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As a child, Wiegand always asked to drive downtown to see the neon lights. Now he’s helping local businesses turn on their lights. Wiegand, executive vice president of acquisitions and sales for Focus Property Group, has focused his real estate efforts on downtown for the past three years. He admits that there are plenty of challenges in operating downtown these days, like landowners who lack the capital to improve their decaying properties but who are unwilling to sell at a reasonable market rate. “There are a lot of places in town where it’s easier to make money right now. But there isn’t anywhere that I’m more excited or passionate about.”

The Curator

Brian Paco Alvarez | '02 BA Anthropology | Culture Curator, Zappos, Inc.

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As a curator, Alvarez has overseen collections from Liberace, Siegfried and Roy, and the Neon Museum, among others. One of his proudest moments came when he helped the Neon Museum acquire the old Stardust Hotel-Casino sign. “That is literally an enormous piece of history. It’s 300 feet high,” Alvarez said.

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Big-dollar developments tend to grab the headlines but small businesses run by UNLV graduates are also percolating downtown.
Robert Gurdison | '98 BS and '01 Master of Architecture | Founder, D!G Design Group

ROBERT GURDISON HELPED RE-DESIGN Las Vegas’ old city hall, which last year became the new headquarters for Zappos Inc., arguably downtown’s most impactful economic and cultural game changer. The valley native and longtime proponent of downtown redevelopment had made an impression on Zappos founder Tony Hsieh with his work, and since then Gurdison set up his own downtown architecture firm, D!G Design Group, a venture with fellow UNLV architecture grad, Ly Dao. Their firm was involved in redeveloping the old Ferguson Motel, which should open as a 60,000-square-foot retail, office, and entertainment district later this year.

Gurdison was ahead of his time when he talked up downtown redevelopment for his 2001 graduate school thesis, and admits to being pleasantly surprised by the massive changes to the area in the past two years, including the growing cadre of architectural firms that have set up shop there. Several have been founded by yet more UNLV graduates, including Craig Palacios and Tina Wichmann’s Bunnyfish Studios; Jeff Wagner’s [N]Site Studios; and Amy Lee Finchem’s COLAB.

“It’s great to see architects moving down here. The last time I saw something like that in a major city was in Boston,” he said. “Being a local and growing up here, you become really focused on seeing downtown become a true civic realm, where people can point a finger to and see where Las Vegas culture happens.”

Gurdison has won the American Institute of Architects Nevada’s Young Architect Award. Prior to striking out on his own, he was the director of design at Carpenter Sellers Del Gatto Architects. Today, his firm of fellow Rebels (eight of the nine employees are alumni) is housed in that same building he proposed to redesign for his graduate school thesis.

Web extra: For more on the influence of UNLV architects on downtown Las Vegas, look for the “Designing Downtown” feature coming in July at news.unlv.edu.

James P. Reza, '89 BA Political Science

Reza started his career as founder of Scope magazine, which later became the Las Vegas Weekly, and then turned his business skills to the salon industry. In 2008, he and his wife, Staci Linklater, moved their business, Globe Salon, from the suburbs to Soho Lofts at Las Vegas Boulevard and Hoover Avenue. Reza remembers building the space with certain safety concerns in mind. “Our clients were used to a high-end environment,” the Las Vegas native said, noting that about 60 percent of them still come from the suburbs. “We had to make an impression on people wary of coming downtown.”

Now, his patrons are coming downtown for more than a haircut. He and his wife are considering another salon concept and eyeing restaurant opportunities. “That’s part of what we love. Naturally, people get information from their hairdresser. Our staff is like a concierge service for downtown. Three or four years ago it wasn’t like that.”

The Designer

THE DOWNTOWN REBELS

The Upstarts

Photo: Ryan Reason
YOU COULD ARGUE that no one else really had a chance to win the mayor’s race against Carolyn Goodman in 2011. Under her husband Oscar’s previous three terms as mayor, she had seen re-development efforts pick up steam. She believed in the area’s progress and didn’t want to see it eroded should the city’s next mayor want a much different course. 

“To be truthful, that was the only reason I ran,” she said. “I knew the wonderful momentum council and staff created ... and I said, ‘Let’s continue this.’”

And being mayor was a natural next step for her own city development projects, in a style very different from her showman husband’s. As founder and then president of The Meadows School for 25 years, Goodman was adept at wrangling supporters, building systems, and keeping operations running smoothly.

Now, she sees to it that the city’s doors are open to business leaders and anyone outside the city who has a curiosity about Las Vegas. And when the microphone is on, she will promote or defend, as the case may be, the merits of her city with anyone. “I do believe in the power of the bully pulpit. You use the power, the influence,” she said, to push for progress. She spearheaded efforts to enact the Nevada Film Tax Credit, curb underage drinking downtown, and encourage collaboration among the city’s nonprofits.

While she is encouraged by the business and community development happening downtown, she is concerned about safety issues in the area.

“I’m a huge advocate for more cops,” she added. “Without safety you have nothing. Nobody’s going to come here, and nobody’s going to do business here. Safety, to me, is the single most important issue.”

Carolyn Goodman | ’73 M.Ed. Counseling & Educational Psychology | Mayor, City of Las Vegas

Pj Perez, ’07 BA Journalism & Media Studies

Perez recently gave up his Southern Nevada Water Authority job to focus all his energy on Creation Forge. The printing company complements his Pop! Goes the Icon comic book publishing company, which he launched in 2007.

Through his years in the publishing industry, he learned of the many printing challenges first-time authors face. “Basically you’d either have to go to printers who would do really great work but would take forever to do it or they’d do really great work and overcharge for it,” he said. “Most printers do comic books as an ancillary service and don’t offer enhancements like copy setting, design consulting, marketing assistance, and those value-added services.”

The veteran of downtown has long frequented its arts scene. Now, he says, the area is perfect for engaging both his creative and business sides.

Photo: Curtis Joe Walker
The Builder

Terence Carroll, ’04 BS Computer Science

Carroll, an independent software engineering, operates Downtown Project’s “Work in Progress” building on Sixth Street. His many clients have included a local slot machine manufacturer, credit card processing company, and GameFly, a video game-by-mail service provider similar to Netflix, to name a few. While he has thought of leaving the city at times, the pay-it-forward mindset among the downtown tech crowd has anchored him for now. “For a long time, I feel like the tech scene was very much scattered across the valley. In the past you’d see these tech groups come up, but it was mostly everybody trying to do a lot of business networking — it wasn’t a true community where everybody helps each other,” he said. “Now there’s a central point where people come together and meet other like-minded people.”

LIKE ANY OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECT member, Paul Cline eschews titles. After managing construction jobs for local contractors, Cline is now doing it for an entity that has arguably one of the most important roles in reshaping downtown.

Cline was offered his job while trying to sell his previous employer’s construction management services. There was a miscommunication prior to the meeting and his understanding was that the Downtown Project was looking for an experienced contracting company to help manage jobs. Instead, he quickly learned that the entity was looking for one manager, and his skill set fit the bill. Content with his current employer, he took a little time to consider the offer. “My wife asked me when I would have $350 million to spend on redeveloping downtown (again). I pretty much knew the answer,” he said.

Cline makes sure projects are seen through to completion. He also leans on his architectural insights to shape a densely populated, walkable community with restaurants, schools, and parks — or “a real city” in his eyes. “It’s a bit against the grain. The West, in general, is more focused on cars,” he added.

Cline sees the downtown development boom of the early 2000s as a bit of a false start. Those condo projects were largely built for seasonal residents. Today’s efforts are more community-oriented and geared toward creating not only a destination but a place for people who want to live and work in downtown full time.

“Cities have more patents per capita; they create more wealth per capita,” he said. “As density increases, the accelerating returns increase. … A lot of evidence suggests this happens because of the actual connections we make with people in cities, because we walk past each other on the street, sit next to each other at the café.”

THE UPSTARTS
Brandon Wiegand, ‘12 BS Business Administration

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Matt Williams, the new manager of the Washington Nationals, studies his team like a general planning for a battle. This is Williams’ first spring training with “the Nats,” a team that made the playoffs in 2012 after years of losing records and was expected to contend last season but stumbled out of the gate. The Nationals’ management hired Williams, who had a reputation for aggressive play, to put the fire back into the team.

On this March 4 morning’s workout at Space Coast Stadium in Viera, Fla., players line up to take their swings as the cracks of well-hit baseballs ricochets around the park. On the sidelines, pitchers play soft-toss catch to loosen their arms. This afternoon, the squad will meet the division rival New York Mets in a practice game that means nothing toward regular season standings, yet everything to Williams.

When the Nationals’ media relations officer tells him about a request for a telephone interview, Williams politely turns down the offer. Media attention means little to him — he believes his time is better spent preparing for the upcoming contest. He’s focused on assessing team strengths and addressing weaknesses.

Williams, as his teammates and his former UNLV baseball coach Fred Dallimore says, hates to lose. He embodies the legendary line made famous by football coach Vince Lombardi: “Winning isn’t everything — it’s the only thing.”

Before taking the Nationals job, Williams had a 17-year career playing with the San Francisco Giants, Cleveland Indians, and Arizona Diamondbacks. After he retired as a player, he coached for three years with the Diamondbacks, where he picked up the reputation as a player-friendly coach who prepared for every contest as if it were Game 7 of the World Series.

“Managing style is nothing more than personality,” Williams says. “I’m aggressive by nature, so I want to constantly apply pressure.” He looks over the field and adds,
“Managing style is nothing more than personality. I’m aggressive by nature, so I want to constantly apply pressure.”

“We do have a number of superstar players. With that comes great expectations, and that’s a good thing. We must embrace those expectations and work with them.”

That attitude impresses his players, including slugger Ryan Zimmerman, who patrols third base, like Williams did in his day. “When he was the third base coach in Arizona, I chatted with him a bit,” Zimmerman told The Washington Post. “He wasn’t too talkative. I kind of like that. The guys that talk too much annoy you. You worry if they really care about the game. With Matt, you could tell he was focused.”

Outfielder Bryce Harper told The Post that Williams brings excitement to the team. “It’s nice to be able to have a young guy doing things, working hard, and having that enthusiasm of being here every single day, and wanting to win and have a plan and work hard,” he said. “There are a lot of teams trying to [do] that.”

**CATCHING DALLIMORE’S EYE**

Growing up, Williams’ father, Arthur, encouraged his sons to enjoy sports. “My brothers are 13, 11, and nine years older than me, and they were my heroes,” Williams says. “I wanted to be just like them.”

At Carson City High School, he played football — quarterback and defensive back — and baseball. The 6-foot-2 teenager’s hard-nosed work at shortstop and in the batter’s box caught Dallimore’s eye, and the coach recruited him to UNLV. He put Williams on a weight program and turned the lanky 175-pounder into a 210-pound muscular competitor.

“Matt had all things you’re looking for in a young athlete,” Dallimore remembers. “He had good hands and good feet for a fairly big guy, and he was also a good person from a good family.”

Dallimore was impressed by how intensely Williams worked in practices and during games: “He had this look of determination on his face when he stepped into the batter’s box, and you knew he wasn’t going to settle for mediocrity. He was a no-nonsense guy, yet he still knew how to have fun in the game.”

Once after striking out, Williams walked dejectedly back to the dugout. “What can I do at the next at-bat?” Williams asked his coach. Dallimore told him, “When you strike out, it’s a sign of failure. Make the other team work to try to throw you.”

Williams credits Dallimore with preparing him and “all of his student-athletes for the next stage of our lives, in sports or the real world. He taught all of us that there is no substitute for hard work.”

**HARD WORK PAYS OFF**

The hard work paid off. Over three seasons with the Rebels, Williams batted .327, with 58 home runs and 217 RBIs. Those numbers impressed Major League scouts, and the Giants made him the third pick in the 1986 draft. In 1997, he was inducted into the UNLV Athletic Hall of Fame, and UNLV has retired his jersey.

In 17 big league seasons with the Giants, Cleveland Indians, and Arizona Diamondbacks, Williams hit .269, with 378 home runs and 1,218 RBIs. Many were surprised when he chose to play with the Diamondbacks in 1998, an expansion team that had little star power. But three years later, the team won the World Series.

After retiring in 2003, he worked as an analyst for Fox Sports Arizona. In 2010, he rejoined the Diamondbacks as a coach.

“Going from a player to a coach has some challenges,” he remembers. “Coaching allows me to make a difference with our players, because I can teach them some of the things I learned from outstanding coaches I’ve had during my playing career.”

When asked what’s most important when evaluating a player — athletic ability or heart — he answers, “All players that make it to the professional level have talent. The ones that find success at the major league-level have certain intangibles: a keen sense of timing, the ability to be a good teammate, and knowledge of the game in all aspects. These separators allow greater success.”

After the spring training game, which the Nationals won 11-5 thanks to some timely hitting and well-executed fielding, Williams congratulates the players as they jog off the field. Before he heads into the clubhouse to dissect the game and plan for tomorrow, he says, “Just want our players to enjoy the game as they did as kids, and play every game with intensity and energy. If we can do that, we’ll be successful.”
1960s
Andrew Barnes, '67 BS Business Administration, retired in October after a career in the computer industry. He held various sales/marketing and management positions at such companies as Sun Microsystems and Mentor Graphics. At Sun he led a team that developed and rolled out a global program for major software partners. Twice he was named a Sun Key Employee. Now he is looking forward to spending more time with family and plans to take up golf for the third time. As a retiree present he gave himself a Porsche and joined the Porsche Club of America. He and his wife, Janet, live in Laguna Niguel.

1970s
Jack Howard, '71 BS Electrical Engineering, is working as a senior project engineer with the newest office of CDI Engineers in Irvine, Calif. With more than 40 years' experience in structural engineering, he has been involved in the design of every type of structure. For the past 15 years he specialized in concrete structures ranging from parking structures to high-rise hotels. He and his wife, Janet, live in Laguna Niguel.

Sheryl Stansbery Misenhimer, '74 BS Theatre Arts and Physical Education, has been a principal in Santa Paula, Calif., for 22 years. Singing is her hobby. She and her husband, James “Dart,” have two sons, Matthew and John. They live in Ventura.

Tina Kunzer-Murphy, '75 BS Physical Education, '77 Master of Education, was honored recently as a “Woman to Watch” by Vegas Inc. She was among 15 inspirational women throughout the Las Vegas Valley who were recognized for having an impact on the community. She was recognized for her achievements throughout her career and, most recently, for being named the first female athletic director at UNLV.

Nancy Forni Flagg, '79 BA Elementary Education, '92 MA English, retired from UNLV in 2013 and has opened Finishing Touches Project Management. Her company provides writing, copyediting, and proofreading services as well as project management consulting. She currently is managing an e-learning project for NSHE Chancellor Dan Klaich.

1980s
Clarence Lee, '84 BA Political Science, has worked on and off Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., for years and has run political campaigns at the federal, state, and local levels. At UNLV he was the first black student government president. Now he is married with a teenage daughter. Her love for volleyball prompted him to create a girls’ volleyball club. The family lives in Woodbridge, Va.

Vi Hirsch, '85 BS Math, is a front-end web developer who has experience with Angular, JS, and LAMP. He lives in Los Angeles.

George Lorenzo, '85 BA English, is writer, editor, and publisher of SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends and Strategies, and Real-timeOnlineEd.com. The former editor-in-chief of the Rebel, Yelli lives in Williamsville, N.Y., with his wife, Gabriele, and their two children.

Michael Green, '86 BA History, '88 MA History, received the 2013 Eugene Asher Distinguished Teaching Award from the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Society for History Education. Green teaches history at the College of Southern Nevada and also teaches part-time in UNLV’s Honors College. One member of the prize review committee described the scale, range, and innovation of Green’s teaching as extraordinary. The award is given to inspiring teachers whose techniques and mastery of subject matter are judged to make a real difference to students. He received the award at the AHA’s 128th annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in January.

Steve Thornock, ’87 BS Elementary Education, is a tax lien investigator. His hobby involves the nonprofit Las Vegas Jr. Track Club, which he founded. The club hosts free three-mile fun runs at Performance Footwear each week followed by optional dinners. He and his wife, Joanna Gleason Thornock, ’85, have four children.

Judy Taylor Voigt, ’87 BS Education, ’93 MEd Educational Administration, and her sister recently wrote a children’s picture book, The Great PJ Elf Chase: A Christmas Family Tradition, based on a tradition that has been in her family for generations. It’s the story of two brothers who are determined to catch one of Santa’s elves as pajamas are secretly delivered on Christmas Eve. She lives in Littleton, Colo., with her husband, Barry, and two sons.

Kurt Hildebrand, ’88 BA Communication Studies, was named president of the Nevada Press Association at the group’s annual meeting. A member of the association’s board since 2011, he also has served as second vice president and vice president. Since 2004 he has been editor of The Record-Courier in Gardnerville. Previously, he served as city and managing editor of the state’s fourth-largest daily newspaper, the Nevada Appeal in Carson City and as production manager of Nevada Magazine. In 1994 he was named Nevada outstanding weekly journalist. He and his wife, Jennifer Hollister, live in a home they built on the outskirts of Genoa, Nevada’s first settlement.

Rod Richter, ’88 BS Business Administration, is the director of enterprise risk & compliance for the Pasha Group in San Rafael, Calif. He, his wife, and two children live in Oakland.

Rebel Entrance
Celebrity chef Guy Fieri, ’90 BS Hospitality Management, opened his first Las Vegas restaurant in Rebel style. He arrived to the April 17 grand opening of Guy’s Vegas Kitchen & Bar in his classic Chevy Camaro with UNLV cheerleaders as the marching band played the UNLV fight song. The 200-seat restaurant at The Quad Resort & Casino faces the Las Vegas Strip and is decorated with his alma mater’s memorabilia.

In 1996, Fieri opened his first restaurant, Johnny Garlics, in Santa Rosa, Calif. Since then, he expanded Johnny Garlics, launched the Tex Wasabi’s restaurants, opened Guy’s American Kitchen & Bar in New York City, and created Guy’s Burger Joint for Carnival Cruise Line’s fleet. He gained celebrity chef status in 2006, after winning the reality show Next Food Network Star. He went on to launch several popular cooking and dining shows, including Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives.
Energy. What sources should we rely on: solar, wind, nuclear? To what degree can we decrease our reliance on more traditional sources such as coal? The stuff of news stories across America, right? But not just in America as UNLV alumna Tracy Logan can attest.

Logan, ’03 BA Economics, spent a four-month stint at the University of Sydney in Australia as a Fulbright Scholar in climate change and clean energy policy. An attorney whose work focuses on international energy issues, she was chosen for the professional scholarship following a six-month application and selection process.

The United States and Australia have a lot in common when it comes to energy, she said. Both have aging power supply systems that need to be replaced, according to Logan. Both have been largely reliant on carbon-based fuels such as coal and oil. And both now face tough decisions to move more toward cleaner, renewable resources such as solar and wind.

“This overhaul has to happen. It is not elective,” Logan said. “And the longer we wait, the more expensive it is going to be.” In Australia, the estimated cost of such an overhaul is about $240 billion.

“A real sense of urgency exists to usher in a no-carbon system,” she said.

One of the major challenges, of course, is how to finance the overhaul. For Australia, it will need to include both private and foreign investment, she said.

While the two countries’ energy challenges have many similarities, there are important differences, she pointed out.

“Australia has great distances and not many people,” she said, adding that the United States has both great distances and a very large population.

Another difference is that while a robust solar power system and a great deal of coal make Australia energy-independent, America has not yet been able to achieve that status.

Logan, who earned a law degree from the University of San Diego School of Law in 2009, is writing an article for a law journal based on the research she did while in Australia.

Since returning to the United States in January, Logan has switched jobs. She is moving from Washington, D.C., to Southern California to work for the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Her job will involve offshore wind issues in the Pacific region.

Logan transferred to UNLV after spending six years studying at community colleges. She had taken a number of hard science and math classes but had no intention of studying economics. "I had taken, I think, one economics class at that point. I owe it all to the career person in the College of Business (now the Lee Business School). She looked at the classes I had taken up to that point and asked if I would consider economics.

“When I began taking the economics classes at UNLV, everything I studied opened my mind to the business of ordinary life. I began to see economics as being a part of everything.”

The professors were excellent and supportive, said Logan, citing Bernard Malamud and Bradley Wimmer as two economics faculty members who were particularly influential in her academic career.

She also drew support from two fellow female economics majors. There weren’t many women in that major at the time, she recalled. “I felt like we were the ‘Charlie’s Angels’ of economics.”
1990s

Jim Howell, ’90 BA Communication Studies, became the first full-time sports information director for Phoenix College in August. He also is the play-by-play “Voice of the Bears” on their internet streaming broadcasts; and is responsible for all athletic department media releases, media conferences, marketing, and sponsorships. Previously, he spent eight years as the first sports information director at Arizona Western College in Yuma. For the past three years he served as secretary of the Arizona Community College Athletic Conference, NACC Region I. He also is the secretary of the Western States Football League. His hobbies include bike riding and golf. The father of one son, he lives in Surprise, Ariz.

Dominic Provenzano, ’90 BS Hotel Administration, has been named the new general manager of the Tampa Airport Marriott Hotel located at Tampa International Airport in Florida. Formerly the assistant general manager of the Renaissance Tampa International Plaza Hotel, he has been with Marriott for 21 years.

Jody Walker Belsick, ’91 BS Civil Engineering, ’10 MBA, is president of Walker Engineering, a civil engineering consulting firm. The company, which celebrates its 11th anniversary this year, is expanding with a new an office in Santa Monica, Calif. She says that UNLV alumni Teaseya Wolf, ’90 BS Civil Engineering, Don Walker, ’91 Business Administration, and Joanna Opena, ’92 BS Civil Engineering, are valued members of the team.

Geraldine Barr Perry, ’91 BS Business Administration, was promoted to supervising auditor for the Nevada department of taxation. She supervises all the audit staff in the Las Vegas office. Previously, she was a business director and staff accountant for KPMG Peat Marwick. Her hobbies include tombstone photographs and anything involving vital statistics and historical articles for genealogy. She is manager of the Nevada Tombstone Project, the Nevada Dibituary Project, and the Nevada Archives — all free genealogical websites. She has two daughters, nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. One of her grandsons is majoring in music at UNLV. She lives in Henderson.

A. Autumn Betke, ’93 BA Communication Studies, ’97 MA Communication Studies, ’00 JD, is the founding member of Betke Law. She focuses on plaintiff’s personal injury law, including car accidents, premises liability, and injuries caused by defective products. She teaches public speaking at the College of Southern Nevada. She was the first graduate of UNLV’s Boyd School of Law — because her name came first alphabetically among its first class. After graduating, she went to work for the civil division of the Clark County district attorney’s office. She is involved with many charitable organizations, including St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Safe Nest, Three Square, and Habitat for Humanity.

Mike Essig, ’93 BS Business Administration, ’95 MS Hotel Administration is senior director of information technology for the Choctaw Casinos in Oklahoma. Earlier this year he earned a doctoral degree in organizational management with a specialization in information technology from Capella University. He lives in Henderson.

Scott Gulbransen, ’93 BA Communication Studies, was named vice president of global communications & digital marketing at DSI, an enterprise mobility company. He leads brand-level communications; public relations; analyst relations; and online, content, and social marketing for the company. He is married to Eliete Muniz Gulbransen, ’96 BA Criminal Justice. They live in Overland Park, Kansas.

Young “Sally” Kim, ’98 MS Hotel Administration, is an associate professor of marketing at Shenandoah University. Golf is her hobby. She lives in Chantilly, Va.

Rachel Klem, ’98 Bachelor of Music, is a general, choral, and instrumental music teacher at The School at Columbia University. She lives in Hoboken, N.J.

Killer Tribute

The band The Killers paid homage to the UNLV’s 1990 championship-winning basketball team during its performance at this year’s March Madness Music Festival, which coincides with the NCAA Final Four. Frontman Brandon Flowers had customized an official UNLV letter jacket with the words “Never Forget” and the last names of starting players Larry Johnson, Stacey Augmon, David Butler, Greg Anthony, and Anderson Hunt.

The band has strong ties to UNLV. As a student here, drummer Ronnie Vannucci used to sneak his bandmates into the Alta Ham Fine Arts Building for rehearsals. The band soon hit it big with its 2004 Hot Fuss album. Vannucci returned to earn his bachelor of music degree in 2011 and remains a supporter of the College of Fine Arts.

A lifelong Rebels fan, Flowers grew up in Southern Nevada as coach Jerry Tarkanian’s teams dominated college basketball. He reached out to UNLV’s athletics department to request an official jacket and lettering. The department knew he was planning to customize the jacket, but didn’t know he’d be sporting it during a nationally televised concert.
Communications Studies, is a recruiter and sourcer for '99 BA Communications, Wendy Callahan Roksvold, '98 BS Business Administration, '01 JD. Andi Chang, a recruiting manager in the transportation practice of Klotz, '99 BS Business Administration, '04 Executive MBA, is running for governor of Nevada. He supports building a high-speed rail system between Las Vegas and Los Angeles, moving the state capital to Las Vegas, and setting up a moral education program for the state's children. The former chief financial officer at the Tuscany Sun, Thomas Uhlenberg, '99 BA Communication Studies, '00 BA History, '02 Master of Education, owns All Pro Carpet Cleaning, a carpet, tile and grout, and Oriental rug cleaning company, in Phoenix. He says many great UNLV professors have been helpful not only while he was in school, but also afterward. His hobbies include hiking, biking, working out, rollerblading, staying hockey, and watching sports. He has a 3-year-old son.

**2000s**

Donald Durgin, '00 BS Civil Engineering, '04 MS Civil Engineering, is the mobility department manager in the transportation practice of Klotz Associates. A licensed professional engineer, he came to the firm with extensive experience in a variety of transportation-related fields, including municipal roadways, complex highways and interchanges, rail design, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. He is a member of the North Houston (Texas) Association and the American Council of Engineering Consultants. He also serves on the Houston Transportation Committee. He lives in Houston.

Zachary Smith, '00 MS Kinesiology, '07 Ph.D. Educational Leadership, has joined the higher education practice of the executive search firm Witt/Kieffer as a consultant. His focus is on recruiting advancement officers as well as other high-level administrators, including presidents, provosts, chancellors, vice presidents, and deans. Before joining Witt/Kieffer, he was interim chief development officer and executive vice president of the University of California, Riverside Foundation as well as the university’s assistant vice chancellor for development. He previously worked as director of development for commercial litigation and also is a member of the firm’s employment law practice group. Before receiving her UNLV degrees, she worked in the insurance industry.

Jeffrey Engleberg, '02 BS Hospitality Management, is director of Installations for Qware Inc. The company develops and markets global hospitality management products and services to hotels, condominiums, resorts, spas, and multi-property locations. He lives in Denver.

Kristen Gallagher, '02 Master of Social Work, '05 JD, was advised to partnership in the law firm of McDonald Carano Wilson in January. She practices primarily in the area of commercial litigation and also is a member of the firm’s employment law practice group. Before receiving her UNLV degrees, she worked in the insurance industry.

Kara Hendricks, '01 JD, works for the Nevada attorney general’s office, serving as supervising senior deputy attorney general with the bureau of litigation. Another Boyd Law School graduate, Dominika Mourn, '11 JD, is on her staff. Traut joined the attorney general’s office after graduation and has served four attorneys general. For most of that time she represented the state department of corrections, first for inmate civil rights, defense, and then working up to the senior deputy level, functioning as general counsel. She also has worked in the personnel division of the attorney general’s office. Singing is her hobby. She lives in Reno.

Shannon Blood, '03 BS Business Administration, is director of public relations and social media at Digital Current. She has extensive and nationally recognized skills in developing comprehensive public relations and marketing strategies and implementing innovative initiatives. She has more than 11 years of international experience in public relations and marketing. She serves as publicity summit chair for the Phoenix chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and on the Community Involvement Committee of the Phoenix chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). She also is a founding member of the Phoenix Suns B8 Chariots and serves on the Slam Dunk Planning Committee.
Last year she received two ADDY Awards from the American Advertising Federation, a Spectrum Award from the American Marketing Association, and an IABC Bronze Quill award. Her hobbies include running, traveling, yoga, meditation, and walking her pugs. She lives in Tempe.

Jacqueline Bodnar, '03 BA Interdisciplinary Studies, celebrated 10 years as a professional writer in May. She has had more than 3,000 articles published in newspapers and magazines around the world, in addition to having worked on thousands of copywriting projects for a wide variety of clients. She has ghostwritten three books and has published one book under her own name, Starting Your Career as a Professional Blogger. She runs the blog VolusiaCountyMoms.com. Her hobbies are traveling, camping, hiking, spending time in nature, writing, reading, and collecting seashells. She lives in Port Orange, Fla.

Homa Sayyar Woodrum, '03 BS Business Administration, '07 JD, opened her own legal practice, Woodrum Law, in January. She practices in the areas of civil litigation, business formation, guardianship, elder law, estate planning, probate, and immigration. She is in her second year as co-manager and cofounder of the Food Allergy Bloggers Conference, an annual conference for food allergy advocates and professionals. This year the conference will take place in September. She is married to Adam Woodrum, '06 JD.

John Danko III, '04 MBA, was promoted to principal electrical engineer at Raytheon Co. He is responsible for radar design and analysis, signal processing, electronics engineering, antenna systems, electronic warfare design and analysis, communication systems, and microwave engineering at Raytheon Missile Systems in Tucson, Ariz. He is married to Brooklyn Danko, '06 M.Ed. Secondary Instructional & Curricular. They live in Sahuarita.

Brent Denison, '04 MFA Theatre Arts, works for the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles as box office customer services manager. Previously, he worked as director of ticketing and patron services for the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center at the College of the Canyons. He also served as production stage manager for the Santa Clarita Regional Theatre main stage productions. Also, he participated as an actor or stage manager in several productions, including South Pacific and Cabaret. His hobbies are theatrical productions and concerts and sightseeing across the country. He lives in Canyon Country, Calif., with his partner and two dogs, Oliver and Eden.

David Hall, '04 BA Film Studies, is a senior publicist at DreamWorks Animation. He works closely with the 20th Century Fox publicity team to formulate film messaging and strategies for all DreamWorks Animation feature films. He has worked on the release and award campaigns for the Academy Award-nominated films Kung Fu Panda, How to Train Your Dragon, Kung Fu Panda 2, and Puss in Boots. Recently his work has involved the films Mr. Peabody & Sherman, How to Train Your Dragon 2, and Home. In October he was included in the 2013 Hollywood's New Leaders Impact Report issued by Variety. The annual issue spotlights the most exciting and important 35-and-under professionals in the entertainment business. He began his career in the publicity department at Sony Pictures Animation where he worked on the film Surf’s Up. He lives in Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Tarin Keith LoCascio, '04 BS Business Administration, is senior project manager and partner at Sound Strategies, a web presence development and search engine optimization firm in New York City. She handles the requests of the company’s major clients while also managing a team of 13 programmers, multiple writers, and the social media team. A former player on UNLV’s volleyball team, she now is a professional beach volleyball player. Her hobbies include snowboarding, fishing, concerts, and traveling. On Feb. 15 she married Andrew LoCascio. They live in Port Washington.

Carlos Sindo, '04 BS Business Administration, has been accepted into the master of science in public relations and corporate communications program at New York University. He lives in Astoria, NY.

Jason Steed, '04 Ph.D. English, is an associate in the law firm Bell Nunnally & Martin’s appellate litigation practice area. A 2009 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law, he represents clients in both state and federal appellate courts across the nation and has acted as lead counsel in a variety of those matters. The former English professor also frequently assists clients and other attorneys with writing briefs. He is a member of the Dallas Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association, and the American Constitution Society.

Irene Sereno Wandtke, '04 BS Business Administration, recently was promoted to director at Geerty & Associates, CPAs where she has worked since January 2007. Before that, she spent five years with McGladrey & Pullen. Her hobbies are crafting and running craft shows. She is married to Richard Wandtke, ’89 BS Business Administration.

Charles-David Young, '04 BA Communication Studies, owns and operates CD Young’s Professional Karate Center in Henderson. The school works with children as young as 4 as well as with adults. He says the program builds self-discipline, confidence, humility, and respect. The

Career in the Air

Gaillard “Gail” Peck Jr., ’90 MBA, was inducted into the Nevada Aerospace Hall of Fame in November. A retired U.S. Air Force colonel, he is the author of America’s SECRET MiG Squadron (Osprey, 2012) in which he writes about a training program he originated in Nevada using actual Soviet jet fighters to train American aircrews for aerial combat. At the time, the program was highly classified. Now he and his travel-agent wife, Carol, not only travel around the world, but also fly around the United States in their Cessna Cardinal. The Vietnam veteran is building a two-person, fully acrobatic RV-8 experimental aircraft. He has two daughters who are UNLV alums, former CSUN President Jennifer Peck, ’00 BS Business Administration, and Elizabeth Peck, ’03 BS Business Administration.
Kirst, ’05  

Yen, ’05  

Clary, ’08  

Batara, ’10  

Thetford, ’10  

Vail, ’10  

Hannah Mathews Farmer, ’08 BA Interdisciplinary Studies, is studying toward a master of science degree in information studies at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Information. She hopes to complete her degree this year. She then plans to pursue a career in youth librarianship. She also is interning with the teen services department of the Austin Public Library through a grant from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. She is married to Barrett Farmer, ’07 BA Film Studies.

Rebecca Cripe Garcia, ’08 Master of Public Administration, is a program manager with the Nevada Gaming Control Board. She has worked for the board since 2003. She and Eddie Garcia III, born Edie, a 16-year employee of Nevada State Bank, is an assistant vice president/senior training developer. The family enjoys traveling and lives in North Las Vegas.

Daniel McCue, ’08 MA Journalism and Media Studies, is an online marketing specialist with Grollin Mutual Reinsurance Co. He has been named to the Communication & Marketing Committee of the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies. This past winter he and his family built an ice skating rink in their backyard for the fourth consecutive year. They live in Grinnell, Iowa.

Chelsea Milko, ’09 BA Political Science and BS Kinesiology, completed nearly three years of service as a Peace Corps volunteer in May 2013. She worked in radio and community economic development in northern Uganda. In September she began work as a Center for Government Leadership fellow with the Partnership for Public Service in Washington, D.C.

Megan Batare, ’10 BS Education, is a middle school and high school science teacher at Coral Academy of Science Las Vegas. She is in her fourth year of teaching. She also is pursuing a master’s degree in educational leadership at Nova Southeastern University. She lives in Henderson.

Jessica Jaques Thetford, ’10 BA Art, is the project coordinator for the Silver City (N.M.) CLAY Festival, an arts and cultural event featuring clay-centric artistic, educational, and entrepreneurial offerings for all ages. Her hobbies include hiking, interior design, open-mic nights, and painting. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for two years. They recently acquired their first puppy.

Vail, ’10 BS Informatics, participated in a project for his Anthropology of Aging class during his college years that eventually prompted his grandfather, Ronald Vail, to write a book, Fair Winds and Following Seas: Reflections on the Navy Career of a Teenage Ensign (Authorhouse). After answering several questions about his life and his participation in World War II, the elder Vail decided to write the memoir.

Delbert Barth, emeritus professor of environmental studies, died March 27. Born in Indiana, he graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point with a degree in military engineering in 1945. He later earned a master’s degree in solid state physics from the Stevens Institute of Technology, and a master’s degree in nuclear physics and a Ph.D. in biophysics, both from Ohio State University. Barth was an Army officer and professor that included a variety of assignments with the Army, the U.S. Public Health Service, where he received the Distinguished Service Medal; the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, where he was promoted to assistant surgeon general; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, he came to UNLV in 1978 as a visiting professor of biophysics. He later joined the faculty fulltime and retired in 1994 after spending three years as director of the Environmental Research Center. He is survived by Lucile, his wife of 67 years, son Christopher, daughter Diana Barth Gaines, and four grandchildren. His older son, Del Jr., and older daughter, Deborah Barth Webb, preceded him in death.

OBITUARIES

Maureen Abel Bernstein, ’75 BA Theatre Arts, ’81 M.Ed. Secondary Instructional and Currucular Studies, died on her birthday, Aug. 24, 2012. She taught theater for the Clark County School District for 20 years, most recently at Desert Oasis High School. She was a professional actress and musical comedienne. One of her roles was Auntie in UNLV’s production of Company. Among her many accolades were the Nevada Theatrans Teacher of the Year for 2007-08 and the National Collegiate Athletic Association Award for Outstanding Contribution to the National Youth Sports Program in 1998. She is survived by her husband of 35 years, Lawrence “John,” son, Frankie, and brother, Jack Abell.

Jerome Koscielniak, ’76 M.Ed. Educational Administration; died Feb. 20. He taught history and geography and coached many sports at Kelso Park High School in Chicago. He wrapped up his education career as a science teacher at Gunn Middle School. He is survived by daughters Christine Doucet-Koscielniak and Jessica Gardnier, mother Mary Koscielniak, two grandsons, and sister Diane Romanek.

George Saphire, ’88 BA Political Science, died Dec. 31. He was a member of UNLV’s first football team in 1968. The team was inducted into the UNLV Athletics Hall of Fame in 1987. A fullback, he lettered in football in 1968, 1969, and 1970. Survivors include sisters Deborah West, Kathleen Rodriguez, and Christine Saphire; and brother Greg Saphire.

Bill Wagonseller, emeritus professor of special education; died March 16; Born in Fairview, Okla., he earned a bachelor’s degree from Wichita State University in Kansas in 1959, a master’s degree from Kansas State University, and a doctoral degree in special education from the University of Kansas. He joined UNLV in 1971 and retired in 1999. He spearheaded the creation of the Parent-Family Wellness Center. He received the UNLV Distinguished Faculty Award in 1982. In 1985 and 1986 he was named Distinguished Teacher of the Year.NKRAP, he received numerous books and videos, including the You and Your Child and Parental Parenting series. Survivors include Beverly, his wife of 56 years; daughter Kim Adams; sons Jeff and Greg; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.
With the Book and Bean Café, group meeting rooms, and quiet crannies for studying, Lied Library is one of UNLV’s most welcoming spaces. Back in the earliest days of the campus, however, UNLV’s library attracted some unwelcome visitors.

Alice Brown, former documents librarian, recounted in her history of the Libraries (held in UNLV Special Collections) that a number of desert dwellers, both plant and animal, wandered or were blown in, lending credence to the nickname “Tumbleweed Tech” that was often attached to the university in its first decade. One day, she said, a desert tortoise wandered into the library, which was then located in UNLV’s first building, Frazier Hall. And a lizard, who became known as “Sneaky Sam,” once took up residence and repeatedly evaded capture.

In 1959, the library moved to Grant Hall but four-, six-, and eight-legged (as well as leg-less) desert visitors continued to make their presence known. By January 1963 the library had its own building at last, an elegant round structure designed by architect Jim McDaniel. It featured a blue-tiled pool with a bubbling fountain at its entrance. Still the nonhuman visitors kept coming. As Brown noted, “The campus was still ‘country.’ People would use the space to walk their dogs and ride horses. The pool by the door was an attractive place for watering animals.”

Another downside: With minimal surrounding landscaping, Las Vegas’ high winds made the fountain an eyesore full of sand and debris. By the early 1970s it was removed, so the library was no longer used as a watering stop for domestic and wild animals. The loss of the fountain was felt most keenly by UNLV biologists who had used it as a habitat for the desert pupfish native to Southern Nevada.

Today the only lizards, snakes, and tortoises in the library can be found in the appropriate sections of the fifth floor, which house monographs on reptiles. —Su Kim Chung, head of special collections public services at UNLV Libraries

More: Do you have a collection of photographs or documents from your time at UNLV? Visit library.unlv.edu to learn about donating to special collections.
We can be a little dramatic

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