

\$4.5 million in gifts pledged to athletics

The Nevada athletics department has been pledged a total of \$4.5 million for construction of a student athlete academic center, enhancements to Legacy Hall and the Peccole Park baseball field, and a new videoboard for Mackay Stadium.

The Marguerite Wattis Petersen Foundation committed the lead gift of \$2 million toward a \$7.5 million building and plaza area to serve the academic needs of the more than 400 Nevada student athletes as well as a gathering point for all students. Another \$500,000 has been donated by the Reno-



Link Piazza

based E.L. Cord Foundation. The facility will include a computer center, individual and group study areas, a student lounge and offices for the department's academic advising staff. It will be located west of the Robert Cashell Field House. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2007.

Link Piazza, announcer of Wolf Pack radio broadcasts in the 1940s and '50s and proprietor of The Sportsman sporting goods store in Reno, has donated \$1 million to renovate the Legacy Hall athletic ticket office and Hall of Fame Center. The gift also would upgrade the press box at Peccole Park. Piazza, 87, plans to donate a sizable collection of his Wolf Pack memorabilia for display in the Hall of Fame Center. Both the ticket office and Hall of Fame Center will be named in his honor.

The new 18-by-60-foot video scoreboard at the football stadium was paid for with a \$1 million gift from a donor who prefers to remain anonymous.

Researchers prove GPS can detect tsunami-triggering quakes

Global Position System software can tell whether an ocean earthquake is likely to generate a devastating tsunami much faster than conventional detection systems can, according to research led by University geophysicist Geoff Blewitt.

Incorporating this new technology into existing tsunami warning systems could potentially save thousands of lives by making it possible to issue warnings much earlier.

Tsunamis — ocean waves generated by submarine quakes and other massive disturbances of the Earth's crust — race across the ocean at jet speeds, so it's important to know whether a warning needs to be issued. Some tsunamis are inconsequential, but others cause devastation. The Sumatra tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004, killed close to 300,000 people and wreaked destruction far away from the earthquake on the coasts of Thailand, Sri Lanka and India.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center underestimated the magnitude of that quake because no comprehensive tsunami warning system was installed in the Indian Ocean at that time. Officials had to rely on seismometers, which measure the energy released in waves by earthquakes. But seismometers are ill-adapted to gauge the size of earthquakes of unusually long duration, like the one that spawned the Sumatra tsunami.

The warning center initially estimated the quake as having almost no risk of producing a damaging tsunami, so

it didn't issue a warning. It took hours for the conventional technologies to determine that the quake had actually been much stronger, and days to figure out its true size.

"We'll always need seismology as the first level of alert for large earthquakes, and we'll need ocean buoys to actually sense the tsunami waves," says Blewitt, research professor in the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. The advantage of including GPS in warning systems is that it quickly tells how much the ocean floor moved.

The new method, called GPS displacement, works by measuring the time it takes radio signals from GPS satellites to arrive at ground stations. That lets scientists calculate how far the stations have moved because of the quake. The GPS is so sensitive it can measure movement in millimeters. Movement is an indicator of a quake's magnitude, and magnitude is directly related to a quake's potential for generating tsunamis.

With GPS displacement technology, Blewitt says, a huge earthquake "can't hide," plus the data can be processed fast enough to issue warnings sooner.

Results of the GPS research study, sponsored by NASA, appeared earlier this year in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*. Blewitt's co-authors were Corné Kreemer, William Hammond and Hans-Peter Plag of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology; and Seth Stein and Emile Okal of the Department of Geological Sciences, Northwestern University.

Tougher admissions standards coming sooner

The Board of Regents in June voted to tighten standards for admission to Nevada and UNLV. Starting in the fall of 2008, the minimum GPA will be 3.0 instead of 2.75.

That change had been scheduled to take effect in 2010, but the Regents decided to accelerate it. The admission

standards are being raised to ensure that incoming students are adequately prepared for college. Students who aren't prepared often require remedial coursework or drop out.

The Nevada System of Higher Education's staff plans to study what effect the

new criteria would have if applied to applicants for the 2006 and 2007 entering classes. The study is expected to be completed in time so that the new requirements could be delayed if it was found that they had a disproportionate impact on minorities.

More information about the admissions standards can be found in the Board of Regents briefing paper at <http://system.nevada.edu/Board-of-R/Meetings/Agendas/June-2006-/BOARD/Ref.-D.pdf>



Mike Reed

Business Dean Reed has new job

Dana Edberg '80 (business administration), '89MBA, an associate professor of information systems, has been selected to serve as interim dean of the College of Business Administration.

She succeeds Mike Reed, who stepped down from his post of 13 years earlier this year to become vice chancellor of finance and administration for the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Reed, who joined the college in 1972, said he's been asked to give the vice-chancellor's position a new external focus: "to take what was essentially an internal controller position and communicate the message of the system to the people of Nevada."

As dean of the College of Business Administration, he was known for forging ties between the college and business community, and he said he plans to do the same for the system.

Super-smart kids join student body

The Davidson Academy of Nevada inaugural class ranges in age from 10 to 16

About three dozen of the country's brightest preteens and teenagers — including six as young as 10 — became part of the student body August 28 when The Davidson Academy of Nevada opened in the KNPB Channel 5 building at the north end of campus.

The academy is a new free public school for profoundly gifted students who score at the highest level in college admission exams and intelligence tests. To qualify for admission, applicants also must be performing at the middle-school level or above. Members of the inaugural class range in age from 10 to 16 and come from 14 states. One is from Australia.

The academy is not a boarding school. Students go home each night. At least one parent has to be living in the Reno area or move here.

Davidson students enjoy almost all the same opportunities as other students on campus. They can pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees. They can collaborate on research projects with professors. They have access to all libraries and student services. They're even members of the Associated Students of the University of Nevada or ASUN.

They differ in that each will have an individualized learning plan at the academy based on achievement level, interests and motivation. They have the opportunity to attend small, challenging courses taught by academy teachers and by University of Nevada, Reno professors and lecturers.

As students move through their learning plan, they will take progressively more challenging University courses along with their academy classes. After

Photo by Theresa Danna-Douglas



Chemistry professor Vince Catalano works with students at the 2005 THINK Summer Institute. The three-week residential program brings intellectually gifted 12- to 15-year-olds to campus to earn college credit. It's sponsored by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, which launched the Davidson Academy on campus in August.

earning the Davidson Academy of Nevada high school diploma, they will have the opportunity to become fully matriculated students of the University in the Honors Program. Academy students pay tuition when they take University courses.

University officials welcomed students and Davidson Academy staff to campus in an opening ceremony Aug. 22 at Lawlor Events Center. The event also drew U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

The Davidson Academy is the creation of former educational software entrepreneurs Bob and Jan Davidson of Incline Village, Nev., authors of the 2004 book *Genius Denied: How to Stop Wasting Our Brightest Young Minds*. In 1999 the Davidsons founded the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a Reno-based nonprofit supporting gifted students. They said they decided

to open the academy on the Reno campus because of the quality and enthusiasm of the University's faculty as well as the campus' willingness to support a long-term partnership. Plans call for the academy to move to the more centrally located Jot Travis Student Union eventually. The couple will provide all funding for the academy in its first year and in following years will supplement state funds.

The academy aims to build on the success of another Davidson-funded program on the Reno campus, the 3-year-old THINK Summer Institute, a residential summer program that allows 12- to 15-year-olds to earn seven college credits in three weeks.

The Davidsons are also major contributors to the construction of a planned \$50 million Science and Math Complex on campus.

— Pat McDonnell

Where are we allowed to protest?

A demonstration that featured gay students kissing in front of a military recruiter's table at a job fair in the student union last November eventually spawned a fierce debate on campus over freedom of speech.

The gay students were protesting the military's don't-ask-don't-tell policy that prevents openly gay people from serving in the military. They were joined by several student peace activists.

Later that day, another group of students demonstrated just outside the student union in support of the military's right to recruit on campus.

It turned out that all of the protests violated a University policy created in the 1960s. The policy restricts demonstrations to four "public forum" areas of campus: Manzanita Bowl, the Jot Travis Student Union lawn (not inside the JTSU, where the job fair was held), the Student Services Building lawn, and Barnes Plaza in front of Getchell Library. The policy also required groups to obtain formal permission before staging a protest in those areas.

Contrary to what many may assume, the zones were established not to limit protests on campus but to ensure that these high-traffic areas would be preserved as possible venues for demonstrations, according to former President Joe Crowley.

After many groups, including the graduate and undergraduate student senates and representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, voiced their opinions on the policy, a new policy was agreed upon.

The new one allows demonstrations, leafleting and other forms of public group speech — activities that have been on the rise in recent years on the Reno campus — anywhere except inside buildings or where they would interfere with regularly scheduled classes, research, traffic flow, events and ceremonies. Advance permission is no longer required to stage a protest.

Under the new policy, the former public forum areas can now be reserved for demonstrations, to avoid conflicts with other groups that may want the space the same day. But reservations are not required.

IGT gift first step toward computer gaming degree

The next big thing in computer games may come from alumni of Nevada's College of Engineering.

A \$500,000 gift from Reno-based International Game Technology is being used to hire two new full-time faculty members who will teach computer gaming and also develop a set of courses leading to a degree.

"We are one of the first universities to even think about doing this," says Sushil Louis, professor of computer science and engineering.

Although computer gaming is a \$30 billion industry worldwide, few universities in the world offer degrees in computer gaming or game development, Louis says. The new courses will be the first step toward eventually ramping up to a computer-game-engineering program, through which a minor and then a major degree would be offered. University officials say it could take about five years to reach that goal.

The University anticipates the IGT seed money will be the catalyst for obtaining additional funds from the state legislature to develop the program further.

The University and IGT have had a mutually beneficial industry-education partnership for many years. In 1994, IGT donated \$1 million to start a computer engineering program at the University. IGT currently employs more than 120 College of Engineering graduates, primarily computer scientists and engineers.

"IGT is one of the largest employers of our grads — both undergraduate and graduate," Louis says. "They have been very good to us because they see value in what we can do for them and, of course, they are helping us by giving us resources."

Computer-game engineering encompasses much more than developing the slot machines and other betting games IGT produces. The specialty also includes the design and development of hardware and software for computer games, digital entertainment and virtual-reality training.

— John Wheeler '86, '87M.A.

Former Wolf Pack golfer to play in Masters

Casey Watabu, a senior on last year's Wolf Pack golf team, qualified for the 2007 Masters Tournament by winning the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championships July 15 in Bremerton, Wash.

The 22-year-old Hawaiian will become the second Wolf Pack golfer to play in the Masters. Kirk Triplett '85 (civil engineering) has competed in the prestigious tournament six times, finishing as high as sixth in 2001 and 2004.

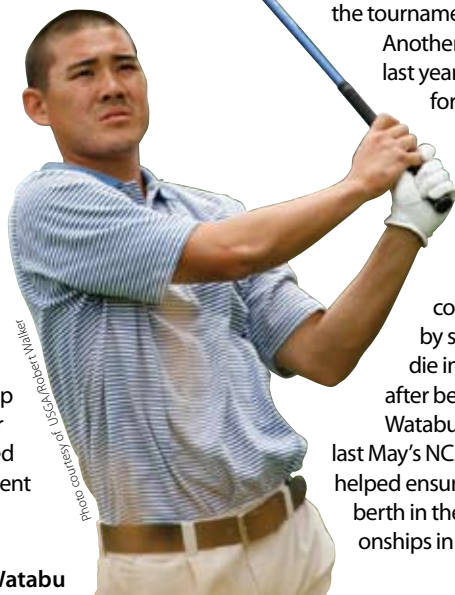
The *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported that Watabu also is being considered for a spot on the U.S. team at the September 2007 Walker Cup event in Ireland. The Walker Cup is widely acknowledged as the world's most prominent amateur tournament.

In the finals of the U.S. Amateur's match-play round, Watabu posted 10 birdies over 33 holes to defeat the tournament favorite, 2005 Big 12 Conference Player of the Year Anthony Kim of Oklahoma. A total of 152 golfers competed in the tournament.

Another Wolf Pack senior last year who qualified for the tournament, John Cassidy, from Yelm, Wash., near Bremerton, lent his knowledge of the course to Watabu by serving as his caddy in the final rounds after being eliminated.

Watabu's tie for first at last May's NCAA West Regional helped ensure Nevada's first berth in the NCAA Championships in 16 years.

— Pat McDonnell



Casey Watabu

PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. AMATEUR GOLF ASSOCIATION