

NEVADA

Silver&Blue

The magazine of the University of Nevada, Reno

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From the President

Of perfect marriage proposals, ancient Greek mythology and the meaning of campus traditions

Moments before she came into my office after bounding up the stairs to the second floor of the Clark Administration Building to announce the happy news, Sarah Ragsdale '08 (health ecology) had received the perfect proposal from her boyfriend, Patrick Mahoney of Norwell, Mass.

As Sarah cried tears of joy, she told me that the proposal of marriage had been delivered in the splendor of our rose garden, in the shadow of our beautiful Honor Court.

It was a place where Sarah, our campus' ASUN president in 2007-2008, had always hoped the big question would be asked. Far, far away in Boston, as a master of public health student at Boston University's School of Public Health, Sarah had often talked of our campus, of how our campus is radiant with the exquisite color of all four seasons.

Patrick proved to be an astute listener. Our campus was a meaningful place to Sarah, and it was fitting that one of the most important questions a person can ever ask of another was offered amongst our roses, on our campus.

Since that joyous moment this summer, I've thought about the larger meaning of Sarah's proposal, and what it says about our University.

Universities hold many traditions sacred. Mackay Week, for example, is a long-standing event on our campus that is steeped in the history of our University and in the heritage of the Silver State. "The Book of the Oath" was initiated by University President Walter Clark in 1920, to be signed by each successive class, which would pledge themselves to service and high ideals.

With the advent of the New Student Opening Ceremony on our campus a decade ago, this tradition has been revived with a candlelit oath. Each August, with the fall semester approaching, our new students gather in Lawlor Events Center for this moving moment, when I lead our new students in the recitation of the Nevada Oath. Together, we recite words promising that these young people will be forthright and honest in their academic affairs, that they will lend service and support to those in need, and that they will gladly embrace and realize what a special honor it is to join the University's community of scholars. The symbolism of the New Student Ceremony is impossible to miss as I've gazed out at Lawlor, filled only with the candle-lit promise of so many young people who are set to embark on one of life's most pivotal journeys.

There are other, less formal, traditions that help bring a campus to life. We've just finished yet another season of "Pack Picnics on the Quad," where young and old gather each Wednesday during the summer for great music, free watermelon and the sort of friendly communion that turns strangers into friends and reminds us of the words of the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, who has said that during such special times we "feel a connection and a kinship with everything and everyone." Some of our newer buildings on campus, most particularly the Joe Crowley Student Union, have also beckoned our friends and alumni to linger a while longer on our campus. Our new buildings are impressive, but perhaps more memorable are the relationships and experiences that they help create.

The best college campuses are made stronger when they combine the best aspects of tradition, from the formality and promise of service that are contained within the solemn words of "the Book of the Oath," to less formal moments, such as meeting old classmates or friends after a Wolf Pack football or basketball game at the Little Waldorf Saloon.

In fact, perhaps Sarah Ragsdale has started yet another campus tradition: A marriage proposal among our roses.

Like all of our campus traditions, I'm sure it's something Sarah won't soon forget.
Sincerely,

Milton D. Glick
President

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Patrick Mahoney and Sarah Ragsdale at Lake Tahoe after their engagement.

Photo courtesy Sarah Ragsdale