From the President

A time to look back, a time to look ahead

April 16, 2011 will be a date that will be forever remembered at our University. It was on that day that Milt Glick, the 15th president of the University of Nevada, Reno, unexpectedly passed away at age 73.

Milt was more than an exceptional leader. He was a loving husband, father and grandfather; he was a good friend to all our students; he was a wonderfully collaborative and intellectually inquisitive colleague; and he was, without question, the right president for the right time for our University. When I arrived on this campus as executive vice president and provost in 2008, I had the distinct pleasure of working closely with Milt on a daily basis. I never grew tired of being around Milt Glick. No one did. Milt met new ideas and new people the same way: with a genuine, warm, interested smile. With his passing, our entire University was saddened.

With this as background, I must say that I felt extremely humbled and honored when the Nevada System of Higher Education announced my appointment as interim president. I have a deep fondness for our University for a number of reasons, most importantly being the special nature of our people.

In the foreword of his excellent chronicle of campus life at our University, The Constant Conversation, President Emeritus Joe Crowley quotes another university president of some repute, Yale’s Bart Giamatti. Giamatti, ever the poet, encapsulates beautifully what a great campus can become when its people have the unity of purpose and aspiration for excellence that we find on a daily basis at the University of Nevada, Reno:

Perhaps it is the sound of all those voices … giving and taking … that is finally the music of civilization, the sound of human beings shaping and sharing, mooring ideas to reality, making the world, for all its pain, work.

There is no question our University has been tested in recent months. With Milt’s passing and another cycle of budget reductions just completed, our University, in fact, has been tested like never before. Yet never has the collaborative give-and-take of “shaping and sharing” at our University been stronger. With difficult, even sad times, our University has still managed to achieve in historic ways.

Our May Commencement, where we presented more than 2,000 degrees and certificates, was the largest ever in our 137-year history. These numbers reflect a healthy 52 percent graduation rate, in line with the nation’s 56 percent average. Our enrollment, which reached record levels last fall at 17,679 students, promises to be as robust this fall. We continue to attract the state’s best and brightest young minds. Recent University-sponsored “signing day” ceremonies at northern and southern Nevada high schools have highlighted the fact that our pool of National Merit Scholars on campus continues to grow handsomely. Our campus will very likely welcome more than 40 National Merit Scholars when classes begin in late August—yet another record for our institution. In addition to our continuing growth, our current students are succeeding and persevering in their education. Our record-breaking 80 percent freshman-to-sophomore retention rate stands 5 percent above the national average. With such success in attracting and retaining students, we can take pride in the fact that our pipeline is full.

There is no question that we live in a time of challenge at our University. Yet I firmly believe that if the past few weeks and months are any indication, it is a challenge that we are prepared to meet. The people of our University are marvelously adaptable, and are fiercely proud of the important role they play in helping our state realize its future. It is the greatest honor imaginable to help lead the many voices on our campus in making our world, in its continuing pursuit of excellence, work.

Sincerely,

Marc Johnson
President
www.unr.edu/president