Great Nevada ShakeOut earthquake drill draws more than 115,000

The first ever Great Nevada ShakeOut was a huge success, statewide coordinator Graham Kent said following the Drop, Cover and Hold-on drill practiced by schools, businesses and organizations throughout Nevada.

“It’s a wonderful thing to see that more than 115,000 people registered for the event and became more earthquake aware,” said Kent, director of the University’s Nevada Seismological Laboratory.

The Seismological Laboratory teamed Nevada with California’s successful Great ShakeOut to build awareness and get Nevada residents to practice how to respond in an earthquake, all coordinated to happen at 10:21 a.m. on 10/21.

School districts, government agencies, individuals and organizations from almost every county in the state participated.

At the University of Nevada, Reno, students, faculty and staff participated with coordinated drills in some buildings and, in others, individual classes held their own drills. The University also activated its emergency communication networks, including mass text message, e-mail and voice mail alerts and reverse 911 phone calls.

“It’s gratifying to see the enthusiasm throughout the state and it’s great to see our children learning the importance of drop, cover and hold-on, and to get some practice doing it,” Kent said. “Now we have to make sure their parents learn and practice this technique so the whole family is prepared.”

The Great Nevada ShakeOut is the new annual Nevada statewide earthquake drill. Next year it will held on Oct. 20 at 10:20 a.m.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
Reno’s famous arch turns blue in support of Nevada Wolf Pack

Following the 500th victory in the football program’s history and days before the much-anticipated and sold-out football game against No. 4 Boise State in November, Reno’s iconic downtown arch turned blue as a show of support for the Nevada Wolf Pack, who won 34-31.

“Turning our famous Reno Arch blue shows the town’s support for our Wolf Pack teams and generates great community spirit,” city of Reno Mayor Bob Cashell said of the effort, which was funded through donations.

Other Reno-area landmarks joined in the show of support including the Silver Legacy Resort Casino and the Grand Sierra Resort, which used blue lights to turn the exterior of their facilities blue.

During the evening ceremony to turn on the arch with its new, blue light bulbs, University President Milt Glick expressed great pride in the Nevada Wolf Pack football team’s national ranking, but reminded the audience that the academic performance of all student athletes remains a priority. The NCAA issued its academic progress report this fall, and of the nation’s top 25 teams, the Nevada Wolf Pack had the 10th best graduation success rate.

—Jane Tors ’82

Reynolds National Center for Courts and Media names deputy director

Eric Robinson, an attorney with experience in media and Internet law, has been named deputy director of the Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Courts and Media, part of the Reynolds School of Journalism. He began his new post Oct. 1.

The center, managed by the Reynolds School in collaboration with the National Judicial College, is the only organization devoted to resolving conflicts between the competing constitutional guarantees of free speech, open courts and fair trials.

“Eric’s essential experience in First Amendment law will be valuable to the center as we develop training curricula and education materials that judges and journalists will find useful as they fulfill the expectations of their respective roles,” said Ben Holden, director.

Robinson will oversee Reynolds Courts and Media Law Journal, a new scholarly journal that will explore emerging issues, such as the impact of social media on courts.

“The issues involving the courts and the media have moved beyond issues such as ‘cameras in the courtroom,’ to include new issues involving use of the Internet and other new communication technologies in our courts,” Robinson said.

Robinson previously was staff attorney at the Media Law Resource Center in New York, where he tracked and analyzed litigation and legal issues involving the media and the Internet. He also has published articles in The Encyclopedia of the First Amendment and the Journal of Internet Law and is a regular blog contributor for the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University.

Robinson has worked in federal, state and local government, and previously worked as an editor and reporter for community newspapers in the New York City area.

Most of the funding for the center comes from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation of Las Vegas, the journalism school’s biggest benefactor.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named. Headquartered in Las Vegas, it is one of the largest private foundations in the United States.

—Zanny Marsh ’09MJM
Discover Science Lecture Series features top scientists

Renowned scientists from around the country are featured in a series of five evening lectures in the University’s new Davidson Mathematics and Science Center, Nell J. Redfield Auditorium.

“Science encompasses a wonderfully diverse collection of explorations into the unknown,” said Jeff Thompson, dean of the College of Science. “We invite the public to join faculty and students as we experience the extent of the science universe with the best scientists on the planet through our Discover Science Lecture Series.”

The inaugural lecture in November featured National Academy of Science fellow and adjunct University of Nevada, Reno professor Michael Waterman, one of the founders and current leaders in the area of computational biology. His work formed one of the theoretical cornerstones for many DNA mapping and sequencing projects, including the Human Genome Project.

The second lecture in the series, “Lake Tahoe: Five Decades of Change and the World Water Crisis,” was presented by world-renowned limnologist and Lake Tahoe expert Charles Goldman.

“The world water crisis is exemplified by the changes at Lake Tahoe over the past three decades, and is directly linked to climatic change,” said Goldman, also now an adjunct professor at the University. “Freshwater and marine ecosystems are now threatened on a global scale.”

Upcoming topics and speakers in the series are:

- “Eleven Thousand Years of Long-Term Human Environment Interaction in Amazonia.” Presented April 7 by Anna Roosevelt, professor, Department of Anthropology and Program in Geography, University of Illinois at Chicago.
- “The Coupled Climate-Energy System: Limiting Climatic Disruption in the American West by Revolutionary Change in the Global Energy System.” Presented May 5 by Larry Smartt, founding director, California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology; Harry E. Gruber, professor in computer science and engineering, University of California, San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering.

For more information, call (775) 784-4591 or visit www.unr.edu/cos.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
To Sant’Ambrogio, teaching is sweetness

Stephanie Sant’Ambrogio, the 2009 Alan Bible Teaching Excellence Award recipient, will showcase her superlative teaching and performing skills during the second L-Cubed series, set to begin in February. Sant’Ambrogio, assistant professor of violin and viola and director of the University’s Orchestral Career Studies graduate program, created the “L-Cubed: Look, Lunch and Listen” concert series, a dynamic sequence of concerts and exhibitions showcasing Nevada’s Department of Music and Department of Art students and faculty.

“It’s a great opportunity for students to perform in a public setting,” graduate student Roberta Franca said. “It is an intimate setting; you can actually see the audience and their reactions to the music.”

Sant’Ambrogio began playing the violin at five and started teaching when she was in the sixth grade. She taught a third-grade girl for half an hour every week in exchange for a bag of chocolate chip cookies baked by the student’s mother.

“I always associated teaching with sweetness,” Sant’Ambrogio said. “I want to inspire and encourage them to be creative.”

L-Cubed offers free performances every Wednesday, noon to 1 p.m., Feb. 23 through April 20 in the Frank and Joan Randall Rotunda in the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center.

The Alan Bible Teaching Excellence Award is supported by an endowment and given to University faculty members within the College of Liberal Arts who exemplify outstanding teaching methods.

—Nonie Wainwright ’10

Russ Fields named director of Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering

Russ Fields has been appointed the new director of the Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering.

“Russ brings extensive experience as a geologist and manager in the petroleum, minerals and natural resources development industries to the University,” said Jeff Thompson, dean of the College of Science. “I’m excited he’s agreed to accept this challenging endeavor.”

The Mackay School, formerly known as the Mackay School of Mines, is a division of the College of Science.

Fields will work with the Mackay School faculty and staff to develop a vision for the school and initiate steps to realize this shared vision. He will represent the Mackay School interests to alumni and the public, be a liaison to external stakeholders and will work to broaden the College of Science’s connection to the natural resource and earth science industries.

From his third-floor office in the historic Mackay Mines building overlooking the University’s quadrangle, Fields said: “I’m very happy to be here; I’m honored to have the position. There’s such a long and proud heritage that’s Mackay. We’re working on a vision for the future—which is extremely bright—to continuing to build on that heritage, to take the school to even higher levels.

“We want to be recognized as one of the leading institutions in the nation, not only for mining but earth science and engineering, which isn’t such a stretch—we have such a great core to build on.”

Fields earned both his bachelor’s of science in geology (1974) and master’s of business administration (1985) from Nevada, and was the Mackay Alumnus of the Year in 2005. He has worked with Placid Oil Company, Milchem Inc., Sierra Pacific Resources, the Nevada Division of Minerals and Western Resources Group, LLC. In addition, he served as president of the Nevada Mining Association for 10 years beginning in 1997.

“It’s a little humbling to sit here, in what was the dean’s office 40 years ago when I was an undergrad,” he said. “I must admit, it was a little scary coming up the stairs to see the dean back then. It’s such an honor to climb those stairs now.”

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
As agritourism, farmers markets and the slow-food movement have taken off, so has a renewed interest in America’s agriculture. Nevada Foundation Professors Paul Starrs (geography) and Peter Goin (art) have teamed up to produce a fact-filled, entertaining, practical Field Guide to California Agriculture.

The two spent six years engaged in a labor of love documenting almost 400 different crops grown in California’s 75,000 farms and ranches.

In the preface, Starrs explains, “Believe us: we, too, try to share our love for the eccentricity and possibility of California. All those miles, all those conversations (routinely in Spanish, which we both speak with some fluency), have brought agriculture to life.”

Starrs’ lively writing and Goin’s eye-opening photographs transform the book from simply a factual “catalog” to an enjoyable story of heritage, culture and social significance.

“I was particularly struck by the diversity of the crops,” Goin said, “but also of the people in the industry and those who work the fields. California has so many specialty crops partly because of the state’s ethnic diversity and global markets.”

The guide, published by the University of California Press, covers California’s array of diverse crops and animal products, from chestnuts, cheese and cherries, to cabernet, cattle and cannabis (marijuana). The authors document that marijuana is the state’s largest-value crop and is produced in commercial quantities in all but seven of the state’s 54 counties.

Besides the book’s survey of crops, there is also a historical overview, a section on the state’s agricultural regions, and a dramatic gallery of large-format photographs.

Goin and Starrs worked together previously, producing Black Rock, a beautiful exploration of the rugged northern Nevada region. Both have deep roots in, and appreciation for, California’s agriculture. Goin’s father worked as a seasonal farm worker in the lemon groves during his time at the University of California, Berkeley. Starrs has spent much time discovering California’s back roads and has even worked as a ranch hand.

The two are explorers at heart, meeting in Reno during the 1997 flood, “hiking along the Truckee, knee-deep in water,” Goin said. “He was scouting, and I was capturing a moment in Reno land and life making photographs.”

The rest is history, and an example of one great, interdisciplinary partnership.

—Claudene Wharton ’86, ’99M.A.
Veteran business journalist named to Reynolds chair

Veteran financial journalist and author Alan Deutschman has been named Reynolds Endowed Chair in Business Journalism at the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism.

Deutschman, 45, has covered Silicon Valley and other business topics for years. He was Fortune’s Silicon Valley bureau chief from 1992-95. He also wrote about the valley and other subjects for GQ, New York Magazine, Fast Company and Vanity Fair. One of Deutschman’s four books, The Second Coming of Steve Jobs, was about Silicon Valley, and he is at work on a major new book about the valley. Deutschman also has written for TheDailyBeast.com and for Salon.com.

“With more than 20 years of experience in business journalism, Alan will be a boon for our students,” said Jerry Ceppos, dean of the Reynolds School. “And his deep knowledge of Silicon Valley will help us move closer to world leaders in technology who are only 45 minutes away by air and should be involved with our school.”

Deutschman will teach business and other journalism courses beginning in January, develop a program in business journalism and research contemporary issues in the subject. Some of the courses will emphasize the coming “green economy” because of its importance to Nevada.

In addition to writing about Silicon Valley, Deutschman also has established a reputation for expertise in leadership and change. The Wall Street Journal called his 2009 book, Walk the Walk: The #1 Rule for Real Leaders, an “engaging reminder of some leadership basics that aren’t necessarily taught in business school.” The Miami Herald and Strategy + Business magazine both named Walk the Walk one of the best business books of 2009. LeadershipNow.com called it one of the best leadership books of 2009.

Deutschman succeeds the University’s first chair in business journalism, David Morrow, who died in February.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation granted more than $2.2 million to the school last year to develop courses in business journalism. Deutschman will work with Reynolds business chairs at Washington & Lee University, the University of Missouri and Arizona State University and with the Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism at Arizona State University on articles, research projects and training seminars.

—Zanny Marsh ’09MJM

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Nevada professor helps teachers and parents teach deafblind

MaryAnn Demchak, professor of special education in the College of Education, took on assisting the deafblind, or dual-sensory impaired, as her special mission two years after arriving at Nevada.

For 20 years now, through her Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project, she has been assisting teachers, parents and preschool intervention specialists who care for youth with both visual and hearing impairments up to age 21. They call Demchak when they need help communicating, teaching and caring for this special population. Demchak visits the home or school to observe the children and make recommendations.

“I’ve been able to have Dr. Demchak come to homes with me and model the intervention methods,” explained Pam Young, development specialist at Nevada Early Intervention Services. “She has brought toys that work—that I wouldn’t have thought of. She thinks outside of the box. She also watches for clues as to how the kids are responding and shows ways to present things to them.”

Young, who earned her master’s in early childhood special education from Nevada in 2007 and is working on her doctorate, says that when it comes to the children she is assisting, Demchak “just knows no boundaries with them. She lets me know what these little guys are capable of.”

Demchak also offers a lending library and puts on an annual conference each year. She is currently assisting about 100 children scattered throughout the state, spending a lot of time on the road.

“I make a lot of trips to Clark County and the rural areas,” she says.

According to Chris Cheney, dean of the College of Education, “There’s not much else out there for this specific population. This is a program that’s really helping one of the most vulnerable populations in the state and their families.”

The program is mostly funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, with some supplemental funds supplied by the Nevada Department of Education the last two years.

—Claudene Wharton ’86, ’99M.A.

School of Medicine’s Synapse magazine earns Silver Spike award

Synapse, the magazine of the University of Nevada School of Medicine, received a Silver Spike award from the Sierra Nevada chapter of the Public Relations Society of America at the organization’s annual awards dinner Nov. 18 at the Atlantis Hotel Casino in Reno.

“Synapse was a long-standing tradition at the School of Medicine which we are so happy has been recognized by PRSA,” said Cheryl Hug-English ’78 (biology), ’82M.D., interim dean of the medical school. “We are proud to be able to tell the medical school’s story through this award-winning publication. I am grateful to all those who work hard in making this publication such a success and would like to particularly acknowledge the work of Anne McMillin and Edgar Antonio Núñez in the development and design of Synapse.”

The semi-annual magazine, which was re-established in 2009 after a nine-year absence, carries the message of the medical school’s work, its students, faculty and research and clinical programs to a broad audience of stakeholders including alumni, donors, friends, elected officials and community physicians.

The Silver Spike award is recognition of the best, most exemplary public relations work to take place in northern Nevada over the past year, according to Kristen Power, PRSA’s chapter judging chair.

In addition, the University and DRI earned two Awards of Excellence in the printed publications category. The materials were created for the 2010 Tahoe Summit, hosted by Nevada Sen. Harry Reid.

—Staff reports

Synapse is generously supported by the University of Nevada School of Medicine’s Alumni Association. Synapse can be found online:
Scott Mensing named Nevada Professor of the Year by Carnegie Foundation

Professor Scott Mensing has been named the state’s top professor by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and its partner in the awards program, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. He received the Nevada Professor of the Year for 2010 Award in a November ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Mensing, a biogeographer and paleoecologist with a doctorate in geography, has been teaching since 1987. He began as a graduate student instructor at University of California, Berkeley and joined Nevada’s College of Science faculty in 1993. He makes effective teaching sound simple:

“I have two basic premises: motivate and engage the students; and don’t assume that people understand what you’re saying. If the students aren’t engaged, I’m disappointed. In a lecture class there must be activities to keep students focused, and I try to use the class time to get them thinking by developing an exercise where they can demonstrate understanding of a principle and then apply it.”

“I strive to make teaching visual, not just showing but doing,” he added. “Sometimes you have to get them off balance, which means I may do some goofy stuff in class. We can be too formal, which can create a distance between you and the students. It’s important that we meet as colleagues.”

Mensing has earned other distinguished teaching awards: the Nevada Board of Regents Teaching Award in 2007, the University’s F. Donald Tibbitts Distinguished Teacher Award in 2006 and the College of Science’s LeMay Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2005.

“Receiving awards like these, it makes me feel that every time I teach, it better be award-winning caliber,” he said. “I’ve always had the attitude that when I walk into class it should be the best class I’ve ever had. I know it’s not possible every time, but for me, I’m disappointed if I don’t at least start with that attitude.”

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

Glick delivers economic development keynote

For economic development to truly succeed, University President Milt Glick said during a keynote address at the University Economic Development Association national conference, “a great interaction” between communities and universities must occur.

Glick shared the examples of San Diego, Calif., and Seattle, Wash., where a major research university certainly was a driving force, but was not the only factor in strong economic redevelopment efforts.

“In both cases, the presence of great universities served as a catalyst for their communities.”

Noting the University’s 66 percent increase in baccalaureate degrees awarded over the past 10 years, Glick said, “The single most important thing we do (in the economic development equation) is to create an educated workforce. All of us know that we will not enjoy the same kind of quality of life if we don’t produce an educated workforce.”

Commercialization of innovations was a prime conference topic, and Glick shared several examples from the University of Nevada, where faculty-led innovation has resulted in business development either from University-created technologies or through the efforts of graduates who learned such technologies while at Nevada.

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More than 170 university economic development professionals from across the country attended the conference Nov. 7-9, hosted in Reno by the University’s College of Business and Nevada Small Business Development Center. The University’s Center for Economic Development received the Award of Excellence in Economic Development and Public Policy Research, one of five awards presented during the conference.

—John Trent ’85/’87, ’00M.A.