progress is the birthright of the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies. Travis Linn, the first dean of the Reynolds School, watched with fascination as journalism matured in the digital age. Before his passing in 2003, Linn, the former southwest bureau chief for CBS News, was leading the charge to create the school’s first courses in new media. Today, the school’s evolution and transformation are well underway. And Linn would have been proud.

“Travis would have loved this,” said his widow, Sheila Linn, scanning the atrium of the refurbished building during a visit this summer.

For the past 18 months, the Reynolds School has undergone a dramatic $7.9 million transformation, funded by a gift from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

University President Marc Johnson says the upgrades—including floor-by-floor refurbishments, new classroom capabilities and an ambitious expansion of multimedia production space—have positioned the Reynolds School firmly among the ranks of the most advanced schools of communication in the country.

“Through this gift, the Reynolds Foundation has allowed the creation of a dynamic teaching environment that will prepare students to succeed in journalism and communication careers in the digital era,” Johnson says.

With a new building, a new curriculum and a new dean at the helm, the Reynolds School is entering a new era, one that marries the latest in technology and best professional practices with the emphasis on ethics and civic engagement that has always been the hallmark of a Reynolds School education.

A NEW DIRECTION

With an office filled to the brim with Nevada memorabilia, it’s difficult to guess that Alan Stavitsky arrived on campus only this spring. Less than six months into his position as the new dean of the Reynolds School, it seems Stavitsky, a scholar in media policy and the digital transition in journalism, is part of the furniture.

Stavitsky is used to riding—and guiding—the waves of change that have crashed through the media industry over the past several decades. As the senior associate dean of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, Stavitsky was tapped to launch the George S. Turnbull Portland Center, the school’s downtown Portland base, where he directed the school’s efforts to partner with major media outlets to train students
in multi-platform journalism.

So when Stavitsky reported for work at the Reynolds School in late March, he had the school’s new roadmap practically in hand.

“My experience in Oregon profoundly influenced the way I think about journalism and mass media education,” Stavitsky says. “I went from a traditional campus-based journalism program at a public research university to conceiving and constructing this satellite program in the state’s media center.

“The Portland program was very experien-
tially based for the students, and very much engaged with the professional community. The idea was that a journalism school should be an active agent in solving professional problems,” he adds.

A major problem facing professionals in news and strategic communication is how to utilize and master all the media platforms available to them in the digital age.

Beyond legacy print and broadcast media, storytelling today also takes place across new channels: websites, streaming audio and video and handheld mobile devices. Technological advances aside, changing media business models and a depressed economy have resulted in downsized media organizations. That forces media professionals to add new duties and skillsets, including shooting video and using social media.

Modern journalism school graduates of any major, from any school, will be faced with the challenge of staying limber and being prepared to jump into any role. Stavitsky has made it his mission to ensure that every graduate of the Reynolds School is ready to take that leap.

“We are thinking very broadly about where our students are going, and how we can train them for an industry that is in the midst of such profound change,” he says. “We’re looking at how we can prepare our students for jobs that we don’t yet know about, and to work on media platforms that have not yet been developed.”

A new curriculum for news students, unveiled this fall, is key. In the past, journalism courses typically centered on general reporting, writing and editing, augmented by the study of media ethics and First Amendment law. Now data journalism, social journalism and multimedia reporting are all part of the arsenal.

“These days, we speak in terms of multime-
dia storytelling,” Stavitsky says. “Everybody who comes out of the Reynolds School has to be a multimedia storyteller.”

UNDER ONE ROOF

The Reynolds School has produced six Pulitzer Prize winners.

“The Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies has re-opened following a $7.9 million project funded through the generosity of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

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with fiber optic cabling and adding central, electronic storage capacity, updated computers, projectors and screens. The existing audio and video control rooms were updated and the two large studios on the first floor were re-equipped.

The remainder of the gift was used toward building renovations, using every bit of space, but without compromising the character of the distinctive brick building.

Rosemary McCarthy, assistant professor of journalism, walks through the new multimedia newsroom and points to the new workstations, the adjacent editing room and the professional-level broadcast studio and control room. This, she says, is where all Reynolds School students will work side-by-side, learning to create content using any platform.

Journalism workspaces were once very separate at Universities and in the workplace. Photographers were in the darkroom and in the photo lab. Reporters were at their desks in the newsroom. Broadcasters were in the studio and at editing bays. Public relations and advertising students—who comprise more than half of the Reynolds School student body—worked in an entirely separate area of the building.

In the multi-media newsroom, the physical and conceptual walls are down. With technology constantly expanding and job descriptions ever-widening, graduates are preparing for multiple opportunities in the media professions. And this, McCarthy says, is the core of what the school’s faculty set out to accomplish two years ago when the renovations began.

“With a state-of-the-art training ground that mirrors the workplace, our students will have all the tools they need to succeed after graduation,” she says.

The ability—and commitment—to evolve with new technology has enabled Reynolds School graduate Annie Flanzraich ’07

The Multimedia Newsroom, Room 110, is surrounded by audio, video and radio production rooms and is a classroom, lab and nerve center for Reynolds students where they will conceive and create content for student-produced media. Features include a professional video edit room, fiber-connected work stations for use with a high-capacity Xsan server, an anchor desk for “direct-from-newsroom” programming, a ceiling-mounted camera above the anchor desk and studio camera dock, and a quad-video wall monitor.

Sixty Reynolds School of Journalism students received scholarships totaling more than $103,000 at the school’s annual Savitt Awards Banquet last spring.
“With a state-of-the-art training ground that mirrors the workplace, our students will have all the tools they need to succeed after graduation.”

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Alan Stavitsky named dean of modern Reynolds School

Dean Alan Stavitsky joins the Reynolds School as it completes an ambitious 18-month, $7.9 million renovation that creates a state-of-the-art teaching and production facility for students.

“It’s an exciting time,” Stavitsky says. “With the rededicated building, we have so much momentum at a stage in which journalism education is so important to the future of our fields. I’m just thrilled to be here.”

Stavitsky came to the Reynolds School from the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, where he spent 21 years as a faculty member and administrator in Eugene and Portland. He most recently served as senior associate dean and founding director of the George S. Turnbull Center, the downtown Portland base of Oregon’s journalism school. At Oregon, he led undergraduate curriculum review as well as the development of two successful master’s degree programs offered for working professionals in Portland, in multimedia journalism and strategic communication. He previously worked in television and radio as a news director, news anchor, investigative reporter, talk-show host and country music DJ.

His honors include the Oregon School of Journalism and Communication’s Marshall Award for Innovative Teaching, and Adviser of the Year, awarded by Kappa Tau Alpha, the national honor society for journalism and mass communications.

Stavitsky’s scholarship on media policy and the digital transition in journalism has been published in numerous academic journals. He is the author of Independence and Integrity: A Guidebook for Public Radio Journalism, and co-author A History of Public Broadcasting. He has served as a consultant to local, national and international public broadcasting organizations on issues of media ethics and programming, and has advised the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on policies to preserve editorial independence in public media. He was invited to testify before the Federal Communications Commission on ownership concentration in broadcasting.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a master’s in journalism and doctorate in communication from The Ohio State University. The New Jersey native got his start in journalism as a high school student working in the sports department of the Newark Star Ledger.

—Roseann Keegan
The curriculum at the Reynolds School is different from that of Flanzraich’s graduating class. But is it necessary?

“Emphatically yes,” she says. “As journalism becomes more personal and instantaneous, it’s even more important for journalists to understand how to practically, professionally and ethically use the tools available. It’s also important for journalists to think through which tool is most appropriate for which story.

“We have the ability to create video, photo galleries, interactive graphics and a host of other multimedia coverage options for any story—the real question is which tools do we employ and when,” she adds.

Examining how information is distributed and digested will remain a top priority as the Reynolds School sharpens its focus on the second half of the school’s full title: the Center for Advanced Media Studies.

With the ability on the horizon to hire new Reynolds School faculty, dean Stavitsky aims to bring academics on board who will deepen the conversation and enhance the school’s scholarly research.

“We’ll be discovering ways to use our new capacities for a long time. And that’s a good thing.”

—Rosemary McCarthy, associate professor of journalism

AN OPEN INVITATION

Stavitsky has extended an open invitation across the Nevada campus to other deans, faculty and students to utilize the new Reynolds School production studios.

“I want everyone at the University to consider, ‘how can we use this production facility as a University of Nevada, Reno channel to serve and promote the institution?’ ” he says.

McCarthy, who helped lead the renovation project, said the Reynolds School faculty will continue to examine ways the school’s new technology and facilities can be best used to serve communications students, as well as the profound changes in communication, because everyone has a stake in this,” Stavitsky says. “One of the things we’re determined to do is increase the research profile of the school and conduct research that has implications for both the discipline and the profession.”
The school also raised $1.6 million to establish the Fund for the Future of Journalism, an endowment that will offer continued technological support for the capital improvements provided by the Reynolds Foundation. The endowment ensures that the Reynolds School stays at the forefront of journalism education.

“We’ll be discovering ways to use our new capacities for a long time,” McCarthy says. “And that’s a good thing.”

To learn more about supporting the fund and the Reynolds School of Journalism, please contact Kristin Burgarello, director of development, (775) 784-4471 or kburgarello@unr.edu.