



# NEVADA

Silver&Blue

The magazine of the University of Nevada, Reno

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Contact us by mail, phone or fax:  
Morrill Hall/0007  
University of Nevada, Reno  
Reno, Nevada 89557-0007  
address changes/obituaries: (775) 682-6541  
fax: (775) 784-1394

Class Notes submissions: [chatter@unr.edu](mailto:chatter@unr.edu)  
Address changes/obituaries: [silverblue@unr.edu](mailto:silverblue@unr.edu)  
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## From the President

# Numbering a University's success ... one person at a time

Student success can be measured in many ways, particularly on a college campus.

Numbers are one way to quantify success. As a resource economist, I have to admit that I enjoy the reassuring rhythms of numbers, particularly numbers that show steady and quantifiable progress. Numbers can provide a clear snapshot of where a University is today, and perhaps just as importantly, where it hopes to be tomorrow.

Over the past year, we've marked many numeric milestones relative to student success. We've seen the number of National Merit and Presidential Scholars on our campus soar to new highs. We've reached an all-time record in enrollment. We've graduated more students than ever before.

These milestones, as alluring and promising as they are, tell only half the story, however.

Our campus is a place of subtle experiences, where moments of interaction between a student, a professor, and the nurturing campus environment around them, can change the course of a young person's academic life. With a number of new, student-centered buildings opened in recent years, it demonstrates our commitment to support student success.

Just as importantly, our faculty has shown creativity, resourcefulness and an unwavering proclivity for creating experiential moments for our students. Our students, in turn, have possessed an inquisitive ability to embrace such lessons and make them their own. This issue of *Nevada Silver & Blue* provides many excellent examples of such experiential learning, from our nationally known team of concrete canoe engineering students to theatre students who have helped unveil the world's first "original pronunciation" production of *Hamlet* in centuries.

Recently, I learned of the story of Natasha Monga, a student in our BS-MD program, which allows motivated students to graduate from college and the School of Medicine in as little as seven years. Natasha is on the cusp of graduating after four and a half semesters at our University, with plans to enter the University of Nevada School of Medicine in the fall. For all the things she has learned and done during her time at the University—and this has included serving as a representative from the College of Science in the Associated Students of the University of Nevada senate—Natasha recalls the experience more in terms of relationships.

Sarah Cummings of the Department of Chemistry, who has been honored by the College of Science for her teaching prowess, was a key mentor.

"Dr. Cummings was a great professor," Natasha said as the fall semester ended. "She was always available to talk, and was always so helpful. She was very relatable. I could go into her office and talk about organic chemistry, and other things, too ... why she chose chemistry and why she chose to pursue her Ph.D.

"Dr. Cummings wasn't the only professor who was like that. Looking back, I've had a great experience at the University." Natasha said her experience at our University was informed by numbers, though not necessarily the type one would find on a spreadsheet. If anything, it was a lack of numbers that made Natasha's time at the University so memorable.

"I've felt that if I had gone to a bigger university, I don't know how much of that attention I could've gotten," she said. "At other schools you're just a number; here, I've never felt like a number."

As much as I am enamored with numbers, I have to admit: I love this aspect of our University more.

Sincerely,

Marc A. Johnson  
President

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President Marc Johnson

Photo by Jeff Dow