New College of Education dean sees partnerships as future hallmark

Much of Ken Coll’s career and research have focused on educational psychology and counseling, specialties that overlap with student development from pre-kindergarten through higher education. This broad perspective and an impressive breadth of research, service, teaching and administrative experience have prepared Coll for his role as dean of the University of Nevada, Reno’s College of Education.

Coll joined the University in July, coming from Boise State University, where he served as associate dean of the College of Education and director of Boise State’s Institute for the Study of Addiction, which was named the Distinguished Program of the Year in 2009 by the International Association of Addictions and Offender Counseling.

“Ken brings ideas, interests and research expertise that match well with our priorities,” said Kevin Carman, executive vice president and provost. “He is passionate about partnering with faculty to explore ways to even better prepare our future teachers, advance scholarship within the college and continue to develop our degree programs, notably our advanced-degree programs. He is eager to work with regional school districts, which is especially important to us.”

“As colleges of education look toward the future, it is critical that we have strong partnerships with Pre-K-12 school districts, promote outreach that will prepare globally minded educators and engage in meaningful multidisciplinary research,” Coll said.

Coll spent nearly a decade working as a counselor in higher education settings before joining the University of Wyoming, where he coordinated the Educational Psychology and Counseling Program and directed the Wyoming Chemical Abuse Resource Center. He next joined South Dakota State University as associate professor of counseling and human resource development. He was named the College of Education Researcher of the Year at both Boise State University and the University of Wyoming. In 2010, the Idaho Counseling Association presented him the 2010 Distinguished Service and Advocacy Award, and in 1996 he received the Wyoming Counseling Association Award for Service to the Profession.

Coll replaces Christine Cheney who retired in July. Cheney joined the University and its College of Education in 1984 and was named dean in 2010. Cheney is a past recipient of the F. Donald Tibbitts Distinguished Teacher Award, the University’s most prestigious teaching award, and she received the University’s Distinguished Faculty Award in 2013.

The College of Education is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The college’s counseling and educational psychology programs are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.

—Jane Tors ’82

College of Business graduates first Online EMBA cohort

Two years ago, 13 students decided to invest their time and effort into the University of Nevada, Reno’s College of Business first online Executive Master’s in Business Administration (EMBA) program. This first cohort received their EMBA degrees Aug. 24.

BACK ROW: Christine Casey, Nova Coiffron, Matthew Gardner, Lilliana Camacho and Matthew Spaur.
Summer fun and learning: nearly 5,000 students enjoy University summer camps

Each summer the University of Nevada, Reno transforms as nearly 5,000 students under the age of 18 participate in more than 35 different camps at University facilities throughout northern Nevada.

A point of pride is the Dean’s Future Scholars summer program offered through the College of Education. This academic outreach program seeks to increase the number of underrepresented students graduating high school, better their access to higher education and assist them in entering the field of education. The day camp hosted 213 students.

“The University of Nevada campus provides the ideal backdrop for youth summer camps,” said Mariluz Garcia ’03 (elementary education), ’07M.A. (counseling and educational psychology), program director for Dean’s Future Scholars. “Not only is it a beautiful place to be, but this setting expands students’ horizons by allowing them to step into the shoes of college students every single day. They get to experience what it’s like to learn in a college classroom and enjoy access to the superb technology on campus.”

The College of Engineering organized multiple camps, each focusing on a different aspect of engineering such as civil engineering, transportation and computer science. Additional camps included Girls in Engineering and the MESA program (mathematics, engineering, science achievement), which shows first-generation college students how fun engineering can be. These camps brought more than 100 young students to campus.

“Many students do not know what engineering is before coming to one of our camps,” said Elyse Bozsik ’07 (speech communications, ’10 M.Ed. (secondary education), College of Engineering K-12 outreach coordinator. “It is our hope to expose them to a number of engineering fields while they’re on campus and to inspire them to go on and choose engineering or science and technology as a future major and career.”

Other specialty camps welcome thousands more students to University settings, including: University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s annual 4-H Camp at Lake Tahoe; Lake Tahoe Music Camp organized by the University’s Department of Music faculty members who are also professional musicians; Kids University which energizes nearly 1,900 students through a series of weeklong sessions on topics ranging from robotics and space science to music composition and history; Wolf Pack Sport Camps which help students starting as young as 6 develop skills in a variety of sports; University of Nevada School of Medicine Summer of Discovery program; Smallwood Multimedia Boot Camp where high school students receive hands-on experience in a wide-range of media and research; Girls Math and Technology Camp which encourages girls from varied backgrounds to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence in mathematics and the use of technology; Nevada Boys State, a seven-day leadership experience that draws together high school juniors to form a mock state with cities, elections, courts and government branches; NCLab Summer Camp which welcomes 50 kindergarten through 12th grade students to create 3D designs and/or computer programs; and Upward Bound Summer Academy, a campus residential program where high school students enjoy courses in multimedia production, music, drama, public speaking, fitness, test preparation and more.

—Abbie Walker ’11
Keeping an eye on climate and fires

The University of Nevada, Reno’s Seismological Laboratory is expanding its seismic monitoring network capabilities to include high-definition video and climate and environmental monitoring.

“This imagery represents an evolution as it incorporates multi-hazards and climate monitoring into our seismic monitoring network,” said Graham Kent, director of the Seismological Lab.

The cameras can tilt, pan 360 degrees and have a 20X optical zoom. The monitoring stations also include seismometers and other environmental and climate monitoring equipment to help emergency managers, researchers and others in their efforts.

When completed, the monitoring network will provide web-based access to real-time, time-lapse video, which will improve situational awareness for emergency managers and provide remote monitoring of research sites within range of the monitoring stations.

The Nevada Seismological Laboratory is a statewide public service department at the University. It operates a network of about 150 real-time seismograph stations throughout the region providing earthquake information to Nevada citizens, the USGS and local and state officials.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02

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Faces on the Quad

RJ BOYAJIAN has been elected president of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) for the 2013-14 academic year after representing the University’s College of Liberal Arts and School of Journalism in the organization for the past three years. Boyajian is pursuing a doctoral degree in political science and has master’s degrees in international business administration and global leadership from the University of California, San Diego. Prior to returning to school, Boyajian ran her own consulting company in marketing, strategy and program management.

ZIAD RASHDAN, an economics and finance major, has been elected president of the Associated Students of the University of Nevada (ASUN) for the 2013-14 academic year. The graduate of Edward C. Reed High in Sparks, Nev., has been involved with ASUN for the past four years. Rashdan is actively involved in the University’s Greek community, was a founding member of the College of Business Peer Mentor Program and has been involved in other clubs and organizations including College Life 101 and the Business Student Council.

KATHLEEN “KATIE” HILL was one of 30 selected nationally to participate in the inaugural GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy in Washington, D.C. this summer and receive training on grassroots advocacy, social media advocacy and leadership. Hill has been active in GEAR UP—Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—since the first Nevada State GEAR UP grant in 2001. She graduated as valedictorian from McDermitt High School in McDermitt, Nev., in 2007. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, having majored in psychology, and earned a master’s in educational leadership from the University of Nevada, Reno in May 2013. This fall she continues her studies at the University, pursuing a doctoral degree in educational leadership.

CHELSEA LEE, a political science major from Sacramento, cares deeply about human rights issues. Lee’s award-winning research paper on same-sex couple rights, which studied and evaluated same-sex marriage laws and legislation in more than 180 countries including the United States, was chosen by the Council on Undergraduate Research to be presented to members of Congress in April in Washington, D.C. The “Posters on the Hill” presentation is one of the most rigorously vetted and competitive undergraduate research competitions in the country. Of 800 applications, only 60 posters were selected. Lee, who will graduate in May 2014 and plans to attend graduate school, is interested in a career involved with international human rights.

SHAVON MOORE was one of eight medical students in the country to receive a Minority Scholars Award from the American Medical Association Foundation at its annual meeting in Chicago this summer. Shavon received the $10,000 scholarship in recognition of her academic achievement and commitment to the elimination of health care disparities. As an undergraduate at the University, Shavon was co-captain of the women’s basketball team and graduated with degrees in biology and psychology. A second-year student at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, Shavon volunteers as the women’s clinic manager at the Student Outreach Clinic. She is chapter co-president and associate regional director of the Student National Medical Association and serves on the Student Advisory Committee for the wellness program.

CHRIS SALLS, a dual computer science and engineering and math major minoring in physics, was co-vedictorian at Edward C. Reed High School in Sparks, Nev., and entered the University as a National Merit Scholar in 2009. Salls was already an accomplished scholar, having placed first in the state’s American Mathematics Competition. Salls joined the University’s math team, which helped prepare him for the rigorous nationwide math test, the Putnam Exam. This year, Salls placed in the top five percent of nearly 4,300 students who participated in the Putnam Exam. The University team placed in the top 20 percent of the 578 participating colleges and universities.

Walker named interim dean of Cooperative Extension

The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension welcomed a new interim dean, Mark Walker, on July 1. He has served 23 years as extension specialist.

Most recently, Walker served as chair of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences for the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources.

“I am very pleased to be entering this position at this time,” Walker said. “I plan to visit everyone in the Extension system in the next three to six months and become acquainted with their work. It’s a different depth of experience to visit with people who live, work and serve in Nevada.”

Walker earned a bachelor’s in English and journalism from Binghamton University, and joined the Peace Corps following graduation. He obtained his master’s in water resources administration from the University of Arizona and a doctorate in soil and water engineering from Cornell University.

In 2010, Walker received the Project of Excellence award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture for his research testing unregulated water supplies in the Navajo Nation.

His appointment follows that of Jerry Buk who has 36 years of experience in Cooperative Extension and a variety of leadership roles in both rural and urban settings in three states.

—Natalie Savidge ’04
University researchers at forefront of preserving Lake Tahoe

It’s always been hard work, this collaborative business of uniting the vision of management agencies, research arms of institutions of higher learning and the will of the public regarding the future of Lake Tahoe.

A day before President Bill Clinton made an appearance at the Lake Tahoe Presidential Summit in 1997, Vice-President Al Gore hiked part of the trail to Mount Tallac on Tahoe’s south shore to get a better feel for the lake’s reputed beauty.

Gore could see this was a national treasure. Later that morning, during a three-hour open-air workshop, Gore spoke of a “consensus” of purpose that would include effort from all with a stake in Lake Tahoe’s future.

Sixteen years later, Gore returned to Lake Tahoe on Aug. 19 to deliver the keynote address for the annual Lake Tahoe Summit, hosted by U.S. Sen. Harry Reid at Sand Harbor State Park.

Since 1997, the work of University researchers, in collaboration with their partners at the Desert Research Institute and institutions such as UC-Davis, has been significant in the ongoing effort to preserve and sustain Lake Tahoe’s future.

Current projects by University researchers are evaluating the most effective mechanical methods to remove and manage non-native fish, supporting restoration of native fish in the lake and studying the 90 percent decline in bugs living in the muck at the lake’s deepest, darkest depths. University research has informed current forest, wildfire and soil management practices to reduce nutrients and sediment from going into the lake. Mountain-top environmental monitoring stations are being established by the University’s Nevada Seismological Laboratory and use remote sensing equipment to collect and transmit basin-wide climate and environmental and climate information.

Through his earthquake fault research at Fallen Leaf Lake in the Tahoe Basin, Graham Kent, director of the Seismological Laboratory, has confirmed evidence of 200-year-long megadroughts. Underwater stands of pre-Medieval trees in the lake suggest the region experienced severe drought at least every 650 to 1,150 years during the mid- and late-Holocene period. The last one ended 750 years ago.

“It is uncertain when the next megadrought will occur,” Kent said. “With climate change upon us, it will be interesting to see how carbon dioxide loading in the atmosphere will affect this cycle.”

“The University’s researchers have taken an expansive view of the lake, using science to better understand the entire basin and its surrounding environment,” said Mike Collöpy, assistant vice president for research and director of the University’s Academy for the Environment. “We’ve made important progress. We have a responsibility to remain vigilant and work collaboratively with other research institutions and management agencies to preserve the Lake Tahoe Basin, and we’re committed to doing it.”

—John Trent ’85/87, ’00M.A. and Mike Wolterbeek ’02

Researcher Christine Ngai, center, scoops warm-water invasive fish from the Lake Tahoe Keys in a pilot project to determine the effectiveness of mechanical removal methods for management of non-native fish and the restoration of native fish in Lake Tahoe. Her project, based in the University’s Aquatic Ecosystems Analysis Laboratory, received international attention this year when her team, including personnel from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, found a monster goldfish in the lake.
100 years of samples could link plant size to climate change

Plants are shrinking in the Great Basin and warming climate could be the culprit, according to a paper published in the renowned science journal Global Change Biology based on research conducted by University of Nevada, Reno plant ecologist Beth Leger.

"I used the extensive plant collections in University’s herbarium to ask how plants are responding to climate change over the last century," said Leger, associate professor of plant ecology in the department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. "I found that plants are shrinking over time—a result that has been seen in vertebrates, but almost not investigated at all in plants. This has implications for primary productivity and turns the old idea that ‘bigger is always better’ on its head."

Of the thousands of specimens to choose from, Leger and four of her undergraduate students chose seven annual flowering plant species that had samples and records reaching back to the late 19th century. They examined, measured and analyzed more than 1,900 samples to determine if climate affected plant height, leaf size and flower number, and whether those changes in climate resulted in decreasing sizes. Leger took into account air temperature minimums and maximums, sea surface temperatures and precipitation beginning in the year each specimen was collected. She used climate data from PRISM, recognized worldwide as having the highest-quality spatial climate data sets available.

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The University’s herbarium, part of the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station, was established in 1888 and now houses more than 90,000 samples from the Great Basin.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02

Beth Leger shows specimens of Collinsia parviflora, Blue-eyed Mary, used in her research about climate effects on plant size in Nevada’s Great Basin.

Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station, was established in 1888 and now houses more than 90,000 samples from the Great Basin.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02
Menon joins University as director of the School of Social Work

Following a nationwide search, the University of Nevada, Reno is pleased to welcome Goutham M. Menon as its new director of the School of Social Work.

Menon, who comes to Nevada from the University of Texas at San Antonio, said Nevada’s social work program has been doing well, with a stable student population and faculty, and will offer him the opportunity to build on that base.

“We are looking to expand access to students across the state, so this move is a good fit for me,” Menon said. “Our faculty is positive and willing to explore and develop these opportunities.”

According to Menon, the social work workforce has historically been low in Nevada. Working in consultation with faculty, he intends to grow that pool of new professionals by reaching out to prospective students through traditional classroom settings for the School of Social Work’s undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and expanding its offerings of online and hybrid degrees.

The undergraduate social work degree currently offers an online program that entails students doing three years at a Nevada community college, followed by a one-year distance online course at the University. “We’d like to translate this program to our master’s degree because there is a need for people with a master’s degree in social work in the health and human services professional. And this will increase as our health care environment changes.”

As part of his recruitment process, Menon and his wife, Maureen Rubin, who also joins the faculty at the School of Social Work, visited agencies in Reno that provide social work services. “Those meetings, which were positive and welcoming, gave us the idea that we could strengthen our work by partnering with community partners.”

In addition to growing the student population within his school and reaching out to partner more with local agencies, Menon will immerse himself in his passion for research, which focuses on the use of technology in the field of health and human services. Distance education, or using technology to reach rural and underserved populations, will also be at the top of his list for projects to continue and further enhance while he is here. He will reach out to the University of Nevada School of Medicine to add his faculty’s social work expertise to its telemedicine and Project ECHO outreach services to rural patients and providers.

Menon has a passion for his students and has taken a special interest in mentoring non-traditional students, especially first-generation college students as they go through the process toward graduation and beyond.

“I want to help build collaborative relationships between our various programs across campus, especially within the Division of Health Sciences, and to help my faculty enhance their research. I want to be that catalyst to bridge across disciplines. The School of Social Work is a resource center for our community and we are planning to offer services like program development and evaluation, and we want to market that to our area and make them aware that we are here to serve.”

The School of Social Work is dedicated to educating students for competent, responsive and ethical social work practice. By teaching, conducting research and outreach, the school seeks to promote positive change and social justice for diverse communities, families and individuals. The School of Social Work’s baccalaureate program offers course work and field studies that prepare individuals committed to the elimination of poverty, oppression and injustice for entry-level generalist practice. The baccalaureate program also prepares individuals for entry into graduate-level education. The master’s level program prepares individuals for advanced generalist social work practice. Both the baccalaureate and master’s programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

—Anne McMillin, APR

Goutham Menon, the University of Nevada, Reno’s new director of the School of Social Work, stands near a whiteboard outlining milestones for the school’s upcoming accreditation cycle.

Photo by Anne McMillin
Flying at the edge of the atmosphere

The University of Nevada, Reno Planetarium’s associate director, Dan Ruby ’02 (art), spends a lot of time studying space and its many wonders. This summer, he and teammate Matt Oates ’03 (elementary education), ’10 M.A. (elementary education), from Washoe County School District’s Dilworth STEM Academy, were closer to the stars than ever. They were among 26 educators from across the United States selected to be Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors and to work with research teams aboard SOFIA (Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy), NASA’s flying observatory.

“‘This is an honor, and it’s exciting to see the forefront of space science research,’” Ruby said. “‘This allowed us to bring a lot back to the kids who come to the Planetarium on field trips, in the classroom and to the community interested in astronomy.’”

The pair joined two flights to the edge of the atmosphere on the airborne observatory, a modified Boeing 747SP jetliner equipped with a 2.5 meter diameter telescope, slightly larger than the Hubble Space Telescope. The observatory enables the analysis of infrared light to study the formation of stars and planets, chemistry of interstellar gases, and super massive black holes at the center of galaxies.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

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