“Lead by example and be an inspiring leader.”
Those words of advice given by Maj. Gen. Mark W. Yenter, a 1981 graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, to 12 senior cadets earlier this summer at a commissioning ceremony could sum up his decorated history as a commander and engineer officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

As a fourth generation Nevadan and fourth generation graduate of the University, Yenter has motivated others throughout his esteemed career, earning numerous military decorations while serving in the United States, Italy, the Netherlands, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Korea. His awards include the Army Distinguished Service Medal; Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal; Defense Meritorious Service Medal; Meritorious Service Medal; Armed Force Expeditionary Medal; Afghan Campaign Medal; Iraq Campaign Medal; Global War on Terror Expeditionary Medal; Humanitarian Service Medal; NATO Medal; Master Parachutist Badge; Ranger Tab; Sapper Tab; and Belgian, Canadian, French, Australian and German Airborne Badges.

Along the way, he has taken on many command and staff challenges, from overseeing engineering design, construction and real estate management of countless military projects to engaging in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. With each challenge, he has grown as a leader.”

“Commanding soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Department of the Army civilians for 24 months in combat is by far the greatest challenge I have faced,” he said of his distinguished career. “I am most proud of their professionalism, courage and compassion … the best I have seen in 32 years of service.”

As much as Yenter has done for his country, he has been equally impactful on his alma mater. Whether it is inspiring a group of newly minted lieutenants, spending time with members of the Wolf Pack Battalion (the University’s ROTC program), or extolling the virtues of Nevada’s engineering program to prospective students during one of his many recruiting efforts on the University’s behalf, Yenter has been a lifelong supporter of the University.

Yenter credits several aspects of his experience as a student at Nevada as contributing to his success. He notes the quality of the curriculum in the civil engineering and ROTC departments, both of which established a solid professional foundation. The mentorship of engineering professors and Army officers helped him to understand personal and professional growth. And his involvement in the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, where he served as president, and the ROTC Department, where he served as battalion commander, developed leadership skills and lifelong friendships.

Throughout his life, he has shared his expertise and insight with countless others, including this sage advice: “Follow your heart; do what you are passionate about.” Taking his own advice, Yenter served for 23 years as a paratrooper, parachuting out of ‘perfectly good airplanes’ with the 82nd Airborne Division, the XVIII Airborne Corps and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

We need only look at Maj. Gen. Yenter’s distinguished career to understand just how far following your heart can take you.

—Steven Aramini ’96 (journalism)