The William N. Pennington Foundation makes lead gift to the Student Achievement Center

The William N. Pennington Foundation has made a $6 million lead gift to name the William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center at the University of Nevada, Reno, representing half of the $12 million in philanthropic support the University is seeking for the center. The final naming of the center was approved by the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents in early September.

The new Student Achievement Center, to be located near the site of the former Getchell Library, will be a 77,064 square-foot, multi-winged facility that will allow the University to bring under one roof a myriad of student success services now scattered across campus, including the Writing Center, Math Center, Tutoring Center, Service Learning and Civic Engagement Center, Career Studio, Advising Center, Student Veterans Lounge, Disability Resource Center, Counseling Services, Student Cultural Diversity Center, Interfaith Space and the TRiO and McNair scholar programs.

The University, recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a national Tier 1 university, has had several student-centered capital improvement projects built on the Nevada campus in recent years: the Joe Crowley Student Union, the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center, the William N. Pennington Health Sciences Building, the Marguerite Wattis Petersen Academic Center and the Nevada Living Learning Community.

“Not only do these buildings, and the programs they house, assist with academic excellence and recruitment, they also provide opportunities to engage, and retain, students at the University,” said University President Marc Johnson.

“The William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center will allow the University to continue to attract top students and reach the goal to increase enrollment from 18,000 to 22,000 students over the next 10 years,” Johnson added. “Once the enrollment goal of 22,000 students is reached, an increased economic impact of more than $145 million annually is projected to benefit the northern Nevada economy and will make the Reno-Sparks region an increasingly vibrant college community.”

Pennington, a philanthropist and gaming pioneer, acquired Circus Circus in 1974 and soon turned the business into Nevada’s leading employer and one of the most successful gaming companies in the world.

He established the William N. Pennington Foundation in 1989 to provide grants to Nevada-based organizations in the areas of education, community services, health care and medical research.

The William N. Pennington Foundation has given significantly to the University, including lead gifts to the William N. Pennington Health Sciences Building and the Pennington Medical Education Building, and has generously supported general and medical student scholarships at the University for nearly 20 years.

Pennington was honored with the Distinguished Nevadan award by the Nevada Board of Regents in 1997 and awarded the University’s President’s Medal in 2007. He received an honorary degree from the University in 2008.

Pennington led a remarkable life, passing away at 88, one month before the William N. Pennington Health Sciences Building opened. In his honor, the William N. Pennington Foundation is continuing Mr. Pennington’s legacy at the University.

—Roseann Keegan