More than 2,200 degrees awarded at Spring Commencement

The University of Nevada, Reno’s 2014 Spring Commencement conferred 2,251 degrees and certificates over two days, May 16 and 17. More than 20,000 people attended the three ceremonies; one for the 512 advanced-degree recipients and two for the 1,739 bachelor-degree recipients, which all took place on the University’s historic Quadrangle.

Last year, the University changed from one to two undergraduate ceremonies to accommodate the larger crowds that have resulted from increased enrollment and improving graduation rates. Since 2007, the University has seen a 23 percent increase in graduates.

Three Distinguished Nevadans were honored May 16. The Distinguished Nevadan, the most prestigious award conferred by the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education, is bestowed upon individuals who have made significant contributions to the cultural, scientific or social advancement of Nevada. Gregory Wright Ferraro ’85, Keith Lee ’65 and James D. Santini ’59 were honored.

This year’s Golden Reunion class was also recognized for their contributions to the University community. The Class of 1964, whose freshmen year at the University witnessed the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy, re-dedicated a plaque that first came about on Feb. 12, 1964. The John F. Kennedy plaque, was originally unveiled on the first floor of the former Getchell Library to not only commemorate the words and life of President Kennedy, but also to inspire generations of future University students to seek the realization of his words. The plaque, which now resides in the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Rotunda Reading Room of the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, reads: “Let the word go forth from this time and place ... to friend and foe alike ... that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans ...”

University President Marc Johnson concluded this year’s Spring Commencement ceremonies by passing the torch to this year’s graduates. “You are the next generation of University graduates,” Johnson said. “It is now your duty to carry this torch of involvement for the betterment of all into the future.”

—Nicole Shearer ’03

New book explores history of boxing in the Silver State


The Main Event discusses boxing’s origins in Nevada mining camps. Several other matches are discussed, including the first legalized boxing fight between Bob Fitzsimmons and Jim Corbett in 1897, the “Fight of the Century” between Jack Johnson and James Jeffries in 1910 and the big-name fights in Las Vegas after the 1960s.

“Boxing encompasses Nevada’s maverick spirit,” Davies said. “Many people may not realize it, but boxing was engrained in our state’s culture and the University.”

Davies, a longtime history professor, joined the University in 1980 as the vice president for academic affairs. During his tenure, he was named a University Foundation Professor in 1999, a Distinguished Professor in 2009 and a Distinguished Service Professor at his retirement in 2011. Today, he is an appointed distinguished professor emeritus of history and recent inductee into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame.

Davies has authored nine books, and his historical accounts have been acclaimed by peers, Sports Illustrated and the Journal of Sports History.

—Patrick Harris ’14
An inspiring story of perseverance and accomplishment

At 16, Ivon Padilla-Rodríguez was homeless. Fast-forward a couple of years, and Padilla-Rodríguez was on the turf of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta during halftime of the 2011 SEC Championship Game throwing footballs for the chance to win a $100,000 scholarship awarded by Dr Pepper. Fast-forward again to this spring, when she learned in a surprise presentation by University President Marc Johnson that she has been named a Truman Scholar, considered one of the country’s most prestigious undergraduate scholarships.

Padilla-Rodríguez’s string of impressive academic and community-service accomplishments led Glamour magazine to name her to their list of Top 10 College Women of 2014.

During her freshman year at the University, Padilla-Rodríguez was chosen to compete with five finalists for the Dr Pepper Tuition Throw Competition after submitting a video explaining why she deserved to win college tuition. After much practice on her own, plus throwing lessons with Wolf Pack quarterback Cody Fajardo, she hit the target with the most footballs in 30 seconds and won the nationally televised competition.

Padilla-Rodríguez is going into her senior year at the University majoring in history and philosophy of ethics, law and politics, with a minor in ethnic/Latino studies. She plans to attend law school, become a federal judge and ultimately a Supreme Court Justice.

Since 2011, Padilla-Rodríguez has been an active member of the University’s Latino Student Advisory Board and currently serves as the organization’s president.

The $30,000 Harry S. Truman Scholarship is awarded to approximately 60 U.S. college juniors annually who demonstrate leadership potential and a commitment to public service.

—Ivion Padilla-Rodríguez was named a Truman Scholar, the fourth awarded to a University of Nevada, Reno student.

Celebrating Nevada’s Sesquicentennial

The University joined the year-long celebration of Nevada’s 150 years, starting with the Nevada Bowl football game versus UNLV in Mackay Stadium last fall and continuing through the year with campus exhibits and events.

Special Collections’ opens the third in a series of three exhibits in July. When the Lights Dim: Arts and Entertainment in Nevada runs through Oct. 31.

The new Reno Historical App—available at http://renohistorical.org—explores stories, places and moments that shaped the city. The app was developed by Special Collections in partnership with the Nevada Historical Society, Nevada Humanities, Historic Reno Preservation Society, City of Reno and Regional Transportation Commission.

Last November, the School of Medicine hosted the Third Annual Nevada Rural Health Day at the site of Nevada’s oldest standing health-care facility, St. Mary’s Art and Retreat Center, formerly St. Mary Louise Hospital, in Virginia City. The event brought attention to health topics of Nevada’s rural and frontier communities and celebrated providers who have had a significant impact.

The History Department is planning a day-long symposium, All for the Union: Nevada Statehood and Constitution, Nov. 6. Nevada’s Constitution outlined the framework for creation of its first “state university,” the University of Nevada opened 10 years later in 1874 in Elko, and was approved by the Nevada State Legislature to move to Reno in 1885. Staying true to its Constitutional roots, the University continues to provide teaching, research and service in agriculture, mechanic arts (today’s engineering) and mining, and provides for the preparation of teachers.

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From the exhibit, When the Lights Dim: Arts and Entertainment in Nevada, this 1864 photo captures Dan Martin as Dan the Wizard in Como, Nev.
College of Engineering concrete canoe team takes first at National competition

The University of Nevada, Reno concrete canoe competition team won first place in the national competition June 21 in Pennsylvania, beating 22 other top universities from around the country.

“Congratulations to the whole team and coaches,” University President Marc Johnson said. “You all have represented your university well.”

The team of 16 civil engineering students carry on the College of Engineering’s winning tradition by making this the University's second national win, the ninth year in a row to earn a national appearance and having now placed in the top five in every appearance since 2007. The team designed, built and raced a 170-pound, 21-foot 8-inch long concrete canoe with an ichthyosaur painted on its side.

The competition's goal is to give civil engineering students hands-on experience working with concrete—one of the world’s most common building materials—and to increase public awareness about civil engineering as a dynamic and innovative field.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02

Summer Session 2014 presents

Summer Concerts and Watermelon on the Quad!

Voted one of Reno Gazette-Journal’s “Best Family Outings” — free Watermelon Wednesday concerts on the Quad are fun for all ages. Bring a blanket and a picnic dinner and join us from 6-8 p.m. on these Wednesdays:

- July 9: JellyBread
- July 16: Disney (Reno Municipal Band)
- July 23: Whitney Myer
- July 30: Tim Snider & Sound Society
- Aug. 6: HomeMade Jam
- Aug. 13: Guitar Woody & the Boilers

For more information visit www.unr.edu/365

Shine with us this summer!

Concerts are presented by Summer Session in partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno Alumni Association.

The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Produced by Extended Studies Marketing Dept., 6/14.
University research informs public, agencies on drought response

All 17 counties in the state of Nevada have been under a Drought Emergency Declaration since 2012.

“We have experienced significant drought conditions,” said Nevada State Climatologist and University Associate Professor Douglas Boyle ’96 (hydrology/hydrogeology). “During the last three years, we have received significantly less precipitation, breaking records for lack of precipitation in some places, during the winter periods and warmer-than-normal temperatures during the summer demand periods.”

Boyle conducts a number of research projects aimed at developing a better understanding of the frequency and magnitude of previous short- and long-term droughts. Research indicates that, for the most part, the last 200 or more years have been mostly wet periods compared with the last 15 to 20 years.

The University’s State Climate Office collects and interprets Nevada’s climate data and shares the analysis with a number of state agencies and the public. Boyle is not alone in conducting outreach and high-caliber research to better understand our environment.

The University has a host of experts who research the water, soils, rangelands, forest ecosystems and weather of Nevada, the West and around the world, as well as looking to the future of climate change by designing plants and trees to thrive in low-water environments.

While the University’s climate, soils and other environmental-based research helps drive policy and decision making for land management, water management and other issues across the Great Basin and beyond, the University also helps communities through outreach programs and resource identification.

The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is leading an initiative to provide drought information to Nevada residents, from farming to home water use.

Cooperative Extension’s new “Living With Drought” website is a one-stop shop where homeowners, gardeners, farmers, ranchers, natural resource managers and others can find information to help them respond to their various drought-related challenges. Learn more online: www.unce.unr.edu/programs/sites/drought/

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
Campaigns, competitions, cups and canoes

Students learn teamwork and gain real-life experience in collegiate competitions. In addition to national championships secured by the University’s debate and concrete canoe teams, students demonstrated success with impressive top-placed finishes in several other academically oriented arenas.

The University’s International Genetically Engineered Machine team received a silver medal at the 2013 iGEM competition. The University’s Integrated Marketing Communications competition team placed second in the regional portion of the National Student Advertising Competition.

At this year’s Sontag Entrepreneurship Competition, student group Irrigo was awarded $50,000 to continue research on irrigation tactics for agriculture. Irrigo also won the graduate division of the Donald W. Reynolds Governor’s Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition and the Lieutenant Governor’s Cup and $10,000 for their environmentally efficient business plan.

The University’s MicroMouse team won first place at the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers conference in a competition where students develop a miniature robotic vehicle that runs through a maze.

The first prize winner of the 2014 Best Illusion of the Year Contest went to an illusion named “the Dynamic Ebbinghaus,” designed by a team of University psychology students and staff researchers, including graduate research assistant Christopher Blair ’08 (German), ’12M.A. (psychology), research scientist Ryan Mruczek and assistant professor Gideon Caplovitz.

In the Donald W. Reynolds Tri-State Competition, a collegiate business plan competition between student business and entrepreneurial teams from Arkansas, Nevada and Oklahoma, University graduate team DragonflyEnergy, led by MBA student Denis Pharis, won the first-place, $30,000 graduate-category prize. Pharis also won the graduate elevator pitch competition, a $2,000 prize.

—Natalie Savidge, ’04

University’s debate team crowned National Champion

The University’s debate team has a lot to celebrate this year. The team won the National Parliamentary Debate Association Season Sweepstakes National Title, ranking first out of 189 schools.

“It is special because everyone contributed by winning rounds throughout the year,” said University debate coach Phil Sharp. “I challenged the team to make this title our goal this year. We discussed the way in which even a freshman team winning one more round could be the difference in the end. The final results were close.”

The season-long, top-place ranking was earned over the course of the debate season and it factored in all of the competing teams’ performances as opposed to just the national tournament.

“I know that I set the bar high on this one,” said Sharp, who is also the University’s forensics director in the College of Liberal Arts.

“This is a team accomplishment.”

Jonathan McGuire, a Reno High School graduate and Fraternity Man of the Year by the University’s Greek Life for the newly charted Kappa Sigma Fraternity, was also recognized as the 14th ranked speaker out of 302 competitors. Additionally, he was selected as an All-American, one of only eight debaters honored for both academic and competitive success. He is the fourth member of a University team to receive this distinction since 2009.

McGuire also participated in the U.S. vs. Ireland debate competition, as one of three all-star American members selected to make up the national team.

—Natalie Savidge, ’04
They’re coming to the University of Nevada, Reno

Reminiscent of high-school athletes’ "signing days," Nevada Scholar Signing Day ceremonies celebrate the decision of bright, prepared scholars to pursue their college degree at the University of Nevada, Reno.

The six-year tradition of partnering with Nevada high schools to host these ceremonies continued this spring, and Reno-area, homeschooled-senior Jamie Poston was one of several high-achieving, graduating students recognized.

A National Merit Scholarship Finalist, Poston is interested in pursuing a degree in computer science and engineering and was honored during a ceremony at the University’s Redfield Campus in south Reno.

The University was notified of its sponsorship status by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation five years ago. Scholarships awarded through National Merit programs are regarded as some of the highest academic honors attainable by U.S. high school students.

The University’s student body recently included about 220 Presidential Scholars and 46 National Merit Scholars, the largest number ever enrolled at Nevada.

—Natalie Savidge, '04

Faculty members receive prestigious Science Foundation CAREER awards

Chanwoo Park and Yantao Shen, assistant professors in the College of Engineering, have joined a growing group of University researchers who have received highly competitive National Science Foundation CAREER awards.

The Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program award is given to faculty at the beginning of their academic careers.

Park’s five-year, $400,000 award will allow him to further his energy-related research in nano-, micro- and macro-scale thin-film evaporation for electronic cooling, energy systems and wastewater treatment applications.

Park’s award will also support energy-centered STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs for K-12 and college students and be used to increase underrepresented student enrollment in engineering programs.

Shen’s $418,000 CAREER award will fund his research on adaptive technologies for blind and visually impaired people. A cornerstone of Shen’s research in the Department of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering is new E-Braille technology that will allow blind and visually impaired people to conveniently perform tasks such as reading, typing in Braille, browsing the Internet, engaging in online conversations and perceiving graphics.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02

National rankings highlight quality and value

In the annual spring listing of the nation’s best graduate schools and programs by U.S. News and World Report, the College of Education, College of Engineering and University of Nevada School of Medicine achieved improved rankings over the prior year.

In addition, the University achieved an all-time-high with 24 graduate programs ranked. Eight College of Engineering graduate programs were noted in the annual listing.

Behind the engineering and medicine rankings are impressive indicators of faculty research productivity. The School of Medicine ranks No. 44 for total National Institutes of Health grants per faculty member. The College of Engineering ranks No. 79 for research expenditures per faculty member. The College of Education also saw its online graduate education programs climb to No. 36 this year from No. 52 in 2013.

This spring, Best Value Schools ranked the University No. 9 in the Western United States for offering the best return on investment.

The University remains in the top tier of “best national universities” in U.S. News’ annual “best colleges” issue.

—Jane Tors '83