University and Reno are the epicenter for education of nation’s judiciary

Quick quiz: For the better part of 50 years, the epicenter for programs that have led to the education and the improvement of the performance of the judiciary in the United States has run through:

– The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in Washington, D.C.
– The University of Nevada, Reno in Reno, Nev.

If you picked SCOTUS, or the Ninth Circuit, you would be wrong. The University is home to the National Judicial College (NJC), which received funding from the Max C. Fleischmann Foundation for operations and held courses on campus for the first time in 1965 and has been housed on campus continuously since then. Since 1969, the University has also been home to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). In 2012 alone, the NCJFCJ trained nearly 12,000 judges attending from all 50 states and more than 150 countries and serves more than 4,000 judicial officers annually through 30 to 40 web events each year.

Linking the two entities have been three graduate degree programs offered by the University through its Judicial Studies Program that have provided a formal academic setting for trial judges, administrative law judges, and juvenile and family court judges.

“These two entities are proud of the fact that they’re on this campus,” says longtime University Sociology Professor Jim Richardson, who has coordinated the shared Judicial Studies degree programs. “Having the NJC and the National Council on our campus makes us unique in the country. No other university has something like this.”

For 25 years, Richardson has been one of the ties that have helped tether the two organizations to the University as director of the Judicial Studies Program.

The graduate degree program’s impact has been impressive: More than 125 judges have received either master’s or Ph.D.’s from the joint degree program; more than 60 percent have had their theses published, and cited by state legislatures and in case law; its participants come from more than 40 states.

“We have faculty who are scattered over the country (as well as University faculty who teach on letters-of-appointment), we have judges who are our students who are scattered all over the country,” Richardson says. “It’s a very serious degree program that has done a lot of good. There’s no question it has improved judges’ lives and judges’ performances.”

On Sept. 10, the NJC held a 50th anniversary reception in the Joe Crowley Student Union honoring five decades of judicial excellence. More than 200 people attended, including Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval ‘86 (foreign affairs). Other key attendees included NJC founder Ernest Friesen, the college’s first dean; the Hon. Laurance Hyde, a member of the college’s first class; the Hon. James Richards; as well as William Dressel, the NJC’s president, who is retiring.

Mari Kay Bickett ’73 (management), chief executive officer of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, has a unique perspective on the role of the NJC and the National Council. In addition to her current position, she also worked as a program attorney and was the first academic dean for the NJC in the late 1980s.

“We’re kind of the light under the bushel,” Bickett says. Her organization’s office is located in the Continuing Education Building, across the street from the main campus on Virginia Street. “We have an impact that some people may not realize. Both organizations have had a strong impact on northern Nevada. We have an $18 million (annual) economic impact on Nevada, and the NJC has around an $11 million impact. We support the University and the University has always been good to us.”

–John Trent ’85/’87, ’00M.A.
Top tier again for University of Nevada, Reno

U.S. News and World Report has again named the University to the top tier of “best national universities” in its annual “best colleges” rankings.

“The University’s continued ranking in the top tier is a statement about the graduates we produce, the quality of our faculty and their world-improving research and creativity, and the commitment of our faculty and staff to the success of our students,” said University President Marc Johnson. “This has important implications: our students are the next generation of entrepreneurs and creative and cultural leaders who will fuel Nevada’s economic development and quality of life.”

In developing its rankings, U.S. News surveys more than 1,600 universities and colleges. Schools in the “best national universities” category offer a full range of undergraduate majors, masters and doctoral degrees and are committed to a productive research program. Ranked No. 181, the University of Nevada, Reno joins 205 other universities ranked in the top tier.

In addition to the University’s overall ranking, the College of Engineering and the College of Business are again ranked among the “best colleges” in this year’s survey of undergraduate programs.

The U.S. News measures include a national peer-assessment survey with university leaders, graduation rate performance, faculty resources, student selectivity and preparedness, financial resources, alumni giving and a reputation rating based on input of high-school counselors.

— Jane Tors ’82

Enrollment numbers steadily increase as students also increase course loads

Including its largest and most diverse freshmen class ever, the University welcomed 18,776 undergraduate and graduate students to campus this fall. This reflects a 3 percent increase over the fall 2012 enrollment of 18,227.

Students are continuing to embrace a culture of completion as is evident with a 3.4 percent increase in full-time equivalent students, which indicates more students are taking 15 or more credits a semester. This fall, 14,830 students are taking the minimum number of credits needed to graduate in four years.

“As the University continues to grow, it is important for us to stress student success and the students’ ultimate goal of graduation,” said University President Marc Johnson. “In addition to ongoing improvement of our nationally ranked programs and services, our focus is to make sure students understand what is needed to walk across the stage and receive a diploma in four years’ time.”

In his annual “State of the University” address delivered in October, Johnson told the campus that increased student enrollment, the hiring of additional faculty, a concerted effort to double the national impact of University research and the fostering of a the “college town” concept between the University and the community are all priorities for the state’s land-grant institution.

“It is also important to remember that we are doing this as we continue to stress the remarkable student experience that our students have during their time at our University,” he said.

— Nicole Shearer ’03 and John Trent ’85/’87/’00M.A.
Collaboration in robotic, biochemistry research creates student learning opportunity

Students and faculty are exploring new robotic innovations and accessing state-of-the-art laboratory automation systems through a collaboration with the Hamilton Company, a Reno-based, international robotic-manufacturing company.

The College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources has provided laboratory space in the Howard Medical Sciences building for several automated liquid handling stations where Hamilton aims to develop new cell-based, protein-based and nucleic acid-based applications for their workstations. Faculty researchers, post-doctoral students, and undergraduate and graduate students are being trained to use the high-throughput and complex instruments, that use precision robotic arms to automate a wide range of laboratory tasks.

“This project has the potential to increase the research productivity at the University and could lead to new research opportunities,” said David Shintani, biochemistry professor and associate dean of the college. “It will also provide an unprecedented training opportunity for our students, which will give them a competitive edge when they enter the job market.”

Hamilton is a worldwide leader in manufacturing robotic systems used in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries for high-production drug development. The workstations in the Hamilton Center for Laboratory Automation will perform tasks in minutes that would take technicians hours or even days to complete, without the risk of human error associated with repetitive and tedious motions.

“Hamilton is thrilled to take part in educating the young scientists and clinicians of the future, especially within our own backyard,” said Jose Carle, vice president at Hamilton Robotics, a division of the Hamilton Company. “Not only does this opportunity provide a unique learning experience for the students, it also gives Hamilton new insights into the needs and expectations of potential future customers. In addition, it provides a broader employment pool when we look for talented researchers and technicians to be a part of our company.”

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

City of Reno declares ‘Wolf Pack Fridays’

With a proclamation of “Wolf Pack Fridays,” Reno Mayor Bob Cashell and the Reno City Council are encouraging the community to wear blue, University-logoed clothing on Fridays. During Homecoming Week in October, the City of Reno further exemplified Wolf Pack spirit by changing the lights in the downtown arch to blue.

“Turning our famous Reno Arch blue shows the town’s support for our Wolf Pack teams and generates great community spirit,” Cashell said. “Reno is a true university town.”
Laxalt biography tells story of a storyteller

Warren Lerude '61 (journalism), professor emeritus at the University’s Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism, bestselling author, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and friend of Robert Laxalt for more than 30 years, has captured the story of the acclaimed Nevada writer and celebrated Basque-American citizen in Robert Laxalt: The Story of a Storyteller, published by the University’s Center for Basque Studies.

Laxalt’s daughter Monique (Nicky) compares the warm, intimate and detailed account to her father’s 1957 classic, Sweet Promised Land, saying both books were the products of great love for the subject—in her father’s case, his father, Dominique—and that both will stand the test of time. “There is no one better suited to tell the story of a great storyteller than someone who fits that description himself,” said President Emeritus Joe Crowley.

Laxalt, whose journalism, creative nonfiction and fiction made him an international literary figure, is the most acclaimed writer to hail from the state of Nevada in modern times. Sweet Promised Land not only brought to life the immigrant experience of the Basques, it served as an exemplary story for all immigrants to the United States. Laxalt went on to found and head the University of Nevada Press and to write many more popular and critically acclaimed books.

Lerude admits the project kept him awake many nights, and that through the process he learned much about his close friend, as he dug around in notes, letters and manuscripts and spoke with innumerable people who knew the writer professionally and personally. His resulting biography focuses on Laxalt’s small town upbringing in Carson City, military service, courtship and marriage to his beloved wife Joyce (to whom his books were dedicated) and development as a journalist and writer.

For the Center for Basque Studies, the biography is the inaugural book in a new series, Basque Originals, which presents lively and informative books on a variety of subjects relating to the experience of being Basque and Basques around the world.

Robert Laxalt: The Story of a Storyteller is available for purchase at the Nevada Wolf Shop in the Joe Crowley Student Union, Sundance Books in Reno or online at www.basquebooks.myshopify.com.

—Daniel Montero
The environmentally friendly design of the University's newest residence hall, known as Nevada Hall, has been recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Nevada Living Learning Community receives silver LEED distinction

The Nevada Living Learning Community, which opened fall 2012, has been awarded Silver certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Also known as Nevada Hall, the $32.5 million, 124,000 square-foot facility is the University’s newest residence hall, accommodating 320 students.

Environmentally green buildings like the Nevada Living Learning Community are awarded LEED certificates by meeting standards such as design efficiency and innovation, site placement, construction, water efficiency, indoor air quality and sustainability. The Nevada Living Learning Community was designed to achieve the Silver certification by LEED Accredited Professional Peter Grove of Collaborative Design Studios and built by West Coast Contractors.

Living learning communities combine student learning with on-campus residential living. Students of similar majors are placed in the same living area to promote teamwork and study habits amongst fellow classmates. Nevada Hall includes faculty offices and four classrooms to further support student-teacher interactions.

The Nevada Living Learning Community is the University’s second LEED-certified building. The first, the Marguerite Wattis Petersen Athletic Academic Center, was built in 2009.

—Patrick Harris, Class of 2014

FAces on the Quad

ALEX BYBEE’S interest in world affairs and politics has led him to several roles, from state president for the Nevada Association of Student Councils while attending Bonanza High School in Las Vegas, to chairman and youth legislator for the Nevada Youth Legislature, and director of legislative affairs for the Associated Students of the University of Nevada (ASUN). Bybee has received numerous scholarships, including the Senator Valerie Wiener Nevada Youth Legislature Scholarship, the University’s Lillian Evansen Political Science Scholarship and the ASUN Senator Raggio Scholarship. He was recently awarded the Regents Higher Education Opportunity Award. Bybee, who serves as a career mentor at the University’s Career Studio, plans to graduate in 2016 with a degree in political science and government.

CAMERON CHAPPELL is a mechanical engineering major, and math, Spanish and tentative music minor, with plans to graduate from the University in spring 2015. Last summer, he put his varied interests and talents to work through an internship with piano manufacturer Steinway & Sons in Long Island City, N.Y. He maintained quality control, as he states, “for all of the parts that go into making the action of the piano.” The 10-week internship provided Chappell a new perspective and appreciation for both engineering and music, and may have been a first step in a career direction. A graduate of Golden Sierra High School in Garden Valley, Calif, Chappell participates in community outreach with the College of Engineering’s Mobile Engineering Education Laboratory. He said the University has been the perfect place, allowing him to meld his skills in engineering with his creativity in language, music and adventure.

JORDAN DOBRICH, a Wolf Pack Football team captain and linebacker, has been named to the 2013-14 Capital One Academic All-District Football Team. Dóbich, a sophomore who carries a 3.85 grade point average in neuroscience, is one of 23 honorees named to represent District VIII, which spans football programs across the Western United States. Dóbich is a graduate of Paradise High School in Magalia, Calif.

GREGRETTE PERRY has mentored high school students through the All Students College Educated in Nevada Today, or ASCENT, and the Dean’s Future Scholars program. She is also involved in University programs such as Sisters on a Move and the TRiO Scholars Program. Perry has a bachelor’s degree in human development and family studies with a minor in addiction treatment services. Continuing her education, Perry is seeking a master’s degree in educational leadership and would like to pursue a career to create opportunities and support systems for first-generation, underrepresented students. She received one of two 2013 University Balloon Race Scholarships, which are financially supported by University employees.

CHRISTOPHER ZINTL is one of 75 German students selected for an international student-exchange fellowship and is the first-ever student hosted by the University through the program. The exchange program, Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX), is a fellowship funded by the German Bundestag (parliament) and U.S. Congress that annually provides 75 American and 75 German young professionals the opportunity to spend time in each other’s countries to study, work as an intern and live with host families on a cultural immersion program. Zintl, 22, specializes in mortgage and real estate financing. In Germany, he completed an apprenticeship for two-and-a-half years and then worked in a bank where he was responsible for six branches and 3,400 customers.

—Natalie Savidge, ’04
Grants underscore Tier-1 expertise in transportation, earthquake engineering

The University continues its leadership in transportation, infrastructure and earthquake engineering, having recently received two Tier-1 University Transportation Center grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Research and Innovative Technology Administration.

The first initiative, funded with $1.4 million a year for two years, promotes intermodal transportation systems for efficient, safe and economic movement of goods and people in parts of the United States where a sparse network connects smaller cities and towns with denser networks of large cities. This multi-institution project led by the University will invigorate the College of Engineering’s successful transportation engineering programs that have been supporting Nevada’s transportation safety and infrastructure for many years. The new transportation center study area includes Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona.

“The need for improvements on our infrastructure has been identified as a critical national priority and is an area in which our Civil and Environmental Engineering Department has a long history of achievements and transformative contributions,” said Manos Maragakis, dean of the College of Engineering. “This center is a major success of our transportation program and a clear indication of its excellence and ability to address state and national needs.”

The University’s second Tier-1 transportation initiative will investigate seismic and other extreme load effects on prefabricated bridges used in accelerated bridge construction, a novel technique that allows quicker and more efficient rebuilding of bridges after damaging earthquakes. With a budget of $800,000 over two years, the project is an outgrowth of the University’s world-renowned bridge engineering and large-structures earthquake engineering programs that conduct innovative bridge design with worldwide impact.

“The world class earthquake engineering laboratory here at the University allows us to investigate bridge seismic performance at a level that no other lab in the country can match,” Said Saidi, principal investigator for the University’s portion of the collaborative work, said.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
New program boosts students’ financial literacy

In an effort to empower students to become more financially savvy, the University has implemented a free program for all students and alumni who have graduated in the last three years. Offered in partnership with American Student Assistance, SALT, which is not an acronym but a reference to SALT being used as currency, is an online resource that makes it simple for students to take control of their personal finances and student loans.

With SALT’s unique approach, students and recent alumni can:
- Boost their financial smarts with interactive lessons;
- Track their student loans online at www.saltmoney.org/unr;
- Find scholarships for which they are eligible;
- Land jobs and internships to increase their earning power;
- Talk with expert counselors for personal student loan help.

The program offers advice on total financial literacy, not just tuition or student loans. It allows for students to add personal loans as well as rent, groceries, books and other regular planned expenses. The University is one of almost 250 universities participating nationwide.

—Nicole Shearer ’03

SALT, a free online program, helps students and young alumni manage their total financial picture.
Ag-related breakthrough on anabolic steroid regeneration sparks worldwide notice

Breakthrough research on how anabolic steroids used in agriculture can persist in aquatic environments, even after it has been broken down by sunlight, caught the attention of media around the world.

“We investigated trenbolone, an anabolic steroid, and found that the photochemical breakdown isn’t the end of its life cycle,” said Ed Kolodziej, environmental engineering associate professor and co-author of the paper published in the renowned journal Science. “Our team found that these substances, after a rapid breakdown in sunlight, are capable of a unique transformation in aquatic environments under various temperature and light-cycle scenarios where the process is reversed.”

Kolodziej, project leader of a collaborative multi-disciplinary research team that includes the University of Iowa and Truman State, said this newly found mechanism may account for unexplained observations of endocrine disruption in aquatic organisms.

“Right now, I’m not alarmed, just concerned and interested in defining the real ecological risks associated with the widespread use of potent steroidal pharmaceuticals,” Kolodziej, who has been studying the effects of these substances on aquatic ecosystems for 12 years, said. “This implies uncertainty with the current environmental risk assessments or ecotoxicology studies used by regulatory agencies, researchers and pharmaceutical companies.”

He said new regulatory approaches may be needed to assess environmental risks of agricultural growth promoters, and similar human pharmaceuticals, following his research that shows this newly found reversion mechanism allows unexpected persistence of the steroidal substances in aquatic environments.

Trenbolone is a federally approved drug widely used by the beef industry to promote weight gain and to increase feeding efficiency in cattle. The drug, although used in the body-building and weightlifting communities and as an athletic performance enhancer, has long been banned for human use and also is banned for agricultural uses in the European Union.

—Mike Wolterbeek '02

Ed Kolodziej led the research team that found a new mechanism where chemicals transform to avoid detection, which may account for unexplained observations of endocrine disruption in aquatic organisms.