Stephanie Luongo ’05, ’09 M.S. (electrical engineering), a systems engineer at Sierra Nevada Corporation, says College of Engineering Professor Indira Chatterjee has been an important mentor to female engineering students at the University of Nevada, Reno. “She has shown tremendous support by offering guidance and challenging us to excel beyond the classroom,” Luongo says. “We are all very grateful to Dr. Chatterjee and all that she does.”

Since 1983, the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation has honored standout faculty like Chatterjee for their indelible teaching and research contributions to the University. This year, Chatterjee, Mark Nichols and James Kenyon were named 2015 University of Nevada, Reno Foundation Professors.

“The University of Nevada, Reno Foundation proudly salutes these three professors for their outstanding accomplishments,” says Foundation Chair Mary Simmons ’78 (accounting).

“They carry on the legacy of academic excellence demonstrated by the nearly 100 Foundation Professors honored since 1983.” Recipients are nominated by their deans and selected by a committee comprised of faculty peers and Foundation board members, chaired by University Provost Kevin Carman. They receive an annual stipend of $5,000 for three years, provided by the Foundation, to further their professional endeavors. Their names are engraved in the granite pillars of the Univer-

Foundation Professors at Nevada
Driving Excellence in Research and Instruction

By Roseann Keegan. Photos by Theresa Danna-Douglas.
The University's Honor Court.

“The Foundation Professor program was developed to recognize and salute the University’s professors for outstanding achievements, particularly in research and teaching,” Carman says. “Foundation professors meet a select criteria—they must hold a tenured professorship at the University, have a record of excellence in their discipline as a teacher and scholar, have achieved a position of national prominence in their field, have a demonstrated record of service to the University, and have a record of sustained achievement.”

Professor Indira Chatterjee, associate dean of the College of Engineering, has made major contributions to the advancement and rapid growth of the college, especially in the areas of outreach, advisement and partnership with industries. Chatterjee has also been very active with the recruitment of female engineers and has served as faculty advisor for the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) student chapter on campus.

“Something happens between middle school and high school and we lose aspiring female engineers,” Chatterjee says. “It’s not so in other countries. Here at the University of Nevada, Reno, the number of women in engineering is still hovering around 20 percent and we have been unable to cross that barrier. It’s very important to have a group on campus that makes women feel comfortable in engineering and makes them feel like they have a community.”

Luongo recalls how Chatterjee encouraged her to become more involved in the campus chapter of SWE, and was a big influence on her decision to pursue a master's degree at the University.

“Her genuine concern for so many of us who were fortunate enough to interact with
her during our time at Nevada remains strong,” says Luongo, the 2014 recipient of the College of Engineering’s prestigious James G. Scrugham Medal, which honors successful engineering alumni. “Even now, 10 years after graduation, she continues to stay in touch and show her support.”

Chatterjee joined the University in 1988 and is a tenured full professor in the Electrical and Biomedical Engineering Department, in addition to her duties as associate dean. She was recognized with the F. Donald Tibbitts Distinguished Teacher Award in 1995. She was also selected as a faculty mentor by Senior Scholars in electrical engineering in 2005 and twice in 2001. She has received several honors for her commitment to teaching and advising students, including the Ralph E. and Rose A. Hoepner Award for Excellence in Teaching and Advising in 2009, the University of Nevada, Reno IEEE Student Section Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2009 and the Silver Compass Award in 2005. She was also a Nevada Women’s Fund “Women of Achievement” honoree in 2001.

“Dr. Chatterjee has been, and continues to be, an inspiring role model for aspiring female engineers,” says College of Engineering Dean Manos Maragakis. “She also presents a comprehensive record of excellence in each area of her professional assignments.”

Chatterjee has developed a strong research program in the area of bioelectromagnetics by collaborating with Professor Gale Craviso at the University of Nevada School of Medicine and her engineering colleagues.

“Bioelectromagnetics is essentially the effect of electromagnetic fields on biological systems, including the human body,” Chatterjee says. “Right now, Dr. Craviso and I are looking at high-intensity nano electric pulse effects on cells. We’re hoping to discover some changes in the cell, which we hope will eventually lead to some clinical applications.”

**Professor Mark Nichols**, director of graduate programs in economics, is a prominent national and international scholar on the social and economic impact of the spread of casino gambling. His research focuses on the social, fiscal and economic impacts associated with the spread of casino gambling over the last 25 years.

“Nichols is a distinguished scholar in economics and has created a significant record of academic and professional accomplishments since joining the University as an assistant professor in 1996. He was promoted to associate professor in 2001 and full professor in 2009. “Dr. Nichols has consistently demonstrated his ability to successfully and effectively teach undergraduate and graduate classes in econometrics and industrial organization,” says Greg Mosier, dean of The College of Business. “His student evaluations are among the best in the college.”

Nichols’ teaching and research awards from the University include the 2013 Graduate Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award from The College of Business and being named a 2013 Senior Scholar Mentor.

In 2010, he was honored with Distinguished Researcher Awards from the Academy of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues and the Academy of Banking Studies. He was named Beta Gamma Sigma Researcher of the Year in 2001.

“This is a great university,” Nichols says. “I’ve always been really well supported, I have great colleagues to work with, and the University has a nice balance between teaching and research. Both are valued. It’s a good match for me.

“Nevada has really become a national and international institution,” Nichols adds. “I’m excited to see where this University is going.”

Donald Siegel, School of Business dean at the University of Albany, New York, recently commissioned Nichols to write a chapter on the elasticity of casino gambling for the *Oxford Handbook of Economics of Gambling*. Siegel says Nichols’ section is “one of the best chapters in the book” and will be widely cited for years to come.

“Dr. Nichols is one of the world’s leading researchers on the economic and social impacts of gambling,” Siegel says. “Only a small set of academics at major research universities can match his record of scholarly achievement. His body of work is impressive, both in terms of quality and quantity.”

**Professor James Kenyon** serves as the senior associate dean for research at the University of Nevada School of Medicine and is the principal investigator of Nevada INBRE, a National Institutes of Health program designed to help traditionally underfunded states build biomedical infrastructure. He is also project coordinator of the Clinical Translational Research Infrastructure Network in collaboration with UNLV.

“Our goal is to help the faculty get their projects funded and published, adding knowledge and benefit to society,” Kenyon says. “It’s very exciting and challenging work.”

He joined the University of Nevada School of Medicine faculty as an associate professor in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology (formerly the Department of Physiology) in 1987, was promoted to professor in 1996 and awarded tenure in 2000. He was appointed senior associate dean for research in 2012. He
has held several other positions during his 27 years at UNSOM and the University, including director of the interdisciplinary graduate program in molecular biosciences.

“Dr. Kenyon embodies the highest level of achievement across the three traditional roles in academic medicine: teacher, independent investigator and most recently, administrative leader,” says School of Medicine Dean Thomas Schwenk, M.D. “Of particular note are his national leadership positions in the INBRE program, a critical base of biomedical research infrastructure support and funding for which Dr. Kenyon has had substantial influence at the national level.”

In recent years, Kenyon’s work has focused on both the regulation of different types of potassium channels in smooth muscle and the regulation of intracellular calcium in neurons.

“I really focused on the control of the excitability of sensory neurons that collect information from the skin and body and move it into the central nervous system,” Kenyon says. “Nociceptor neurons detect pain. When they’re active, you consciously say, ‘I hurt.’ There is much interest in what makes them active and what makes them stop.”

Since 2007, he has directed his efforts away from his basic science research toward the development of research infrastructure at UNSOM across seven Western states through the National Institutes of Health Institutional Development Award program.

“Moving forward in Nevada, we are focusing on providing mentoring, training and research opportunities in community colleges throughout the state,” Kenyon says. “UNR and UNLV have powerful research opportunities for our students; they interact with active researchers all the time. Students at the community college level don’t have the same mentoring and guidance.”

The overall goal of the INBRE program is to increase Nevada’s biomedical workforce, Kenyon says.

“I feel very fortunate to come to an institution where discovery and translational research are valued,” Kenyon says. “The University is very supportive of all my work and research. I take the award of Foundation Professor as an indication that they appreciate what I do, but I really appreciate the opportunities the University has given me.”