Commencement 2015: Weather doesn’t dampen a thing

Inclement weather moved the venue for the University’s 125th Commencement, but the smiles, hugs and shared emotion of a hard-earned moment for more than 2,400 graduates who received their diplomas inside the dry confines of Lawlor Events Center – rather than outdoors on the Quad – remained firmly intact. A record 2,454 degrees were awarded.

“We can solve the important issues of our time only if we combine the vast amount of knowledge at your disposal with our own inherent humanity,” President Marc Johnson told those assembled. “As you move forward today, remember the knowledge you’ve gained is always tightly interwoven with your own sense of purpose.”

The University featured one guest speaker at each of three Commencement ceremonies: Annette Bidart ’85 (Spanish, political science), co-founder of the investment and financial services firm, Bidart & Ross; Sara Lafrance ’73 (English), president of Educational Pathways International; and U.S. Sen. Richard Bryan ’59 (paralegal), former two-term Nevada Governor.

The Herz Gold Medal for Outstanding Scholarship was awarded to Steven DelaCruz ’15 (chemical engineering) who will begin his graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley in the fall.

The President’s Medal was awarded to Joseph S. Bradley ’78 (economics) in honor of the Reno attorney’s more than 30 years of substantial generosity, service and connection to the University.

Honorary Doctorates of Humane Letters were awarded to Jennifer ’80 M.Ed., ’15 H.D. and Phil Satre ’15 H.D., who have made significant and longtime contributions to the University.

Distinguished Nevadan awards were presented to prominent Nevada attorney Paul A. Bible ’62 (economics) and civil rights leader Eddie Scott.

—John Trent ’85, ’87, ’00 M.A.

Switch propels downtown “Innevation” Center

The innovation ecosystem taking hold in Nevada is further strengthened by Switch, the world leader in data-center development and mission-critical operations. Switch is funding the half-million-dollar interior build-out of the University’s Innevation Center in downtown Reno, creating a hub of innovation and commercialization.

“With the support of Switch, the Innevation Center will propel the incubation of new start-ups and further accelerate the growth of the knowledge-driven economy,” Mridul Gautam, University vice president of research and innovation, said.

The Innevation Center will offer co-working and meeting space, as well as a makerspace. It will be home-base for three University initiatives focused on enhancing the competitiveness of Nevada businesses:


Slated to open late summer 2015 and located at 450 Sinclair Street, the Innevation Center is just over a mile from the University’s main campus and three blocks from Reno’s City Hall. The University acquired the 25,000-square-foot facility from the City of Reno through a lease-to-purchase agreement in early 2014.

“I am thrilled to see Switch and the University join together to further solidify downtown Reno as an emerging, energetic center,” Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve said. “This project demonstrates the impact that comes with being a ‘University Town’ and starts to bring it to life.”

—Jane Tors ’82

The concept team: Mike Kazmierski, president and CEO of the Economic Development of Western Nevada; John Sagebiel, University assistant director for environmental programs; Kristi Overgaard, Switch executive vice president of awesomeness; Adam Kramer, Switch vice president of government and public affairs; Mridul Gautam, University vice president research and innovation; and Heidi Gansert ’90 MBA, University executive director of external relations.
The College of Business hosts ecosystem for entrepreneurship

Small businesses in Nevada were a big deal in 2014. The Nevada Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a statewide resource for business assistance headquartered in the University’s College of Business, helped open 136 new small businesses in the state last year.

“It’s easy to forget the impact small businesses can have, especially with the growing focus on many big-named businesses in the state,” Sam Males ’76 MBA, director of the Nevada SBDC, said. “These smaller businesses created 470 jobs and $18 million in new financing, clearly making a marked impact.”

According to Males, 62 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses nationally. In Nevada, 98 percent of businesses are considered small businesses, with less than 100 employees, and further, 70 percent of Nevada’s businesses employ under 10 employees.

The Nevada SBDC, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, has become the state’s go-to resource for small business owners, with 13 locations statewide. From those just starting out to those looking to grow and develop their business, it provides a wide range of services, expertise and training in all areas of business. Additionally, partnerships throughout the state allow the Nevada SBDC to serve a diverse group of individuals and offer outreach programs in several communities.

“The University of Nevada, Reno is the state’s land-grant University and one of the hallmarks of which is its engagement with communities,” University President Marc Johnson said. “We’re reaching out to engage in a 360-degree way and The College of Business is working with various businesses in our community and forming true partnerships.”

Through these community partnerships, the College of Business has become a hub for business start-ups. Additionally, it continues to support students to impact the important issues of our time through their entrepreneurial efforts.

In March, The College of Business announced the 2015 winner of the Sontag Entrepreneurship Competition, a $50,000 award given each year to the student team who presents the best business plan. Nevada Dynamics, a hardware and software safety solution for unmanned autonomous systems, was the winner of the student competition team. Navatar, a free indoor navigation system application for blind students, won $5,000 and second place for their business plan, a free indoor navigation system application for blind students.

“The University of Nevada, Reno is the state’s land-grant University and one of the hallmarks of which is its engagement with communities,” University President Marc Johnson said. “We’re reaching out to engage in a 360-degree way and The College of Business is working with various businesses in our community and forming true partnerships.”

Through these community partnerships, The College of Business has become a hub for business start-ups. Additionally, it continues to support students to impact the important issues of our time through their entrepreneurial efforts.

EMBA continues to build buzz

The College of Business Online Executive Masters of Business Administration was recently named one of the “Top 25 Online MBA Programs for 2015” by the Princeton Review. This is the first ranking of online MBA programs based on both surveys of administrators and of students enrolled in the program. In January, U.S. News & World Report ranked the program No. 29 of 195 schools in the “Best Online MBA Programs” category and the College’s Part-Time MBA program is ranked No. 24 in the nation by Bloomberg BusinessWeek.

The Online Executive MBA meets the highest attainable level of accreditation standards of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. If you have questions about this program, please contact Associate Dean and Director Kambiz Raffiee at (775) 682-9142 or raffiee@unr.edu.
Earth Day ceremony celebrates University’s designation as Tree Campus USA

Since the 1908 planting of elm trees around the University of Nevada, Reno’s historic Quad, campus has been a place for diverse and plentiful plants and trees.

On June 10, 1908, the Reno community convened on the Quad at the University of Nevada, with its recently planted trees, to celebrate the dedication of the Mackay Mines building and the statue of John W. Mackay. After much maturation, the University was designated as a state arboretum in 1985 by the Nevada Legislature. In 1987, the Nevada Quad was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and categorized as a Jeffersonian Academic Village.

On April 22, 2015, the University campus celebrated another milestone: it was honored as a Tree Campus USA.

“This is a special designation for our campus, and so many have worked long and hard to be recognized for it,” Cheryll Glotfelty, professor of English and chair of the University’s Arboretum Board, said. “We are thrilled the Arbor Day Foundation has recognized the value and diversity of the flora on campus for both enjoyment and educational pursuits.”

Tree Campus USA is a recognition by the National Arbor Day Foundation honoring college and university campuses for establishing and sustaining healthy community forests along with promoting student involvement.

—Natalie Savidge ’04

School of Medicine researcher to develop rapid diagnostic test for Ebola

A microbiology professor at the University of Nevada School of Medicine has initiated a partnership with a virologist from Public Health Canada to develop a rapid point-of-care diagnostic test for Ebola virus.

David AuCoin ’00 M.S. (biology), ’02 Ph.D. (cellular and molecular biology), associate professor, said the end product will be similar to a home pregnancy test and will be able to detect a protein that the Ebola virus displays on its surface.

“This test will allow for diagnosis within 15 minutes directly from patient samples,” said AuCoin, whose lab will design and construct the prototype diagnostic test.

Once AuCoin’s lab has constructed a prototype Ebola diagnostic, it will be sent to collaborators at Public Health Canada for further testing and validation in the lab and in the field.

“We are thrilled to help in the global response to a disease that is impacting so many worldwide,” AuCoin said.

—Anne McMillin

Three Minute Thesis gets at heart of research

The copious research on smooth muscles fascinates Scott Barnett ’11 (biochemistry, molecular biology), but he knows the topic isn’t at the top of everyone’s reading list. This understanding is at the core of the University of Nevada, Reno’s Three Minute Thesis competition, known as 3MT.

“Where the 3MT sets itself apart is that it forces you to discover the core essence of your research, the absolute essence of what you are doing,” Barnett, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in cellular and molecular pharmacology and physiology and placed second in last year’s competition, said. “You have three minutes, and you need to not just explain it, but to keep people interested. It really teaches you a lot about your own research.”

The University’s second annual 3MT saw 32 graduate students compete in the preliminary round and 13 advance to the finals. Each had three minutes to present their abstract or professional-project overview, and could use only one presentation slide. A panel of judges evaluated the presentations based on two categories of criteria: first, comprehension and content and, second, engagement and communication.

—Jane Tors ’82
DeLaMare Library named Most Innovative Space

Talk about juxtaposition: The DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library is located in the University’s historic Mackay School of Mines Building, yet this library, housed in a building completed in 1908, is home to one of the most innovative makerspaces in America as named by Make Magazine. This spring, the library received the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada’s 2015 Most Innovative Space Award, presented during the Nevada’s Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology Awards Dinner.

A makerspace is an area that promotes new ideas and inventions by providing the tools for people to discover, create, design, model, engineer and learn. Not only is DeLaMare a place for innovative ideas, but it creates a new model for libraries everywhere. The library was first in the nation to make free 3D printing services available campus-wide, and it offers many other resources and technologies to promote innovation and collaboration including laser cutters, advanced computer software, Oculus Rift glasses and other advanced technologies.

—Walanya Vongsvirates ’15

University of Nevada, Reno Head Librarian Tod Colegrove ‘89, ’92 M.S., ’99 Ph.D., was the primary innovator behind the DeLaMare Library’s makerspace concept.

Summer Session 2015 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 8 The Novelists
- July 15 HomeMade Jam
- July 22 Guitar Woody & The Boilers
- July 29 JellyBread
- August 5 Tim Snider and Sound Society
- August 12 Whitney Myer

For more information visit www.unr.edu/365

Shine with us this summer!

Concerts are presented by Summer Session in partnership with the Nevada Alumni Association.
Transforming students into energy detectives through STEM

Empowering students to make energy-saving recommendations for their schools is the aim of Project ReCharge, launched this spring. Through collaboration with the University's Raggio Research Center for STEM Education, the Washoe County School District and Envirolution, a local sustainability and educational nonprofit, students and teachers at O'Brien Middle School and Reed High School are conducting energy audits of their school and providing cost-saving recommendations to school district facility managers and administrators.

Project ReCharge is designed to provide students with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about energy usage and conservation in their own lives. To do this, research-based, energy-efficiency curriculum was added to eighth grade mathematics and science classes as well as high school environmental science and career and technical education classes. Professional development workshops support integration of energy and technology into teachers' core curriculum and create authentic STEM experiences for their students.

"This collaboration brings cutting-edge energy education and energy monitoring to schools and engages students to design and implement a plan that will save their schools 10 percent of their energy consumption," David Crowther, executive director of the Raggio Research Center for STEM Education in the University's College of Education, said. "Project ReCharge will help prepare students for jobs in the growing green economy."

The plan is to add additional schools with the goal of reaching more than 30 teachers and 3,000 students at the middle and high school level in just three years. Helping realize this is a $1.2 million energy-efficiency grant from the National Science Foundation awarded to the Raggio Research Center for STEM Education, along with sub-recipient Envirolution.

—Nicole Shearer '03

Padilla-Rodríguez led an accomplished four years at the University

"One day, I hope to become a federal judge and ultimately, a Supreme Court Justice."

These were some of the first words we heard from Ivón Padilla-Rodríguez ’15 (history, philosophy) during her freshman year at the University. In 2011, she burst onto the accomplished-student scene with her winning football throws during the 2011 Dr Pepper Tuition Throw Competition at the SEC Championship game in Atlanta. After personal coaching and training from then Wolf Pack quarterback Cody Fajardo ’15 (management), she nailed the football toss and walked away with a $100,000 scholarship for her college education.

“I can never forget the tremendous, life-altering impact the Dr Pepper Tuition Throw Competition had on my ability to afford my undergraduate education as a low-income, first-generation student,” Padilla-Rodríguez said. “Many of my wildest dreams came true at the University of Nevada, Reno and for that, I am forever indebted to this beautiful institution.”

As the student with the top grade point average in the College of Liberal Arts and having met a number of academic and extracurricular criteria, she was named a Senior Scholar. She was also bestowed the honor of the Nevada System of Higher Education undergraduate Regents’ Scholar Award, which came with a $5,000 stipend. Padilla-Rodríguez also received the Dean's Award for Research, and the Henry Albert Public Service Award.

“I will be moving to New York City to begin the Ph.D. part of my joint J.D.-Ph.D. this fall at Columbia University,” she said. “The University ultimately allowed me to actualize my dreams without impediment.”

“I am not surprised of Ivón’s success,” Emma Sepúlveda Pulvirenti ’76 (Spanish), ’78 M.A. (Spanish), Foundation Professor in world languages and literature and director of the Latino Research Center, said. “She is hard working, has a hunger for knowledge and motivation to keep going.”

During the University’s Honor the Best ceremony this spring, Sepúlveda Pulvirenti was recognized by the Nevada System of Higher Education with the Regents’ Creative Activities Award. She also stood by Padilla-Rodríguez during the Senior Scholars banquet as her selected mentor.

“She has an amazing life story and is one of the most motivated students I’ve ever had,” Sepúlveda Pulvirenti said. “She wants to become a judge one day, and I think she will.”

—Natalie Savidge, ’04
Nevada researchers experience Nepal earthquake aftershock

“The waves were like riding on the ocean after the initial shock subsided,” Ian Pierce, one of a team of researchers from the University’s Nevada Seismological Laboratory, said about the 7.3 aftershock that struck Nepal and India May 12.

He and fellow graduate student Steven Angster were standing in an open field after cataloging a large damaged chimney in a brick factory when the earthquake hit. The pair had flown to Nepal to meet up with their College of Science faculty advisor, geophysicist and Foundation Professor Steve Wesnousky, to study the Himalayan earthquake fault in the aftermath of the April 25 magnitude 7.8 earthquake.

“Just before it hit, I heard a commotion from nearby dogs and goats, and then we were moving,” Angster wrote on the University blog. “It was scary, but we all felt relatively safe where we were standing. We saw seiche [water splashing and swaying] in ponds, bricks falling off of chimneys, and dust billowing up from collapsed structures on the horizon. The shaking felt long and slow, like being on a boat in rough water.”

Wesnousky received a grant from the National Science Foundation in September to continue his studies of the Himalayan Fault. He began this research in 1999.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

LOOK ONLINE
View the students’ chronicle of their travel in the Himalayas at unr.edu/science/himalayan-quake-research.

FACES ON THE QUAD

Christine Braunworth ’15, a member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, came to the University with the desire to learn more about the language, tribal stories and traditions of her people. This spring she helped secure a $10,000 Native STAND grant to bring comprehensive curriculum and training to peer educators to promote healthy decision-making for Native youth at the high school on the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, where she lives. Braunworth was raised on four different reservations: the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon; Coeville Reservation in Washington; Ute Reservation in Colorado; and Navajo Reservation in Monument Valley. A TRiO student and intertribal higher-education program intern at the University’s Center for Student Cultural Diversity, Braunworth has spent a great deal of her time at the University bringing national Native American issues to campus. She graduated this spring with a bachelor’s degree in social work.

Augustus Merwin ’11, ’12 M.S., ’15 Ph.D., the 2015 Regents’ Scholar Graduate Student Honoree, graduated as a doctoral student in materials science and engineering. Merwin is recipient of a prestigious University graduate fellowship, funded by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and spent much of his time at the University researching modern reprocessing of used nuclear fuel. In addition to his impressive research, Merwin was the founding president of the University’s Student Section of the American Nuclear Society, has passed the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying professional exam in nuclear engineering, and was a finalist in the University’s Three Minute Thesis competition.

Gwen DePolo, a student worker in DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library, is spending her summer in Washington, D.C., as one of a select group of interns at the Library of Congress. DePolo is an honors student who graduated from Bishop Manogue Catholic High School in 2013 and joined the University as a Presidential Scholar. The opportunity to intern at the Library of Congress combines DePolo’s undergraduate chemistry study with her love of playing violin, something she does for the Reno Pops Orchestra, as well as her work in DeLaMare Library. Nevada Congressman Mark Amodei submitted DePolo’s application.