Our faculty: A life force unlike any other

A university’s faculty has a life-giving quality that can define an institution. If students are the end product of what we do, springing into full professional and personal bloom upon graduation, then faculty is a constantly renewing force. Faculty is the recharging groundwater that each year provides the wellspring of learning, discovery and engagement that brings our campus to life.

The past several years have been a time of record-setting productivity and achievement by our faculty. Our faculty has embraced the concept of experiential, “hands-on” learning in their classrooms. Our faculty has further re-defined its impact by challenging our students to not only excel in our lecture halls and laboratories here in Reno, but on national stages in student team competitions. We’ve hauled home national student team championships in practically every major academic and artistic discipline—engineering and neuroscience, theater and parliamentary debate, just to name a few—in the past five years alone.

Our faculty has also achieved on a national and international scale in research. Whether it has been the national attention garnered through the effort to save the world’s monster fish, the durable work of one of the nation’s longest-funded competitive grants in smooth muscle plasticity, or making the world’s large-scale structures safer through the work of our civil engineering faculty in the world’s largest and most versatile earthquake engineering laboratory, there is no question the research portfolio and creative output by our faculty have been impactful.

In terms of engagement, our campus’ boundaries are no longer physical boundaries. Our old boundaries have given way to partnership and collaboration with our community, our region, and our state. Never has this connection been stronger. And never have more faculty been more deeply embedded in our state’s collective future than right now.

As a way of showing the institution’s appreciation for the transformational difference of our faculty, we offer many awards, many of them presented at the end of each academic year. Foundation Professor is one of the highest honors we bestow upon a faculty member. For more than 30 years, the University has recognized and saluted 90 of our professors for outstanding achievement through this award. Yvonne Stedham, a 2010 Foundation Professor, once said that her professorship offered her an opportunity to make “a real difference in someone’s life. It is such a privilege to have such an impact on another person.” Or, I might add, an impact on an entire University.

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This is a time of advancement for our University. As we grow, our commitment to quality remains high—particularly among our faculty. Over the next five years, we plan to bring in an additional 400 new faculty—more than 300 of which will be tenure-track positions.

Our hope is that these new additions will find in their colleagues what we see every day: An unwaivering ability to expand the boundaries of learning, discovery and engagement while pursuing exceptional standards of rigor, quality and achievement.

Sincerely,

Marc A. Johnson
President
www.unr.edu/president