Scholarships at Nevada help students clear barriers to education

Scholarships at the University of Nevada, Reno don’t just sponsor students. They make dreams come true.

Every year, thousands of hopeful, new students come to the University. They aspire to become scientists, teachers, doctors or journalists, professions many of them chose in elementary school. They come from all 50 states and more than 80 countries. Some will be the first in their family to receive a college degree.

But dreaming big is only part of the equation. Without financial support for tuition, books and housing, students often need to work multiple jobs that monopolize precious study time. Full-time students drop to part-time. Sometimes, students abandon their dreams altogether.

“These kids are bright enough, but the problem is when they don’t have money. They start working two jobs, three jobs, start taking some classes at community college, then boom: they drop out,” says Robert Edgington, director of the Dean’s Future Scholars program, which mentors low-income, minority students from sixth grade through college graduation.

For 2009-10 school year, more than 8,600 awards totaling more than $18 million went to Nevada students. Meanwhile, college tuition is rising nationwide, and the availability of other support for Nevada students, including the Governor Kenny Guinn Millennium Scholarship, has been uncertain.

Established in 2000 by the late Governor Kenny Guinn and funded by the state’s tobacco settlement fund, the Millennium Scholarship provides up to $10,000 in support for undergraduate coursework for Nevada students who maintain a 3.25 GPA or better. The number of students attending Nevada colleges and universities has more than doubled since the scholarship began.

The Millennium Scholarship was in jeopardy last year due to funding shortfalls, but the state finance committee shifted money to support the program through 2011. This year, Governor Brian Sandoval indicated his support by calling to increase the scholarship’s budget in his executive proposal.

Over the past decade, the University of Nevada, Reno has increased the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded by 66 percent. University President Milt Glick says scholarship support for Nevada students is a key ingredient in maintaining this type of forward momentum.

“Those who provide scholarships are
University of Nevada, Reno President Milton Glick stands with the University’s growing number of National Merit Scholars during the Fall 2010 semester.

the makers of dreams,” Glick says. “Our students have worked hard to be here but need help overcoming obstacles, including financial obstacles, to reach their goals. We applaud the efforts of our students and offer a standing ovation to the donors who provide scholarships to support them.”

Redfield Foundation helps raise the bar

Scholarships also strengthen the academic experience on campus by attracting talented students who serve as role models and scholastic leaders.

Last year, the Nell J. Redfield Foundation committed $750,000 to support National Merit Scholars at the University. The Redfield Foundation will sponsor a total cohort of 20 National Merit Scholars starting in the fall.

“We are tremendously grateful to the Redfield Foundation for their generosity and commitment to our efforts to recruit National Merit Scholars,” Glick says. “These highly qualified students will join other bright students in contributing to the campus atmosphere and learning environment. Most importantly, as graduates of the University they will contribute to the state’s future success.”

When Glick joined the University in 2006, he issued a challenge to recruit more National Merit Scholars. By 2009, Nevada was granted sponsorship status by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, which requires each sponsoring school to award at least three National Merit Scholars each year. The University welcomed 10 new National Merit Scholars last fall, bringing the University’s total to 38, the largest number ever enrolled at Nevada.

Scholarships awarded through the National Merit Program are regarded as some of the highest and most prestigious academic honors attainable by U.S. high school students. The scholarship awarded at Nevada is $15,000 per year for four years of undergraduate study and covers tuition, fees, room and board in the Honors Residential Scholars Community—a living-learning community in Argenta Hall—and books. National Merit Scholars are awarded automatic entry into the Honors Program. Undergraduate research and University Studies Abroad Consortium experiences are also available.

One of this year’s new scholars, Andrew Zoll, is a graduate of Northwest Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas and is now a psychology major at Nevada. He chose the University over other options because of “extra time in research labs, entrance into the Honors Program and a guaranteed room in the best dorm on campus.”

“The University is a pretty great place for a National Merit Scholar,” Zoll says. “So many of the students are helpful and welcoming, and it’s great to be in an atmosphere where a lot of kids are really focused on their schooling.”

Memorial Scholarships

Nevada students receive support from memorial scholarships, some established decades ago. These scholarships honor the legacy of a loved one while benefitting students at the University. (For a list of endowed scholarships, please refer to pages 30 and 34.)

Several scholarships, including the Matt Trabert Memorial Scholarship, pay tribute to a former student by providing assistance in a particular field of study or interest. The endowed scholarship was established earlier this year by Scott and Karyn Trabert in memory of their son, Matthew Trabert, 20, who passed away Aug. 9. The scholarship was funded through memorial gifts from friends and family.

Trabert, a standout student-athlete from Wooster High School in Reno, was to begin his junior year at Nevada where he was pursuing a bachelor’s degree in business and was a recipient of the Millennium Scholarship. He also was an active member of the Sigma Nu fraternity and held various officer positions at the Sigma Nu house.

“Matt was a leader in the community,” Karyn Trabert says. “He was a dedicated athlete and participated in community outreach programs throughout high school, including delivering food to the elderly and needy. We miss Matt deeply, but are comforted that this scholarship will help other student leaders like him.”

Support for freshmen and transfer students

Many incoming students qualify to receive an initial award when they join Nevada as freshmen. When students apply for the University, their unweighted cumulative GPA and the highest ACT or SAT I test score are examined to determine eligibility and award level. Other scholarships reflect the University’s commitment to achieving a student body that is diverse in terms of race, geography, gender, special talents, leadership and potential contribution to the academic community at Nevada.

The New Freshmen Scholarships are offered at four levels: Presidential ($5,000), Silver & Blue ($2,500), Nevada Scholar ($1,500) and Pack Pride ($1,000). Awards are based on a minimum GPA and a qualifying ACT/SAT score. The average GPA for incoming freshmen at Nevada is 3.37.

The Presidential Scholarship is available to entering freshmen who have a minimum 3.5 GPA and a minimum score of 31 for the ACT and 1380 for the SAT I. This $20,000 scholarship is available at $5,000 per year for four years of undergraduate study.

Transfer students who have performed well before applying to Nevada may also be eligible for scholarship assistance. Transfer scholarships are based on cumulative GPA from all colleges and universities attended and the number of credits taken.

—Roseann Keegan

To learn more about supporting the University’s National Merit Scholarship program, contact John Carothers, vice president for Development and Alumni Relations, (775) 784-1352 or jcarothers@ unr.edu. For more information about supporting students at Nevada, contact Keiko Weil ’87, director of Donor Relations, (775) 784-1587 or kweil@unr.edu.