2010 was a year to remember for the University of Nevada, Reno, as our institution surpassed key milestones in enrollment, retention, achievement and reputation. We now have more than 17,679 reasons on our campus to crystallize our vision for the future, which more than ever before must be focused on innovation and economic diversification for the state of Nevada. The business of Nevada must be education. If we are to fully realize a modern, 21st-century economy for our state, it must begin with more education, not less.

The most important asset a university campus can ever offer its state is its people, who in turn catalyze ideas into knowledge and new ways of doing business. Our campus' human capital is formidable. We have talented faculty and staff who, when faced by significant and historic budget cuts, have lifted our institution to new heights in the past year. We have a student body that is more diverse and more accomplished than at any other time in our more than 130-year history.

Just one example is Charlie Jose, who has served the past year as president of the Associated Students of the University of Nevada. Charlie comes from a single-parent household in southern Nevada. His mother always encouraged her son to strive for education. And, the son has delivered: He will graduate in the spring with a degree in mathematics. He recently was chosen as part of a 14-person delegation of student body leaders from throughout the country to visit Russia. His future plans include attending medical school.

Yet, four years ago, when his journey at our University began, Charlie knew one thing: “College was always the only option for me, the road for a better life. I always knew college was something very important. It was just a matter of how I was going to make it happen.”

Charlie made it happen in the classroom through his own diligent effort. He sought scholarship opportunities to lessen the financial blow. More Nevada students than ever before tell a similar story. Pell Grant recipients continue to grow on our campus. More than 62 percent of our freshmen students are Millennium Scholars. As tuition rises and our state-supported budget shrinks, support for our students in the form of grants and scholarships becomes more thoroughly magnified.

We would not be the University we are today without your support. We cannot be the University the state needs us to be tomorrow without your continued support. An investment in our University is an investment in people – the people who will in the future help the Silver State realize its enormous promise.

We have 17,679 reasons on our campus to know that this is so.