University welcomes largest freshman class

Enrollment at the University of Nevada, Reno hit the 18,000 mark for the first time with 18,004 undergraduate and graduate students welcomed to campus in fall 2011. This reflects a 2 percent increase over the fall 2010 enrollment of 17,679 students.

The University saw a 4 percent increase in first-time freshman, with 2,880 freshman starting in fall 2011 compared to 2,764 in 2010.

The University also welcomed 66 new Presidential Scholars and 12 new National Merit Scholars, bringing the total number of Presidential Scholars to 165 and National Merit Scholars to 46—the largest number of each type of scholar ever enrolled at Nevada.

“This accomplished class is the largest freshman class in the University’s history,” University President Marc Johnson said. “These students will contribute to the campus atmosphere and learning environment, and they will contribute to the state’s future success.”

Diversity also continues to increase. Enrollment of students of color is up 8 percent, bringing the total of undergraduate and graduate students of color to 26 percent.

“Having a diverse student enrollment contributes to the overall educational experience and prepares students for increasingly diverse workplaces and the global economy,” Johnson said.

—Natalie Savidge ’04

University ranked among the nation’s best national universities

U.S. News & World Report issued its annual college rankings in September and Nevada is again in the top tier of “best national universities,” ranked number 181. The rankings now include a separate listing of the “top public schools” in which the University is ranked at number 100.

In 2011, U.S. News surveyed more than 1,600 universities and colleges. Of those, 252 are numerically ranked in the top tier of “best national universities” for 2012. Schools in this category offer a full range of undergraduate majors, masters and doctoral degrees and are committed to a productive research program.

The University’s placement at number 181 is up from its ranking at 191 last year.

Two University colleges were also ranked:

- The College of Engineering is ranked at number 156 in the category of “best undergraduate engineering programs.” To be ranked, the highest degree awarded through the college must be a doctoral degree and the college must have at least one program accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology. Seven College of Engineering programs are ABET accredited and the college is also ranked among U.S. News’ “best graduate schools.”

- The College of Business is ranked at number 261 in the category of “best undergraduate business programs.” To be ranked, the college or program must be accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

“The University of Nevada, Reno is a competitive research university, and we provide a top-tier educational experience,” said University President Marc Johnson.

“This ranking is a statement about the students we attract, the quality of our faculty and the graduates we produce.” Nevada’s gains in graduation and retention rates contributed to the improved ranking.

—Jane Tors ’82

ONLY 75 STUDENTS ATTENDED NEVADA DURING THE 1886-87 ACADEMIC YEAR. THE SCHOOL CONSISTED OF A WOODSHED AND STABLE BEHIND MORRILL HALL AND AN ABANDONED ALFALFA FIELD USED BY MILITARY CADETS.

—HOLLY WALTON-BUCHANAN ’03PHLD

NOT ONLY IS NEVADA THE STATE’S ONLY TIER 1 UNIVERSITY, BUT STUDENTS HERE PAY LESS THAN HALF THE GOING RATE FOR THE AVERAGE TIER 1 INSTITUTION

—OFFICE OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS
MBA program rockets to fourth in nation

The part-time MBA program in the College of Business has been ranked number four in the country in Businessweek’s 2011 Top Part-Time MBA Programs report.

Kambiz Raffiee, associate dean of the College of Business and director of the College’s MBA program, said: “I believe this is unprecedented. I don’t think I have heard of any of the University’s programs being ranked so highly—not in my 28 years at the University. It really makes a statement about the quality of our faculty and how hard they work to make this program one that sets the standard for other programs in the country.”

The MBA program outranked programs at prestigious institutions such as USC, UC Berkeley and Rice this year.

Much of the ranking is based on student surveys of MBA graduates, with the remainder based upon other data, such as class size, GMAT scores of students and program completion rates. The Nevada program has the second highest completion rate of any part-time MBA program in the country, with 99 percent of students who enroll in the program completing the program. Raffiee said the high completion rate is a result of the program’s structure, with evening and weekend classes to accommodate working professionals, as well as the fact that the program meets and exceeds the students’ expectations.

“When you look at the survey, students graded our program an ‘A+’ in all three categories—teaching quality, caliber of classmates and curriculum,” Raffiee said. “We couldn’t be more pleased.”

According to Businessweek, the program is paying off big for its students. Graduates experience an average salary increase of 28.7 percent after completing the program, which has a per-credit cost that is the lowest of any of the 76 ranked programs in the country, at $239 per credit. Programs such as those at UC Berkeley and Rice, which ranked five and six respectively, just below the University of Nevada, Reno program, have a per-credit cost of seven to 10 times that of the Nevada program.

In addition, the College of Business MBA program was included in The Princeton Review’s Best Business Schools guidebook for the fourth year in a row. Those rankings are derived from the opinions of more than 19,000 students at the best, accredited MBA programs in the world, as well as data from those institutions. Although the guidebook does not rank the schools in order, Nevada’s overall “Academic Experience Rating” was 85 this year, up four points from last year.

Raffiee said: “Being included in The Princeton Review’s Best Business Schools book again this year is very rewarding. It is especially gratifying to see that we have scored even higher this year, evidence that our faculty members are not content to rest on our laurels. They work hard to make the program better each year.”

The students gave the program’s professors especially high marks, evidenced by the 93 they scored the program in the category of “Professors’ Interesting Rating.” Students said their professors are “extremely knowledgeable in their fields,” and they liked the instructors’ “case study and team-oriented” approach.

Claudene Wharton ’86, ’99M.A.
A new, rapid blood test that could lead to early diagnosis and potentially save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people stricken with fungal meningitis, a leading cause of AIDS-related deaths in developing countries, is getting closer to market with a recent collaboration between the University and Immuno-Mycologics (IMMY) in Oklahoma.

“The ability to quickly identify yeast infection in patients is expected to help in significantly reducing cryptococcal meningitis deaths in resource-limited countries such as those in sub-Saharan Africa,” said Tom Kozel, professor of microbiology in the School of Medicine. “Cryptococcosis is a rare form of meningitis among otherwise healthy individuals, but an estimated 600,000 lives are lost to this infection each year in patients with AIDS. Many of these lives could be saved through early diagnosis.”

If successful, the new field test to detect cryptococcal antigen will use a drop of blood from a finger-stick or a urine sample to immediately identify the presence of the disease so that treatment can begin instantly, rather than having to wait for results to be processed at a lab. The point-of-care product is the result of a collaboration between Kozel and Sean Bauman, president and CEO of IMMY, a biotech company founded in 1979 whose mission is to drastically reduce mortality caused by infectious diseases through the increased use of affordable diagnostics. IMMY’s particular research focus is mycology—the study of fungi. The product is being developed under a licensing agreement established through the University’s Technology Transfer Office and IMMY.

“We developed several antibodies to the fungus with the support of research funded by the National Institutes of Health,” Kozel said. “IMMY needed an antibody that worked well with their idea for this new noninvasive procedure to introduce in developing countries where deaths are skyrocketing from HIV-related cryptococcal meningitis. We found fairly quickly that one of ours works very well.”

—Mike Wolterbeek ‘02
Nevada grad named Marshall Scholar

The Marshall Scholarship is one of the most prestigious scholarships awarded to undergraduates seeking to pursue postgraduate degrees. For the first time in the scholarship’s 58-year history, a University of Nevada, Reno student, Max Alderman, who graduated with his bachelor’s degree in philosophy and political science in December, was chosen as a Marshall Scholar.

Similar to the Rhodes Scholarship, only 40 or fewer Marshall Scholars are named each year, and with the distinction comes a full-ride, two-year scholarship at any United Kingdom university. Former Marshall Scholars have included Pulitzer Prize winners, ambassadors, governors, congressmen, attorney generals, supreme court justices, university presidents and top scientists.

The 2012 Marshall Scholars include Alderman and 35 other top national scholars, including several graduates from Ivy League schools such as Princeton, Harvard and Yale. Alderman is no stranger to the national spotlight. He earned the title of the top collegiate debater in the country in March when he was named the Top Individual Speaker at the National Parliamentary Debate Association’s Championship Tournament, beating out 306 other top collegiate debaters.

Alderman has a 3.93 grade-point average and is known for his caring personality and sense of humor. His debate coach, Phil Sharp, who dubbed him “the Lady Gaga” of debate, said, “Max’s friendly nature and concern for the silenced in our world has endeared him to many, while his humor and personality have won over even the most cynical of people.”

Capturing the Marshall Scholarship, however, didn’t come easy to Alderman. He has been working on the application process since spring 2011, with the help of mentor Vipin Gupta, an adjunct faculty member in the Honors Program who was also a Marshall Scholar. When Gupta was bestowed the honor, he promised his mentor that he would help other students who wanted to pursue top international scholarships. Therefore, he taught a course to a select group of honors students last spring, giving them tips on applying for the scholarships. After the course ended, he continued to work with Alderman.

“He really put his mind and heart into the course,” Gupta said. “He made some mistakes, but he learned from them. I could see how serious he was about pursuing it and the effort he was willing to put into it, so I offered to continue to work with him.”

Alderman chose to pursue his master’s in philosophy at the University of Warwick in Coventry, about an hour northwest of London, because he says it has one of the best philosophy programs in the world.

—Claudene Wharton, ’86, ’99M.A.

Reynolds grad student wins big at Hack4Reno

Bob Mills ’09 (journalism), a student in the Interactive Journalism Master’s Program, took first place in the Best Application of Government Data category at Hack4Reno, Oct. 15 and 16. The event was billed as a 24-hour hackathon to develop websites or apps that collect and share information to promote civic engagement.

“I wanted to create a channel for constituents to have a voice in government in a more interesting way,” Mills said.

Mills conceived Council Watch—an interactive app he describes as a fun user interface—for city council agendas. When launched, the app allows users to rank council agenda items by theme and personal importance (i.e., education, public safety, recreation, etc.) and encourages people to attend council meetings and offer public comments.

“We’re making it easier and less time-consuming to participate in civic government via apps and websites that are accessible on mobile devices, laptops and computers,” Mills said.

Hack4Reno was the brainchild of Colin Loretz, community manager and owner of Reno Collective, a community workspace for small businesses, independent workers, startups and entrepreneurs.

Loretz recruited University faculty and students to participate in the event. Larry Dailey, Reynolds Chair for Media Technologies; Donica Mensing, associate journalism professor; Sarali Diaz, information technology specialist, and Sushil Louis, computer science and engineering professor, joined in the round-the-clock event.

Mills turned to the Reno subset of Reddit.com—an entertainment and news aggregation site—to find skilled team members. He soon joined up with Sean Reeves and John Freeman, both PHP programmers, and Dan Martin, a local graphic designer. Together, the team gave wings to Council Watch.

—Zanny Marsh ’09MJM
Nevada Silver & Blue wins top awards in press contest

Nevada Silver & Blue, the magazine of the University of Nevada, Reno, won four awards, two first-place and two third-place, in the Nevada Press Association’s Best of Nevada Journalism 2011 contest.

Nevada Silver & Blue’s regular columnist, K-von ’03 (marketing), a professional comedian, won first place for Best Local Column, which drew the judges’ comment, “Very funny!”

Winning first place for Best Information Graphic this year were artist Andrew Nixon and Nevada Silver & Blue’s art director, Patrick McFarland ’97 (journalism) who collaborated on the Fall 2010 cover, a cartoon map of campus. The judges wrote, “Absolutely stunning … Can’t imagine the time, effort and talent it took to create this.”

The magazine also won two third-place awards: Best Illustrated Photo for Jeff Dow’s cover shot for the Spring 2010 issue showing medical and nursing students learning side-by-side; and Best Profile/Interview for Stanley Paher’s “What I’ve Done With My Life” feature in the Winter 2011 issue.

Last year, the magazine also won four awards in the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Awards of Excellence 2010 contest. CASE is a professional association serving educational institutions and the advancement professionals who work on their behalf. In the CASE contest, the magazine received a gold for its “Family Tree Challenge” department in the Alumni Relations Programs: Programming for Special Constituencies category, and three silvers for the magazine’s Fall 2010 Campus Map Illustration: two in the Excellence in Design category and one in Individual Institutional Relations and Alumni Relations Publications.

—Melanie Robbins ’06M.A.

Deutschman contributes to conversation about Steve Jobs

Few reporters have learned to know Steve Jobs like veteran financial journalist and author Alan Deutschman, and following Jobs’ death on Oct. 5, media besieged him with requests for information about the famously private visionary. Deutschman, the Reynolds Endowed Chair in Business Journalism, established himself as one of the nation’s most knowledgeable reporters when he wrote The Second Coming of Steve Jobs, published in 2000, considered by many industry insiders to be the definitive biography of Jobs.

Deutschman was the first expert quoted by the New York Times in its lead front-page story when Jobs resigned as Apple’s chief executive officer in late August 2011. When Jobs died, Deutschman was quoted in articles from several major news services—Bloomberg, Associated Press, USA Today/Gannett—that collectively appeared in thousands of publications worldwide. The San Francisco Chronicle and the Atlantic Monthly in their coverage also cited his writings about Jobs.

—Zanny Marsh ’09MJM
New study sheds light on public education financing

Although education is the largest share of state and local government budgets, very little comprehensive information has been available on all 50 states related to state financing policies for public elementary and secondary education. A new study provides comprehensive information on public K-12 education finance systems in each state, presented in themes such as funding for special student populations, accountability and equity issues.

Deborah Verstegen, professor of education finance, policy and leadership in the College of Education, authored an article, “Public Education Finance Systems in the United States and Funding Policies for Populations with Special Educational Needs,” presenting results and analysis of her research, which was published in the 2011 edition of Education Policy Analysis Archives.

Earlier this year, Pearson, Inc. published a book that included the survey data, Financing Education in a Climate of Change, co-authored by Verstegen, Vern Brimley Jr. and Rulon R. Garfield.

—Claudene Wharton ’86, ’99M.A.
Early Head Start Program rated top 10 in U.S.

In its 12 short years of existence, not only has the Early Head Start Program at the University gone from serving 64 infants and toddlers each year to serving 180, it has also risen to be one of the top programs in the country.

Out of 1,591 Head Start and Early Head Start programs nationwide, the Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families has named the University of Nevada, Reno Early Head Start Program one of this year’s 10 “Centers of Excellence.”

Early Head Start is a comprehensive child development program serving low-income pregnant women and families with children from birth to age 3.

Former Nevada Governor Jim Gibbons ’67 (geology), ’73 M.S. (geology) nominated the University’s program, which was chosen for its exemplary services, positive outcomes and collaboration to deliver comprehensive services.

“We work closely with our families and other organizations to first make sure that the children are healthy and getting any additional assistance they may need,” said Sherry Waugh ’84 (home economics education), ’89 (home economics), director of the College of Education’s Child and Family Research Center, of which the program is a part. “Children who are hungry or sick are not going to be in a state to learn and develop appropriately.”

Waugh and the program’s coordinator, Jane Hogue, have collaborated with other organizations to bring the program to some of the most underserved in the community. The program is offered at several northern Nevada locations, including Nevada Early Intervention Services, Reno Housing Authority complexes and the University’s Nelson Building in downtown Reno; at Wooster, Hug and Washoe High Schools; and to children and pregnant women in their homes.

—Claudene Wharton ’86, ’99 M.A.

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Marching band welcomes new director, new goals

The atmosphere of any University of Nevada, Reno athletic event has been illuminated with the sounds of Wolf Pack school spirit since 1981, when the “Pride of the Sierra,” the University of Nevada Wolf Pack Marching Band, was established. Three years after the 2008 budget-cut threat of program elimination, the Wolf Pack Marching Band has a new director and reinvigorated mission. Director of Athletic Bands William Plenk has many goals, but at the top of his list is a bigger and louder marching band that will bring the community and the campus together as one.

“We want to sound great, look great, and become a fixture in the community at large,” Plenk said.

Plenk received his bachelor’s degree in tuba performance at Ithaca College in New York and received his master’s degree in tuba performance and doctorate in wind conducting at UCLA. He served five years as the teaching assistant with the UCLA marching band.

—Nonie Wainwright ’10, ’11M.A.

Alan Stavitsky named dean of the Reynolds School of Journalism

Alan Stavitsky, senior associate dean and founding director of the George S. Turnbull Portland Center, the downtown Portland base of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, has been named dean of the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism and will begin April 1.

Stavitsky worked in television and radio as a news director, news anchor, investigative reporter, talk-show host and producer. He joined the Oregon School of Journalism and Communication as assistant professor in 1990. He was named professor in 2004 and, two years later, was appointed senior associate dean and founding director of the Turnbull Center.

“Al brings a strong mix of both industry and academic experience,” said Heather Hardy, University provost. “His success in developing the Turnbull Center is particularly impressive, and demonstrates vision, creativity and entrepreneurialism, all qualities that will serve the Reynolds School and the University well.”

Stavitsky’s scholarship on media policy and the digital transition in journalism has been published in numerous academic journals, and Stavitsky is the author of Independence and Integrity: A Guidebook for Public Radio Journalism and co-author of A History of Public Broadcasting. Stavitsky has served as a consultant to local, national and international public broadcasting organizations on issues of media ethics and programming, and has advised the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on policies to preserve editorial independence in public media.

Stavitsky earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a master’s in journalism and a doctorate in communication from The Ohio State University.

—Jane Tors ’82

Kate Berry named director of Core Curriculum

Kate Berry, associate professor of geography, has been named director of the Core Curriculum, a newly redesigned, part-time position. Berry’s 18-year service at Nevada gives her the background necessary to work with faculty to develop and evaluate these required, foundational courses.

Berry received her bachelor’s degree in forestry and natural resources from Northern Arizona University, a master’s degree in watershed management from Colorado State University, and a doctorate degree in geography from University of Colorado, Boulder. She has been teaching at the University since 1993 and has considerable experience in teaching core classes, as well as diversity and capstone courses.

In her position as Core Curriculum director, Berry will advise University administration on matters regarding the academic core curriculum, work with the General Education Task Force throughout the year and continue to teach in the Department of Geography.

—Misha Ray, Class of 2012

University welcomes new choral conductor

The Department of Music welcomed esteemed choral conductor and educator Paul Torkelson to the University last fall. Torkelson now serves as the director of choral activities, conducts the symphonic choir and chamber chorale, and teaches choral methods and conducting.

Torkelson earned his bachelor of music education degree from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, where he sang in the Wartburg Choir, a group he later conducted for 25 years. He holds a master of music degree from Kansas State University and a doctor of musical arts degree from the University of Colorado.

He is recently retired from his position as Zahn Chair of Choral Music at Wartburg College, where he taught music history, advanced conducting and was a member of the Scholars Program faculty.

A former principal conductor-in-residence for MidAmerica Productions in New York City, Torkelson has conducted numerous choir performances at Carnegie Hall. In 2007, he was invited to conduct at the Heritage of Gold Festival in New York City along with 10 other festivals around the Midwest, among other notable invitations.

—Nonie Wainwright ’10, ’11M.A.