Bravo! The best college actors in America

Ethan Leaverton '13 (theatre), like many students at the University of Nevada, Reno, used the warm spring day to run from campus to one of northern Nevada's most scenic vantage points: the white “N” that for 100 years has stood sentry over the campus on the flanks of Peavine Peak. At the top, the 21-year-old from Spring Creek, Nev., stopped to look out at the surrounding Truckee Meadows. Not only was Leaverton at the top of the N, he was also at the top of the collegiate acting world.

Leaverton and his acting partner, Cameron Miller-DeSart, had recently earned top honors at the 45th Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival on April 20 at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. More than 2,000 students from across the nation competed to earn a spot, and, in the end, Leaverton was selected by a panel of 13 professional theatre adjudicators to receive the top prize, the $3,000 Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship. His three-part performance was also awarded the Mark Twain Scholarship for Comic Performance and the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre Scholarship.

“We told ourselves we were just going to leave it all out there,” said Leaverton, who graduated in May with a degree in theatre. “And that’s what we did. We left it all in the Kennedy Center.”

Miller-DeSart, who was Leaverton’s acting partner in the first two pieces of the performance, said he stood stage right during Leaverton’s final piece, a Shakespearean monologue delivered in the rarely heard “original pronunciation” style of old English.

“Students like Ethan and Cameron come to us with talent, and our rigorous training challenges them to expand on those abilities and refine them,” said Rob Gander, chair of the University’s Department of Theatre and Dance and the duo’s acting coach. “When students apply the actor training we offer here, the results turn heads, even in Washington, D.C.

“Their potential is unlimited,” Gander added. “If they attack professional auditions or graduate school with the same methodical dedication they applied to this competition, they can’t go wrong. They forged a process for success that will serve them well no matter what they pursue.”

—John Trent ’85/’87, ’00M.A.

A season of student-team success

When theatre students Ethan Leaverton ’13 (theatre) and Cameron Miller-DeSart took the stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., they also set the stage for a season of success for student teams representing the University in academically oriented competitions.

Leaverton, supported by his acting partner Cameron Miller-DeSart, earned top honors at the nation’s most prestigious collegiate acting competition during the 45th Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

The College of Engineering’s concrete canoe competition team placed first in the 2013 American Society of Civil Engineers regional Mid-Pac Concrete Canoe Competition and second place in the national competition.

The Reynolds School of Journalism and College of Business Integrated Marketing Communications team took first place in the district presentation of the National Student Advertising Competition.

For the second consecutive year, a team of College of Business seniors took first place in the Human Resource Management Pacific West Regional Case Competition.

The University’s criminal justice honor society took first place in the Knowledge Bowl criminal justice competition held at the national Alpha Phi Sigma Honor Society Conference.

For the first time in the University’s 10-year history with the Model United Nations competition event, all five of our delegations, comprised of international affairs students, won diplomacy awards.

Student business-competition teams swept the graduate track of the Donald W. Reynolds Governor’s Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition and won the Lt. Governor’s Award for the plan that best employs clean or sustainable technologies and services.

“Academically oriented competitions are a hallmark of the experience-based learning opportunities at Nevada,” said University President Marc Johnson. “The students involved step up to a challenge, take on leadership roles, develop and test new skills, and make important career connections.”

—Jane Tors ’82
Commencement honors gold-medal academic performance

Justin Lopez began at the University of Nevada, Reno looking around with wide eyes at the thousands of students and faculty around him and said he was “hesitant and downright terrified of what was to come.” Four years later, during the University’s spring Commencement ceremony, the graduate of Bishop Manogue Catholic High School in Reno was awarded the Herz Gold Medal, presented each spring and winter to the graduating senior with the highest GPA.

The Herz Gold Medal is the University’s oldest and most prestigious award and was established in 1910 when the University was only 36 years old by brothers Richard, Carl and Otto Herz. For the 21st consecutive year, the award recipient has graduated with a 4.0 GPA.

Funding for the award is now being provided by the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation and the Thelma B. and Thomas P. Hart Foundation, a Reno-based charity.

In addition to earning the Herz Gold Medal, this outstanding student, member of the University’s Honors Program and member of the National Collegiate Hispanic Studies Honor Society had earned multiple degrees. Lopez majored in biology and biochemistry and molecular biology, and he minored in Spanish, chemistry and mathematics. And, he maintained a 4.0 grade-point average. Lopez plans to pursue his doctorate degree in molecular biology after taking a year to continue his research at the University and to volunteer and travel abroad.

For the first time, two Commencement ceremonies were held for bachelor-degree recipients this year instead of one. The first on May 17 celebrated graduates of the Colleges of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources; Business; Engineering; Education and the Division of Health Sciences. The second on May 18 celebrated graduates of the Reynolds School of Journalism, College of Liberal Arts and College of Science.

A total of 2,168 degrees and certificates were conferred at the two undergraduate ceremonies and the separate ceremony for advanced-degree recipients on May 17. In keeping with tradition, all three ceremonies were held on the University’s historic Quadrangle.

—Natalie Savidge ’04
Ground-breaking project tests building systems

Ceiling tiles fell, water pipes and partition walls rattled and the contents of an office were a jumbled mess after researchers set the final highest amplitude tests in motion during a simulated earthquake in the University of Nevada, Reno’s world-renowned earthquake engineering laboratory. The six-year long, multi-institutional research project tested the nonstructural elements in buildings, something never before done on this scale.

The experiment attracted worldwide attention, and a delegation of professors and engineers from Japan traveled to campus to watch the final tests in April. Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval ’86 (foreign affairs) was also on hand to watch the action.

“This is impressive work,” Governor Sandoval said. “We should all be proud of the University and the College of Engineering for the world-class research they do here. This lab alone has brought $45 million in research to Nevada, which is great for economic development.”

The ground-breaking experiment is part of a nationally competitive project funded by the Network for Earthquake Engineering Simulation Research program of the National Science Foundation.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval ’86 toured the two-story building in the world-renowned earthquake engineering lab before the final high acceleration tests on nonstructural components. The building was built, damaged and rebuilt several times in this groundbreaking, months-long experiment.

Look Online
See it in action at http://nees.unr.edu/projects/grand-challenge/video-clips

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Kindly RSVP by August 20.
Students gain experience, enrich media coverage

Working from the state capitol in Carson City, the Nevada Media Alliance produced in-depth features on legislative issues and leaders; multimedia presentations for radio, television, web; and social media content.

Launched in spring 2013 through the Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies, the Nevada Media Alliance is a public service news cooperative providing students with real-world, multimedia reporting experience. Media partners include the Reno Gazette-Journal, KNPB public television and KUNR public radio.

“I wanted to create an experimental project where students can work directly with professional journalists and help contribute much-needed coverage for the community,” said Mike Marcotte, faculty adviser and the 2012-13 Donald W. Reynolds Endowed Chair in the Ethics of Entrepreneurial and Innovative Journalism.

The initial focus of the alliance was coverage of Nevada’s 2013 legislative session. The team of eight undergraduate-student reporters and three graduate-student editors worked alongside seasoned journalists.

The alliance is supported by grants from The Hearst Foundations, The Charles H. Stout Foundation and the E.L. Cord Foundation.

—Jill Stockton

Faces on the Quad

STEVEN DELACRUZ, a sophomore studying chemical engineering, is the University of Nevada Reno’s first Udall Scholar, recognizing scholarship and commitment to environmentally oriented careers. He also received the nationally competitive Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, making him the first student at the University to simultaneously receive both the Udall and Goldwater scholarships. Delacruz graduated as valedictorian from Canyon Springs High School before obtaining his Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Delacruz intends to earn his doctorate in chemical engineering and conduct research in solar energy and teach at the university level. Delacruz is the founder of the University’s Sustainable Energy Network.

JONATHAN CARRAL, a member of the University’s Honors Program and graduate from Galena High School in Reno, received the prestigious $30,000 Harry S. Truman Scholarship, the第三 awarded to a student at the University since 1985. Carral studied in Chengdu, China for three semesters, thanks to the Gilman International Scholarship and Smallwood Study Abroad Scholarship. He is an international affairs major and a Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Scholar, preparing to obtain a graduate degree in international affairs. He would like to connect governments and organizations to better meet the needs of the international community, specifically displaced and disadvantaged youth. Carral is a first-generation American and first-generation college student and will graduate from the University in spring 2014.

ANNA KOSTER, a graduate of Galena High School in Reno, was selected as the Senior Scholar for both the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Science. Koster received intensely competitive national undergraduate academic and research scholarships, including the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. She was one of only 12 students nationwide to receive the 2012 American Chemical Society Division of Organic Chemistry Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, which helped fund her organic chemistry research begun in 2010 and allowed her to present at a research symposium hosted by Pfizer in Connecticut. In addition, Anna studied classical piano under School of the Arts faculty member James Winn. She graduated this spring with dual majors in music and chemistry and will attend Stanford University in the fall to pursue a doctorate in chemistry.

CHRISTA HARROP, a senior majoring in psychology, was selected as the recipient of the George C. Marshall Leadership Award, honoring her as one of the nation’s top ROTC cadets. Harrop, a U.S. Army ROTC cadet since August 2011, represented the state of Nevada at the 36th annual George C. Marshall Awards and Leadership Seminar in April at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va. She joined top ROTC cadets from around the nation to hear from several of the Army’s leading experts about the future of the military. The award is given to individuals who have demonstrated leadership to further humanitarian and economic development efforts and who exhibit personal and professional qualities practiced by George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff during World War II, throughout his life of public service. Harrop was honored for her outstanding performance, dignity and integrity.

CHENGLI WANG and JAMES BUHAIN were encouraged by their professor of history to enter their work in a prestigious Harvard University contest. Both students’ work was chosen to be presented in the three-day lecture program at Harvard’s Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies. Wang, a 27-year-old, first-year doctoral student in political science from Chengdu, China, wrote on the subject of distraction “and contending for what truly matters.” Buhain, a 23-year-old political science major who is minoring in Asian Studies, wrote on curiosity and distraction. Both students said their experience with the creation of their essays was enriching, personally and academically. In addition to thinking critically and working on their persuasive writing skills, they said they have gained confidence in their abilities.

—Natalie Savidge ’04
Academic boot camp to help students succeed

The University of Nevada, Reno’s new BIOFIT academic boot camp program aims to give new students a head start for success.

“It’s been shown that boot camps dramatically increase academic performance and student success rates,” said Kevin Carman, executive vice president and provost. “Students are taught study habits, time management, given guidance in particular courses and even financial management. Students who go through boot camp are twice as likely to graduate in their major. We give them tools for success.”

BIOFIT is a five-day, residential, intensive academic program designed to increase success for students majoring in biology and neuroscience. The program offers a glimpse into the University’s rigorous academic expectations and college life prior to the start of the semester. The first academic boot camp is Aug. 16-20.

“Students at all levels of preparation enroll here,” said Jeff Thompson, dean of the College of Science. “Studies show that if students struggle their first semester, it’s very hard for them to keep up and succeed.”

The students will live in the same residence hall during the boot camp. They will attend classes, work in study groups and take exams from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Attending the boot camp is voluntary and this year’s enrollment will be limited to freshmen who plan to major in biology or neuroscience. The College of Science hopes to quickly expand the program to all freshmen entering the college and the University will then look to expand the program to other colleges.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02

‘Signing’ the best and brightest

National Merit Scholars and Presidential Scholars, some of the state’s highest-achieving students who will enter the University this fall, were recognized at the University’s fifth annual Nevada Scholars Signing Day ceremonies held at high schools throughout Nevada in May. The kick-off event at the Redfield Campus in south Reno recognized two National Merit Scholarship Finalists, Marissa Crook who was homeschooled and Emma Beebe from Galena High School. Shown are University President Marc Johnson, Nell J. Redfield Foundation Trustee Jeane Jones ’98 (honorary degree), Crook, Beebe and Nell J. Redfield Foundation Trustee Jerry Smith. The Nell J. Redfield Foundation and Sara Lafrance ’73 (English/journalism) of Educational Pathways International are helping to support scholarships awarded to National Merit Scholars by the University.

Engineering’s Henry Fu receives NSF CAREER Award

College of Engineering assistant professor Henry Fu has received a prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER Award to advance his work in finding how microorganisms such as bacteria travel through complex biological environments in the human body.

The Faculty Early Career Development Award, known as a CAREER Award, grants $400,000 for five years of research for Fu.

The work could lead to advances in fighting infections, enable better navigation of micro robots for medical uses such as targeted cancer medicines, understanding how bacteria moves through soils or how microbes move through biological matter.

The CAREER Program Award is given to faculty members at the beginning of their academic careers and is one of the National Science Foundation’s most competitive awards, focusing on high-quality research and education activities.

—Mike Wolterbeek ’02
University’s College Life 101 recognized nationally

The University of Nevada, Reno’s Center for Student Cultural Diversity has received national recognition again. After receiving the CollegeKeys Compact Innovation Award in 2011, the center’s College Life 101 has now been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a best-practice program. It is one of the 15 programs acknowledged nationally for Achievement Gap Closure: Promising and Practical Strategies, which highlights the country’s best programs in getting self-identified underrepresented college students to graduation.

“We are helping to bridge the gap between students with a good support system and those who lack access to a good support system,” said Reg Chhen Stewart ’03M.Ed.(educational leadership), ’10Ph.D. (educational leadership), director of diversity initiatives and director of the Center for Student Cultural Diversity.

College Life 101 is an in-depth program with an 85 percent retention rate for students who need additional support and grade-level programming to reach the goal of graduating from college. It involves regular meetings with center coordinators, a service-learning component and mid-term progress reports, as well as academic, career and financial-aid advising.

The program is communicated to local students as early as fifth grade, and involvement begins as college freshmen and continues to graduation.

—Abbie Walker ’11, Master’s Cohort 2013

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