By all accounts, growth at the University of Nevada, Reno campus should have stagnated over the past several years. The housing boom, locally and nationally, went bust. The economy went down, unemployment went up. State support for the University dwindled.

But enrollment at the state’s land-grant university continued to rise, putting a greater emphasis on the importance of promoting student success through access to state-of-the-art facilities, infrastructure and services. Since 2008, the University has retained and graduated more students than ever in its 140-year history. As an institution, the University needed to continue to deliver.

“With the promising gains that have been made over the past six years, our obligation to our ever-growing student body has increased,” says University President Marc Johnson. “If we are to truly establish high-performance expectations for our students, we must provide the necessary resources for achievement.”

The fall 2013 enrollment of 18,776 students
represented a 3.2 percent increase from the previous year and a more than 10 percent increase since 2008. Looking into the future, the University aims to grow enrollment to 22,000 by 2021.

With few places left to turn for funding to expand the campus and maintain momentum, the University turned to its alumni and its students. Generous donors of every kind—alumni, friends, foundations, corporations, legacy families, small businesses—stepped forward to help the University through the financial crunch and not only survive, but thrive.

“The University has increasingly developed construction funding streams through philanthropic contributions, federal grants and student fees that have allowed construction projects to continue,” Johnson says. “We’re a very entrepreneurial campus in being able to continue a construction boom without too much support from the state. In all, we’ve added more than one-million square-feet of new facilities since 2003.”

In recent years, student-centered capital improvement projects on campus have focused on retention, including the 2007 opening of the Joe Crowley Student Union, the Marguerite Wattis Petersen Foundation Athletic Academic Center in 2008 and the Nevada Living Learning Community in 2012. Additional building projects provided Nevada students ready access to knowledge-based resources and enriching learning environments, including the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, which opened in 2008; the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center, which opened in 2010; and the remodel of the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies which was completed in 2012. Projects bolstering research include the Center for Molecular Medicine at the University of Nevada School of Medicine in 2010, and the

With the help of philanthropy, the University has added more than one-million square-feet of new facilities since 2003.
University’s new Earthquake Engineering Laboratory which opened in March, combining with the existing Large-Scale Structures Lab to comprise the largest and most versatile structural engineering experimental facility in the United States.

Now a whole new slate of campus construction projects is moving forward, including the William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center, the E. L. Wiegand Student Fitness Center, renovation of the Redfield Proscenium Theater and Church Fine Arts Building, Ponderosa Village, a three-story, 132-graduate student housing project to replace an antiquated 40-unit complex, and a 400-bed residence hall currently under construction.

“I have been amazed by the change and transition of the institution in the last decade—from 15,000 to nearly 19,000 students, from 48,000 to 78,000 alumni and from $40 million to $140 million in endowment growth for the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation,” says John Carothers, vice president of Development and Alumni Relations. “Most of all, I have been gratified to see our students graduate in record numbers each year since 2010. We foresee continued improvement of graduation rates and diversity as we continue to attract more and more students.”

**William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center**

Student engagement is a key driver in most, if not all of the projects moving forward. The William N. Pennington Student Achievement Center, located at the former site of Getchell Library, will bring together vital student centers currently scattered throughout the campus under one roof. This new facility will encourage interaction among students, staff and faculty of all backgrounds by providing gathering spaces and centers that are open and accessible to every member of the campus community. This 75,000 square-foot facility will be a place for all students to use with access to the Writing Center, Math Center, Tutoring Center, Career Services, Advising...
Center, Disabilities Resource Center, Counseling Services and TRIO and McNair Programs.

“National higher education studies strongly suggest that the most successful academic journeys are provided by institutions with interconnected learning support networks,” Johnson says. “An institutional philosophy centered on student success, and perhaps even more directly, on talent development of its students, is a winning philosophy where students are more likely to engage, persist and reach graduation.”

The William N. Pennington Foundation made a $6 million lead gift to the center, representing half of the $12 million in philanthropic support the University is seeking for the project. Additional donor support was provided by the Clarence and Martha Jones Family Foundation, the Nell J. Redfield Foundation, the Bretzlfaff Foundation, the E.L. Cord Foundation, the Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation, the Marshall R. Matley Foundation and the Mallory Foundation, among others.

“My parents always believed in making a difference, particularly when it came to education,” says Charlotte Jones McConnell, the daughter of the late Clarence Jones ’31 (electrical engineering) and Martha Hansen Jones (attended 1929-31), whose philanthropic support has touched every corner of the campus from academics to athletics. “They would agree that this wonderful building will make a real difference for the University and for generations of students.”

The leadership of the Associated Students of the University of Nevada, Reno and the Graduate Student Association also endorsed the plan to better connect campus and take down the 51-year-old former library.

“The decision to take down Getchell Library was not made lightly. Intense review and forethought went into the decision including the health risks of the building, cost to update the building and bring it up to code, and the vision to better connect the north and south part of campus.

“We knew we were making a 50-year decision to help back the vision of growing and supporting our student resources on this campus,” says Sean McGoldrick, associate vice president of facilities services. “After completing a thorough cost analysis, along with schematic designs for what the new building could look like, it really became a decision about what’s best for the campus and future generations of University students.”

E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center, at the heart of the University, will join the Joe Crowley Student Union and the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center to complete the build-out of the student-centered mid-campus development and represents a near tripling of space on campus dedicated to student fitness and recreation.

The center is backed by an $8 million lead gift from the E. L. Wiegand Foundation, announced last fall. In December, E. L. Wiegand board member Mario J. Gabelli and the Gabelli Foundation made a gift of $1.5 million to the project.

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center will be constructed in the parking lot north of the...
Brian Whalen Parking Complex and will border North Virginia Street, bringing to life a vision for the University that nurtures a student’s mind (the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center), spirit (the Joe Crowley Student Union) and body.

The new facility will feature more than 100,000 square feet of multi-use space, which will help alleviate overcrowding at the Lombardi Recreation Center, where more than 350 people are turned away each week from drop-in fitness and recreation classes that are at full capacity.

The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center is envisioned as offering multiple fitness areas for weightlifting, training and a multitude of other fitness classes and activities, plus an indoor, 200-meter, 1/8th mile running track. Three full-court gymnasiums will be utilized for basketball and other indoor-court sports. It is estimated to open in early 2017 and will be available to students as well as faculty and staff.

“In keeping with Mr. Wiegand’s strong belief that self-preparedness leads to exciting innovation, we are proud to make this grant to the University,” says E. L. Wiegand Foundation Chairman Skip Avansino. “The E. L. Wiegand Fitness Center completes the build-out of the new center of campus and we are delighted to play a part in helping University students meet their futures with strength and determination.”

**Acts One and Two**

Providing a boost to the arts and culture on campus and in the community, the Nell J. Redfield Foundation has pledged a $2 million lead gift toward a $4 million renovation of the School of the Arts Church Fine Arts Building. Additional support comes from the Edna B. and Bruno Benna Foundation and other donors.

The first phase of the renovation project, known as “Act One,” is set to complete this month.

“Act One provides our theatre students and northern Nevada community with a first-class venue for instruction and performance,” says Heather Hardy, dean of the College of Liberal Arts. “The renovation of the Redfield Proscenium Theatre takes us from 1960s technology into the digital age, while at the same time providing community members in the audience with a setting that is both attractive and intimate.”

The cornerstone of Act One is the renovation of the Nell J. Redfield Proscenium Theatre, with upgrades to lighting, sound and electrical rigging systems, modernization of the stage and seating venue, introduction of stadium seating and hydraulic stage lifts, creation of an interior control booth and a 6,000 square-foot expansion of the scene shop.

Act One also includes the remodeling of the Front Door Gallery and the creation of the Edna B. and Bruno Benna Foundation Atrium entrance on Virginia Street. Act Two will include an addition to the art and music space: a new recital hall, new practice rooms, improved classroom space and new gallery space.

“The Redfield Foundation has a deep and long-standing interest in fine arts in general and the Nell J. Redfield Proscenium Theatre in particular,” says Jerry Smith, Redfield Founda-
tion trustee. “This gift will make it possible to make necessary renovations to the theatre and to take a lead in developing the new center for fine arts.”

A catalyst for growth

What’s good for the campus is also good for the community, says Brian Bonnenfant, project manager at the University’s Center for Regional Studies.

Last September, the center conducted a study examining the economic impact of construction on campus. The results were staggering. For the construction alone, every dollar of spending translates to 59 cents in secondary spending in the community, including businesses restocking construction materials and construction workers spending their wages. The estimated total, if all secondary spending remains in the community, is an additional $462.9 million to the local economy.

An even greater community economic impact will be realized once student enrollment has fully grown from more than 18,000 to 22,000. An additional $145 million per year will be spent locally on tuition, fees, books, room, board and transportation, Bonnenfant says.

Another ripple effect of expanding enrollment, he says, is creating a more educated community and a larger pool of potential employees. “Businesses want an educated workforce,” he says. “With the University awarding a record number of degrees, the community has a huge leverage for bringing industry to our area.”

Overall community health has also been linked to education. “When you’re educating your demographic, that’s a huge improvement to the quality of life in your community,” Bonnenfant says. “The more degrees we award, the more people it helps across the board.”

President Johnson notes that as a land-grant institution, the University has an important responsibility to the people and the state of Nevada.

“Funding for University initiatives strengthens the state’s economy, provides jobs and improves the quality of life to ensure that the University remains a vital resource to Nevada,” Johnson says. “We are tremendously grateful for the philanthropy of our generous supporters, who have allowed us to continue to grow and remain true to our land-grant mission.”

Act One will also include remodeling the Front Door Gallery and the creation of an atrium entrance (pictured) on Virginia Street. The atrium will be named in recognition of the family of the late Bruno Benna ’53 (physical education) and his wife, Edna. The Edna B. and Bruno Benna Foundation provided significant support for the project.