A Welcome to New and Returning Students
from Jessica Lucero, GPSA President

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 2009-2010 academic year. The good news is we seem to have weathered the potentially devastating budget cut storm of last year. The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) will take a 12.5% budget reduction of which UNLV’s portion is 15.35%. The Legislature also recommended that there be tuition increases to aid in softening the blow of 12.5% reductions. However, the legislature does not intend to place the burden entirely upon the students and advises NSHE not to go above 10%. Since graduate & professional students already had an increase of 10% over the next two years, we will not be asked for an additional increase (this biennium).

While the road ahead is definitely brighter, we still need to be vigilant and proactive, which means continuing to advocate on behalf of graduate and professional students. I’m counting on all of you to write to me (jessica.lucero@unlv.edu) and let me know what research you’re doing as well as how your work contributes to the campus and Las Vegas community at large. We want to acknowledge you and your work as well as to publicize the good things that are going on at UNLV, so please don’t be shy. We’ve had enough bad publicity and negative energy due to the economic climate; it’s time to focus on the positive. That being said, you should also feel free to e-mail me when your graduate and professional needs are not being met. I speak on your behalf at the President’s Advisory Council (PAC) and to the Board of Regents and am always happy to advocate on your behalf.

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Robert W. Bryson Jr.'s research focuses primarily on the evolutionary relationships and biogeography of montane Mexican reptiles and amphibians. During his time at UNLV, he has published 12 articles and notes in scientific peer-reviewed journals, co-authored 10 presentations at international meetings, and collaborated extensively with researchers from around the world. This year Robert will begin the fourth and final year of his doctoral dissertation research on the historical diversification of montane reptiles and amphibians within and between the sierras of Mexico. The major sierras of Mexico harbor over half of the terrestrial vertebrates found exclusively in Mexico, and were recently designated a globally important biodiversity hotspot by Conservation International. Despite their importance, however, these regions have seen explosive human settlement comparable to mountain settlement rates in Ethiopia, and their roles in shaping the genetic structure of highland organisms remain poorly understood. He hopes to spend four weeks in Mexico during the summer and early fall gathering new tissue samples from four focal species of reptiles and amphibians with wide distributions throughout the Mexican highlands. He intends to extract, amplify, and sequence DNA from these samples in the fall, and begin writing his dissertation in the spring.

Leisl Carr Childers is a Ph.D. candidate in the History department entering her fifth year of study at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Among her other accomplishments, she has worked as the Nevada Test Site Oral History Project (NTSOHP) Archive Assistant, and has presented her early research on the Nevada Test Site at several national conferences. She has also worked with curators at the Museum of the American West, where she curated an exhibit on Gene Autry Rodeo. Her research on rodeo is featured in the Winter 2008 issue of Nevada Historical Society Quarterly. She has developed a dissertation project which provides both an on-the-ground and top-down critical analysis and places Nevada at the center of the national debate about public land and environmental policies. Entitled, “The Size of the Risk: An Environmental History of the Great Basin in the Nuclear Age,” my dissertation uncovers the presumptions behind federal public land and environmental policies and examines their human and environmental costs across four hundred square miles in central Nevada during the second half of the twentieth century.

Ordene Edwards is in the data collection phase of her doctoral program in educational psychology. She is looking at the connections among students’ goals, their attention, learning strategies, and comprehension. That is, she is investigating whether the achievement goals that students have for their classes affect how much/little they pay attention to class tasks and whether their attention would eventually lead to better comprehension. She is also examining the link among students’ goals, learning strategies, and learning. She is conducting this study using a well-established attention model called the Selective Attention Strategy and specifically focusing on reading comprehension. Studies in educational psychology have never examined how all these variables would work together to affect one another. Also, her study is unique in that it would be experimental and not the traditional correlational study. This element of the study would add more validity to results about the effects of goals on different learning outcomes.

The results from this research will help scholars understand the cognitive processes that undergird the established effects of goal instruction on student learning. This could lead to more sophisticated techniques that would help students to adopt more adaptive achievement goals. The research is also particularly important because identifying relationships among goals, attention, and learning is very critical at the university level as college drop out rates are a problem. By better understanding these relationships, instructional techniques can be implemented that encourage better attention strategies and adaptive goals that can improve learning and retention.

Robert W. Bryson Jr.

Leisl Carr Childers

Ordene Edwards

UNLV Dial-up is a free Internet dial-up account for UNLV graduate, law or dental students. Features include:

• Free Rebelmail e-mail account
• No monthly charges
• No limit of hours

More benefits with your student computing account are:

• Use any public computer lab operated by the Student Computing Resources
• Receive 100 MB of storage space, commonly referred to as a Home Directory, on the network server. You may access any files saved to your Home Directory off campus through the Internet.
• Through agreements with Apple, Dell, and Gateway, UNLV students can purchase computers at discounted prices.

Additional information available at: http://ccs.unlv.edu/scr/support/
It’s also a good idea to continue corresponding with your legislator as they are always interested in hearing from students and citizens of Nevada. To find your legislator click here: http://mapserve.leg.state.nv.us/website/lcbviewer.htm.

I sincerely hope that you will join me in making this year one of the best years for graduate & professional students ever. Let’s make a difference and stay active. Working as a community will ensure that the future of UNLV and the GPSA will meet with continued success and prosperity.

Best of luck as you begin this academic year,
Jessica Lucero
GPSA President

Dining Deals
- On Tuesdays in the Dining Commons, enjoy $5 lunch when paying with rebel cash
- Jamba Juice PLANit mugs: “Purchase your PLANit Mug today and pay only the price of a small the rest of the year”
- You can get a free boost at Jamba Juice on the third Monday
- At the Sidewalk café on the third Wednesday: you get a free combo upgrade with a small combo purchase at burger king. On the fourth Monday: you get a small breadstick with any Tuscani pasta purchase.
- On the Third Friday at Taco Bell enjoy 49 cent crunchy beef tacos.
- The Book and Bean serves free Tall drip coffee with any pastry purchase on the third Thursday.

Please visit http://www.unlvdining.org/ for more information.

Did you know...
the MSU Information Desk offers:
- Free scantrons
- Free exam booklets
- Free coupons at the beginning of the semester or while supplies last
- Bus passes
- Buy stamps and envelopes
- Send faxes

GPSA Office Hours
Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 9:45 p.m.
Friday 7:30 a.m. - 6:45 p.m.
Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.
Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 10:45 p.m.

Rebel Card
There are many places around campus and in the community to use your rebel card.
- Vending machines
- Student Union dining
- Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
- CVS on Paradise
- RebelBooks
- Freakin Frog
For more options visit http://rebelcard.unlv.edu/whoTakes.html

Jessica Lucero earned her MA in English Literature at UNLV and her BA in English with a minor in German at Mississippi State University. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the department of English and has just begun work on her dissertation. While she enjoys reading and writing (most of the time), her secret love is watching “bad” romantic comedies as well as Top Chef and Project Runway. She is addicted to coffee, which explains why she loves going to Board of Regents meetings. Mostly she looks forward to serving a second year as GPSA President and being a voice for graduate & professional Student concerns.

Jessica Lucero - Continued from page 1 -
Graduate & Professional Student Association

2009-2010 Goals

Legislative Advocacy: The Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) recognizes that the budget crisis of the 75th Nevada State Legislative Session is not over, and that this State may still be facing further economic shortages in funding. To this end, the GPSA will continue advocating on behalf of graduate and professional student needs as well as to the needs of the University and the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Graduate and Professional Student Empowerment: The Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) believes that students should be empowered; as the primary consumers of a University, students should have a voice in the campus community. Therefore, the GPSA would like to foster and encourage a more student-centered mission.

... The GPSA would like to support the Graduate College and the Office of Student Conduct in their efforts to detect, deter, and remedy graduate assistant abuse. One of the main ways in which the GPSA would like to be involved is in collaborating with the various academic and administrative units in defining what graduate assistant abuse is and to continue our efforts in being a strong voice for all graduate and professional students by finding ways in which to help prevent abuse from happening in the first place.

... The GPSA also aims to increase awareness of our body. Graduate students make up 25% of the UNLV student population, and the GPSA is the governing body charged with protecting our interests. The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents recognizes the GPSA as the official voice and advocate of graduate and professional students at UNLV. We would therefore like to encourage the UNLV community to refer to the undergraduate and graduate student governments in distinct terms. Therefore, more focus and energy needs to be devoted to promoting GPSA, our meetings and our events.

... The GPSA believes that the general climate of our university is under-graduate-centric and would like the distinct needs of the graduate population to be more directly addressed. Furthermore, since student centered spaces like the Student Union, and the Student Recreation and Wellness Center were built with student fees and we continue to pay these fees, the graduate student government needs spaces to post relevant information necessary, including flyers, posters and handbills. Additionally, the GPSA will find ways in which to reach out and collaborate with units who are still held by many to be purely undergraduate-centered.

Graduate and Professional Student Benefits:

One goal is increasing the average minimum Graduate Assistant Stipend to be competitive with that of peer institutions. This push is that graduate students need to receive a livable wage. While the GPSA is sensitive to UNLV’s budget situation, graduate students cannot survive on the current stipends. In addition, we will be pushing for more summer funding as most research is year round and does not stop in the summer.

The GPSA would like to see more support from the campus regarding benefits; as graduate and professional students are in that in-between stage where we are not exactly like the undergraduate students and also not faculty, we would like our benefits such as health care, parking, daycare and full accessibility to research resources and tools to be treated with the consideration that graduate and professional students’ needs differ from that of our undergraduate counterparts.

Another way the GPSA would like to better empower graduate and professional students is to support the work of the Board of Regents and the UNLV Housing and Resident Life Department in their efforts to secure graduate housing and Resident Life Department in their efforts to secure graduate housing.

Graduate & Professional Student Association Internal Enhancements:

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) is also committed to making itself the best that it can be and has found areas for improvement.

... The GPSA would like to make grants more competitive. The GPSA has been working with the Graduate Committee while reviewing the criteria.

... The GPSA believes more focus and resources should be placed upon making graduate and professional students more competitive on the job market. The Activities Committee will be responsible for developing and implementing activities geared towards this purpose.

... Another goal is to review the current GPSA bylaws, with particular concern to the lack of policy and procedures regarding GPSA elections and registered student organizations.

Go Green: The Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) recognizes the University’s mission to “confront challenges of economic and cultural diversification, urban growth, social justice, and sustainability.” To this end, the GPSA would like to foster a community that promotes “social, environmental, and economic sustainability.”

Some of the ways in which this council envisions accomplishing this goal is by cutting down on printouts of agendas, minutes, and handouts by publishing these online and sending them out via email. Additionally, the Grants Committee will only require two original grant applications (instead of a total of six copies). Applications will be scanned and committee members will be able to access applications from a secure UNLV network storage space.

UNLV’s Cardboard Battlefield

by Sam Harr

There are some battles that are meant to be recorded for history, and some that will go down in myth and legend. Ultimate Team Cardboard Fortress Battle may not be one of those. Then again, that’s not really what it’s for.

“This will give people from different colleges a chance to break out of their normal social groups and meet other grads,” says Lauren McCubbin, representative of the activities committee and orchestrator of the event. “What better way to do that then by destroying a bunch of cardboard forts?”

The Cardboard Fortress Battle took place on Nov. 21 at the Justice Myron Leavitt Family Park. It was conceived as an alternative to the happy hour events that happen throughout the semester. Instead of socializing over drinks at a local bar, graduate and professional students form teams and construct forts on cardboard, which the other team will have to destroy. It makes it a much different experience from buying each other drinks.

The idea for the Fortress Battle came up in the Activities committee, when they were thinking of a group event for graduate and professional students. The game, which was created several years ago by Jon Sung seemed an obvious suggestion for people to get to know each other, according to McCubbin. “The game is super fun,” she says. “It is nothing but hilarious.”

The game is a combination of team strategy, arts and crafts, and full contact sport. The teams must work together to build a three dimensional fort that can be used to hide a flag that the other team must capture. Then, the team must stop the other team from forcing their way through their line and destroying the fort. Each team elects a general, who delivers a two minute, PhD-stye motivational speech making the game that much more absurd and fun.

While the game might seem odd in many ways, it is designed so that no one will get hurt and that everyone will have a good time. The activities committee believe it will be an excellent way for students of different schools to meet each other. It is also a serves as a chance to root for your favorite department.

The event was open to family and friends, and was catered by Memphis Barbecue. Students were encouraged to bring all the cardboard boxes they could, as well as masking tape or packing tape.

For rules, please go to http://automatedredemption.com/flavorcountry/utcfb.html.