

## UNLV Podcast: Ep 08 - Economic Development

Ben Dimalibot: We are already halfway to our first season of this podcast. With all of the debate, election, and campus growth happening around us, it has made time fly. From UNLV, I am Ben Dimalibot. Living in Las Vegas, the economy is an ever present topic of conversation. As we see our city being rebuilt with new homes, new businesses, and the expansion of the education offerings, we thought it would be a good time to get some insight from one of our resident experts on what is happening here at UNLV. Student journalist, Mallika Pal sat down with the Associate Vice President for Economic Development, Zach Miles.

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Mallika Pal: Innovation and breakthrough ideas are the building blocks of invention. Here at UNLV, young entrepreneurs have useful resources at hand to kick-start their partnerships and new businesses at the Nevada Small Business Development Center. I got to sit down with their director among many other things, Zach Miles to talk about start-ups and projects happening right now at UNLV. Though Miles is an expert in intellectual property and economic development, he surprisingly has his Bachelor's degree in microbiology.

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Zach Miles: I was a pre-med, and blood and guts caused me to have horrible effects on my body, so microbiology and chemistry undergrad. Went to law school at New Hampshire, came back and worked as an attorney for a little while doing prosecution, and then ended up in academics for the past 13 years.

Mallika Pal: Can you tell us a little bit about your role here at UNLV?

Zach Miles: [00:02:00] Sure. I am the Associate Vice President for Economic Development at UNLV. Basically, what that means is we're the commercialization interface with the business community, so we help assess, protect, license, commercialize UNLV owned or controlled intellectual property, or we try to attract companies on campus to conduct their R&D with UNLV, and so really there's student pieces in there, researcher pieces in there, and community pieces that we try to connect.

Mallika Pal: What kind of projects are you working on right now?

Zach Miles: [00:02:30] Yeah. One that just finished up that we're really excited about that's been taking a little while to get done is with Lockheed. We finished the deal with them where they're bringing up to \$5 million on campus for students and researchers to work on the Orion project which is the man mission to Mars. How cool is that to have gotten those deals done? I look forward to maybe seeing a UNLV rebel in space.

Mallika Pal: What does that really mean for the university?

Zach Miles: Sure. With Top Tier that we're pushing towards and becoming a research one institution, these types of projects really get out into the community, into the funding sources, and lets everyone know that we're ready for these types of research activities. Plus, students get hands-on experience with these projects, so not only do they have their degree, but they have real-world experience when they go on and try to find jobs. It's a lot easier to get into the industry. Yeah, I have my degree, but I worked on the project of going to Mars. That's a good selling point.

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Mallika Pal: What role does the UNLV Small Business Center play for the campus?

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Zach Miles: Sure. We have the Small Business Development Center that is associated with our office. They report through us, so they help any individual or group get their companies started and running. Whether you have a company right now or you're looking to form a company, they can help with business plans. They can help with what type of structure should you be looking at for your company, licensing, efforts, where to find funding. Whether that be friends, family, and fools, or whether that be institutional financing, they can really help line that up and make sure that your company is on firm footing when it moves forward.

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Mallika Pal: What kind of resources are available for students there?

Zach Miles: Yeah. All the resources are free, so if they contact myself or Mike Bindrup, they'll be able to schedule a time and they can sit down and really detail out what's available, but it's basically anything that has to do with your business, and from business plans to set-up, to licensing, to taxes, to what are your books like like, how to keep them, to finding rental space, to introductions, to banks and lenders. They really try to help point you in the right direction.

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Mallika Pal: Is this just for students or can alumni utilize this as well?

Zach Miles: It's free to anyone, so the community, alumni, basically anyone. They'll do some screening upfront just to make sure it fits, so there's certain criterias to what a start-up is. If you're too big, it may not fit particularly well, but for the most part, we want to drive some type of value into the opportunity, and so they're more than willing to help.

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Mallika Pal: What kind of start-ups do you have going on right now there?

Zach Miles: There are a wide range. It's not only the ones that we're working on that are coming out of the university, and so Moveo Medics, FRP. Those are technologies that were started here that we've formed companies that they're helping with. They help Mom and Pop Pizza joints to K2 Energy which is working on different battery technologies, so it really is if you can name the business, they've probably helped that business in one way, shape or form, or at least the businesses in that area.

[00:05:30]

Mallika Pal: Yeah. I was reading about someone's working on like a cure for cancer or how to prevent amputations with diabetes, so that's -

Zach Miles: Right. Right. Yeah. That's Moveo Medics. I think they pronounce it Moveo, so I should probably say it right, but it is. Yeah, the orthotic device that helps detect certain ulcerations earlier so that if you have diabetes, some of the effects sometimes are amputation. If you can avoid that, it makes your life a lot better.

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Mallika Pal: I was reading another interview from yours, and you said that the story is more important behind the business than necessarily the money deal. Why do you think that?

Zach Miles: I like the impact of businesses. If you say "Gosh, this business has made \$10 billion", let's say. Okay. That's awesome. That's fantastic, but I love the story of it helped this student out or this person was destitute and they're able to drive this company, and now they're doing really well.

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They're giving back. They're affecting the community. They're making our community better. I like those stories. Money certainly is a piece to that, but the story behind it is so cool to be a part of that, not just the ending.

Mallika Pal: Can you elaborate a little bit on the Harry Reid research part? What necessarily is that and what is it going to do for the community?

Zach Miles: Yeah. Sure. We just hired a master developer to help us with the research part. The research part really ends up being the interface between the community and UNLV through a physical play, so rubbing elbows between high-tech companies and UNLV. We're looking to build buildings that have accelerators and incubators, have resources for UNLV and the community to really help translate new ideas, new innovations, attract new and diverse companies to the area to really help to stand that up as something that's a physical representation of UNLV's efforts to bring the community closer to it.

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Mallika Pal:

What are some of your thoughts on current copyright laws or current intellectual property laws that we have?

Zach Miles:

Good question. It's ever-changing. I'm trying to keep up with it. I'd certainly think that everyone is trying to look out for the best interest of the property rights holder which I think is the right way to go about it, just like your homestead or your house that you're at. You want that to be secure.

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You want that to be safe from others taking that or using it in a manner that you don't want it used for, and I think that's really what the intellectual property rights now. They're trying to make some reforms or make some adjustments that helps that mission.

Mallika Pal:

What could we look forward to upcoming with some partnerships with UNLV?

Zach Miles:

Sure. Some of them are confidential, but we're really looking for some new innovations that are coming out of hospitality and eSports which is really cool.

Mallika Pal:

Yeah.

Zach Miles:

[00:08:30]

It's certainly one of our major industries. Some exciting new technologies in genetics. We just formed a company called ['Heliogenix' 00:08:27], and their first product they're looking at is more kind of NutraGenetics, so what food, what you should be intaking, what your genes say about that which is really cool if you could get a profile of. I should be eating salads more which I obviously know that, but it could be beyond that that you should be staying away from certain foods or taking in more foods based off of your genetics. There's a lot of those moving forward, more commercial-sponsored research agreements like we've seen with Lockheed, so we're really heading in the right direction to have more partnerships, more companies, more technologies licensed in the future.

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Mallika Pal:

For this [Heliogenix 00:09:05], I don't know if you can go into too much detail, but what does that really mean? Do they scan your body or do they just look at your family history?

Zach Miles: Sure. Sure. I'll try not to screw this up too bad, but Dr. Martin Schiller is the researcher behind it, so imagine walking into a GNC store or another same type of store. See a bottle that has this advertisement, [00:09:30] "Get your gene sequence". To take a swab out, you swab the inside of your cheek, put it in a container, send it to the company, and then you get a report back that they've helped identified different sequences within your code that says "You really should look at eating more of these types of foods". It's almost like a 23andMe or Ancestry.com that they get your genetic sequence and tell you what your history is.

[00:10:00] This, instead of telling your history tells you your food history or your food preferences. Really exciting stuff. This is an exciting area of research and new company development, so we're excited to be a part of it.

Mallika Pal: Yeah. That sounds really interesting.

Zach Miles: Yeah. Yeah.

Mallika Pal: For the eSports, would this just mean more availability for competition with UNLV students or can you elaborate on that?

Zach Miles: It's a new and emerging field, so anything associated with it, I think we're looking to be a part of, so not only teaching class or Robert Rippee teaches. A class now where students come in and they're [00:10:30] involved in eSports and learning about it to yeah, "How do we set up competitions? How do we drive that industry? What does it look like in 10 years where it's just emerging? What's the best way to go about it?"

Then, "What is the research behind it? How's it affecting the community? How's it affecting the individuals that are playing? How is this affecting the world's use of technology?" There's really a lot of cool aspects to it.

Mallika Pal: What kind of advice would you offer up to a young student entrepreneur?

Zach Miles: That's a good question. The two pieces of advice, get a lot of people [00:11:00] around you. Swallow the ego that's there. There's a lot of "This is my idea, and I know what to do with it". You may, but there's a lot of people that have been there and done that, and try to listen to them. Incorporate those ideas.

That would be my biggest advises. Don't do it alone and be willing to accept other's ideas.

Mallika Pal: For an entrepreneur who wanted to come in to the Small Business Center, would you say that they have to have something already set up or can they come in with just an idea?

Zach Miles: They can certainly come in with an idea. We may give you homework, be able to check a few resources about your idea, but most certainly because we want to make sure ... I think the earlier, the better. If you have an idea, then we can really structure it appropriately. If we've already gone down a path, sometimes, we have to back up on that path and start over, so yeah.

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Even if it's just "I want to be an entrepreneur. I'm totally excited. I even don't even have an idea for a business", Sometimes we can sit down and say, "Great. Here are some of the hot areas that are going on right now that you may want to look at", or "Here are some of the classes on campus or other areas that you may want to go to" and at least hook up with the community and see what interests you.

Mallika Pal: Just for curiosity, currently, what are some hot issues that entrepreneurs could tackle to start a business in?  
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Zach Miles: Sure. Anything with cyber security. IT arena is really big. Certainly in Nevada, unmanned aerial systems is across the world right now. Advanced mobility and autonomous mobility, those are big privacy issues, and companies around privacy, energy is big.

Those are some of the hot areas. Certainly with the med school coming. Online with UNLV. Bioengineering will be an area to be involved with. Those are some of the hot ones that we're seeing that are coming up.

[00:12:30]  
Mallika Pal:

Another originative area for new businesses is intact in social media. My partner, Jennifer Solis got to sit down with two UNLV students who have their own social media platform.

Jennifer Solis: UNLV is a school with many entrepreneurial students. Two of these students are Dylan Duke and Sebastian Sandqvist who started a website called 'Collage.io'. Could you give us a brief introduction of your business.

[00:13:00]  
Dylan Duke:

Sure. I'm Dylan Duke, and this is Sebastian, and we built a website, and it's called 'Collage.io'. Basically, it's a way for students and other members of the UNLV community to engage and I guess interact with other members of the school digitally online.

Jennifer Solis: How did you get it started?

Dylan Duke: We've known each other for 10 plus years. We went to elementary school together. Last year, we were on a plane, and we were headed to a hackathon which is like a competitive -  
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Sebastian S.: Like a coding challenge.

Dylan Duke: Yeah. Exactly. Basically, we started thinking about what we wanted to work on. We were examining our experiences of students, and we saw that there were opportunities given that we are more of a community-based school that we could ... I don't know.

Sebastian S.: We could make a social network for UNLV students, and so we have this idea as we were brainstorming what we're going to work on over the weekend at this hackathon, and we'd come up with a couple of ideas, and we're like, "This is a fantastic idea. This is something that we need to have on campus, but there's no way we could build it in a weekend", so we tabled it, but we kept coming up with ideas for it, and so we ended up working on something else, something a little simpler over the weekend, but we kept coming back to this idea of collage, and working on it. We pretty much decided after that week, this is something that we were going to put our minds to and really focus on for the next year. That's exactly what we've done. At this point, we've made the website, and ...  
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Yeah. Do you want to talk about the product?

[00:14:30]  
Dylan Duke: Yeah. It basically consists of three primary components. One of them is the news segment of the site, which is where you can find out about what's occurring on campus from the context of the broad whole community, and then you can also make groups that are relevant to personal academic or extracurricular activities or interests. Then, the second component of the site is what we call the 'Market', and that's where students basically can engage in a peer-to-peer marketplace selling their textbooks, their games, their entertainment, anything really. Anything that they would think that other students would want.  
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Sebastian S.: For instance, if you have a couple of spare textbooks ... Everyone has extra textbooks from the previous semester or whatever. If you have some old textbooks or maybe a skateboard that you don't use anymore, video games that you've played through once and you're not going to use again, there's still value in those things. They shouldn't just be collecting dust on your shelf, but you might not necessarily want to go through all of the effort to package it up and sell it on Amazon or sell it back to the bookstore and only make it a few bucks, whereas another student might pay you \$30 for a textbook. The bookstore will probably give you 5 or 10.

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Dylan Duke: Yeah. One of the big things we noticed too in coming up with the idea was that there's all these expenses students have that take their money, and then they leave the college in economy if you will, so you have the big textbook companies that make a lot of money from the textbook expenses, you have entertainment companies that are taking all of the money that students would spend on entertainment, and we were thinking that as a way to strengthen the ties of the community and to provide more opportunity for each individual student as well, that we could redirect some of that spending that the students make that usually goes out of campus and turn it towards other students or turn it towards the campus.

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Sebastian S.: Yeah. Exactly, that.

Jennifer Solis: Because UNLV is such a commuter school, you wanted to bring student ties together?

Dylan Duke: Yeah. Yeah. Provide a digital center for the community to exist.

Sebastian S.: The important thing is even though we're bringing people together in an online way, for example in the market, you make your transaction online or in the news feed, you're seeing what's happening in this online form, but every single part of the website, every component of it has the goal of bringing people together offline, and so when you think of how transaction is going to be completed, you're meeting in person with someone on campus. You're actually making a physical exchange or when you're seeing what are the events that are happening on campus on the news feed, you're going to end up doing things offline that make you really interact with the campus, and so our goal and the whole thing is to bring UNLV students together in an offline way.

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Dylan Duke: Right.

Jennifer Solis: Yeah. I've been on the site and I saw that there were threads for people who enjoy the outdoors?



Sebastian S.: Definitely. I think what you're talking about is one of the groups for one of the clubs, that one of the cool things that we have on the news feed is that it's not just a single feed for all of the campus. That's one of the components. Right? You can see what's happening in real time at the campus right now, but groups can also have these tailored areas of the website where they just talk about a specific thing, and so what you saw was one of the groups at UNLV wilderness.

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That's a club at UNLV, a student organization, but they have a group on Collage where they can get their members to discuss upcoming events and to coordinate trips that they're going to take, things like that, and so website really helps them just like you could help any club organize its members online.

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Dylan Duke: Yeah. It gives them a better reach too, so not just can they organize within themselves, but they have the opportunity to potentially access more people that would be interested in that.

Sebastian S.: Like how it's difficult to stand in the library walk and talk about your club like hand out fliers or something. It's much more effective and efficient if you can just broadcast it to the whole school in a social media way, and so that's what we're allowing.

Jennifer Solis: Right [crosstalk 00:18:22]. What would be the advantage of your site over things like Facebook where you can form groups?

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Sebastian S.: There are a few. I think the big one is that we're exclusive to UNLV students. When you post something, it's not going out to everybody, grandma and whoever else. You know everything that you're reading is going to be relevant to you as UNLV student, but also, you have this idea that when you share something, it's something that's relevant to the campus as well, so -

Dylan Duke: And will be seen by them.

Sebastian S.: And will be seen by them.

Dylan Duke: Yeah.

Sebastian S.: Part of it is the audience, but another part of it is the business model. Facebook makes money by selling its user's data to advertisers, and it's something that we just don't do. We make money through the market instead. It's much more sustainable, much more ethical way to do business we think, and so I'd say that's another one of the major differentiators, that we're not an advertising company, which is what Facebook is.

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Dylan Duke: Yeah. Exactly. Right. No ads. No ads on the site.

Sebastian S.: No ads. Twitter has ads. Instagram has ads now.

Dylan Duke: We've all got ads.

Sebastian S.: Yeah. Seriously, every single social media platform is moving to this idea where they have to sell ads to make money, and we don't think that's the right way to do it, so instead, we make money when our users make money. It's a win-win.

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Jennifer Solis: Right. When asked whether they knew about the Nevada Small Business Development Center at UNLV, Dylan and Sebastian were less than familiar.

Sebastian S.: No. I'm definitely interested in that.

Dylan Duke: Yeah. We developed a business plan independently, but those kind of resources and that kind of knowledge is always useful, especially people from like a mature or a mentor perspective.

Sebastian S.: Yeah.

Dylan Duke: You know what I mean? The people that have experience if they could be ... That would be the ideal scenario.

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Sebastian S.: We're 20 and 21 years old.

Dylan Duke: Right.

Sebastian S.: This is our first business officially. This is something that we're jumping into and with very little, almost no prior experience, and we're winging it to be honest and we've been very successful in that so far, but that doesn't mean that outside advice isn't welcome. Of course, we would want an outside perspective.

Dylan Duke:  
[00:20:30] Yeah. If you do it the way that we've been doing it or if you do it alone, you have to learn by your mistakes or by [trial by 00:20:30] fire, but in the instance that you have someone who's had experiences in other circumstances, you can make prior preparations.

Sebastian S.: Yeah, and another thing, there was a business plan competition that UNLV had, and we entered into that. It was totally separate from the idea. Right? We're going to make collage regardless of the competition, but it was something that was there, and so we did it. To be honest, it was very helpful because it forced us to think about the business in a new way than we had been.

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If it weren't for that competition, we probably would not have formally written down what our business plan was. We wouldn't have done a lot of market research and looked into competitors and all these things that they forced us into doing. All of that was valuable information in the end that we use to this day.

Jennifer Solis:  
[00:21:30] Dylan and Sebastian have no intention of slowing down. They recently entered Tark Tank, a business competition with UNLV study body government where undergraduates have the opportunity to win up to \$10,000 from their business ideas.

Sebastian S.: To anybody listening, if you guys want to go the Tark Tank competition, there's big prizes for the companies that win, but it'll also be just cool to see what other students are working on.

Dylan Duke: Yeah.

Sebastian S.: If that's something that interests anyone that's listening, I would suggest that they'd go and at the end, they can vote for which company or which idea they like the most, and so I think it'll be a fun event.

[00:22:00]  
Mallika Pal:

The resources we make available to young entrepreneurs are an important part of our campus community. The innovators of our campus paved the way for our growth as a university. This is Mallika Pal and Jennifer Solis reporting for UNLV. Thank you for listening.

Ben Dimalibot: In our next segment, student journalist, Genevieve Grippo had a great conversation with Kelsey Kaplan from UNLV Admissions. In this interview, they discussed a variety of topics and offered some great insight to the admissions process, financial aid, and the value associated with attending UNLV.  
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Genevieve G.: We're sitting here today with Kelsey Kaplan. She's an admissions counselor here at UNLV. Hi, Kelsey. Thanks for joining us.

Kelsey Kaplan : Hi. How are you?

Genevieve G.: I'm great. Thank you. I feel like the admissions counselors at UNLV are the unsung heroes of the school. What exactly do the admissions counselor do that maybe UNLV students and faculty don't know about?  
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Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. The admissions counselors are the entry point to students coming into the university. I would say almost any point any student who comes at UNLV, they're coming through the admissions office, so they've probably at one point or another connected with one of us, and we really just help students throughout this whole process from beginning to end, students who are in high school even when they're not seniors and just learning about UNLV and curious about what it's going to take to get to that next step, so we don't necessarily just work with incoming students but students who are still in middle school and high school, and the early outreach point is also really important.  
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Genevieve G.: We've heard that there's been some changes to FAFSA. How might that affect the admissions process?

Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. The FAFSA has gone through a huge change just last year which is actually really great for families and students in general because this is allowing students a lot more of an opportunity to complete their FAFSA. It gives them more time throughout the process to really figure out what schools are good fits for them, what a financial aid package is actually going to look like, scholarships, grants, loans, and gives the students an opportunity to have longer time to look at that, so the FAFSA has moved up this year and opened up in October. In previous years, it's opened up in January which gives students a really limited amount of time to complete. The FAFSA, it being open in October also allows students to utilize taxes or really families to utilize taxes that have been done in the past, so previously when you would complete a FAFSA, you would have to guess on your taxes, and that's really hard for families to do to make a guesstimate on what you've paid, income, all of these things, and then have to go back in and correct that is just another step for families.  
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[00:25:00] With the FAFSA moving up this year, that's really allowing students to utilize their 2015 taxes and complete a FAFSA based off of taxes that have already been completed and filed, so it's really going to help students and families when they go in to complete the FAFSA to make this a lot more of a smooth process for them because their taxes are ready and have been completed for 2015 and they're not going to be guessing, trying to figure out, "Okay. Maybe this is what I made. Maybe this is what I made", that type of stuff.

Genevieve G.: It's a lot more accurate then. Right?

[00:25:30] Kelsey Kaplan : A lot more accurate this year. In the past, there's been a lot of errors on both sides. It's really hard to process a hundreds of thousands of FAFSAs and all of these students submit one. Not just students who are applying, but current students as well, so it's really overwhelming process on the financial aid side as well, so this is really allowing students to complete this with the most accurate information. It's going to help our financial aid offices as well because when accurate information is in there, we have less errors, we have less communications, we have to send out to you to try to fix those things which really can convolute the process for students when you keep having to go back and forth with financial aid trying to figure these things out.

Genevieve G.: It can be frustrating on both ends I'm sure.

Kelsey Kaplan : Yes. Very frustrating on both ends.

[00:26:00] Genevieve G.: In your role, have you maybe come into contact with students who are on the fence about whether or not they want to attend college in general?

[00:26:30] Kelsey Kaplan : Of course. We deal with a lot of first generation college students both here in Las Vegas and out of state as well, so there's a lot of students who are not getting that family support in their homes that are helping them to go to college, and that's really where a lot of us admissions counselors play a huge role, and we're very passionate about helping students. I can say that about myself and about every single person I work with, that at the end of the day, we really want to help the student get to college, and that's the goal. Hopefully it's here at UNLV, but at the end of the day, we want to help them and explain the financial aid process and the admissions processes, and these other complicated things that students who might not have that family support so they can get that information even if they don't have that family support.

Genevieve G.: Are there are any ... You don't have to use names or anything like that, but are there any success stories that you can think of off the top of your head that you've been able to make an impact on a student's life?

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Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. There's definitely students who they have a high financial need, and I work a lot with out of state students, so I get the benefit of watching students who have this high need and it's hard for those students to go out of state. They have to work really hard to ensure that they have enough financial stability to do that, so when you see students who are getting the financial support they need, as well as scholarships on top of that, you can really see great success stories of students who are coming to UNLV for no cost to them. I've seen students come literally and just have to pay the cost of resident fees. All of their tuition fees are covered based off of their FASFA need and their scholarship abilities.

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That is awesome. That makes UNLV such a great value for students to be able to go out of state and do that. That's very uncommon right now and it's something as the cost of college goes up, we're going to see less and less of.

Genevieve G.: When you're talking to students maybe not even about being general, but just going to college, how do you showcase UNLV and show them that it's a school that they want to be at?

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Kelsey Kaplan : I'm a student. I'm a local here. I [grew up 00:28:01] in Las Vegas. I've seen UNLV just transform in front of my eyes, and that's really exciting telling students that they can come and be a part of something that is really new and really taking off. UNLV is in a really exciting place right now with the research and just with improvements in buildings.

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We're getting the Hospitality Hall, the medical school. There's just a lot of exciting things going on right now, and that's always what I tell students like, "You can go somewhere where things have already been in place for maybe a hundred or more years, but here at UNLV, it's a really exciting, innovative place to be and you can really put your footprint on something that's new and be a part of that". That's just the best part to me.

Genevieve G.: It makes it easy. The university is [inaudible 00:28:47] itself right now. Right?

Kelsey Kaplan : It is. It definitely for me, and when I start to talk about it, my passion for it really comes out because I never ever expected UNLV to ... For me to feel this way about UNLV, for UNLV to be growing at the rate it is, it's really exciting for me as a local and as an admissions counselor to getting the share that with students. That's not a lie. I'm not pretending.

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This is actually happening. You can see it happening if you visit campus. You can see the new buildings. You can feel the energy on campus when you meet with faculty and students, so it's definitely an exciting time.

Genevieve G.: What advice would you have for students and parents who are in that application process?

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Kelsey Kaplan : Move quickly and be proactive about what you're doing. Communicate. It's super important. There are so many people here to help you, and if you don't reach out to those people, you can't get that help you need. We want to help. We want to be here for students, but we need those students to also be proactive and reaching out and submitting their applications early for scholarship so they can get scholarships and those types of things. Be proactive and communicate. That is my best advice to students right now in the early stages of applying.

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Genevieve G.: Have you seen an increase in applications or do you suspect to see an increase in applications?

Kelsey Kaplan : Yes. We've seen very large increase in applications over the last several years. That's been a trend and that's something we definitely plan to keep up. I know that's something the university wants, something our office wants, and just really like I said, it's making it easy for us. I think UNLV is becoming more in the spotlight with the debate just happening. I already had a student email me from after the night of the debate telling me that she saw us on CNN and she's like, "I want to come to UNLV".

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Genevieve G.: Wow.

Kelsey Kaplan : A student on the East Coast. That's like wow. That's awesome. She just saw that and wants to come to UNLV.

Genevieve G.: UNLV being in the center of Las Vegas which is one of the most vibrant cities in the world, how does that affect student's choice to come to the school?

Kelsey Kaplan : I always see it one way or another. Some students are really excited about the opportunities that Las Vegas holds and other students are really nervous, families as well. I personally like to spin it in the way of it's a lot of positives. We have this great city with so many opportunities for students. The strip is there.

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It's a tourist attraction. If you live in California, you probably don't go to the beach every weekend. Students aren't spending their time on the strip. It's really utilized as a way for students to get internship and job experience, and that's so important when students are in college that they are in a place where those opportunities are available for them, and being in Las Vegas, we're growing tremendously right now. More businesses are moving here every year. I think we're really moving away as a community from just being this nightlife, exciting adult entertainment place and being more of a community with the university and having more businesses and things for students to do and other people who are local as well.

[00:31:30]

Genevieve G.: What do you think are some of the cooler things about UNLV that potential students might not know about, something that you really want them to hear?

Kelsey Kaplan : The UNLV is diversity. That's something that I always like to tell students that people may not be aware of. We're ranked as the second most diverse institution in the nation last year from [U.S. News & World Report 00:32:05], so that's something that I'm really proud of as a student, as faculty, and I also think it's something that makes the university very unique being a large public state university. Having that diversity is something that you don't really see everywhere and that you can feel that when you're on campus, and it makes just for a really comforting environment for students.

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Genevieve G.: What does admissions do that we don't know that they do? I'm sure a lot.

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Kelsey Kaplan : Oh my gosh. What does admissions ... "What doesn't admissions do?" I think would be the better question.

Genevieve G.: Yeah.

Kelsey Kaplan : We basically do everything we can to help students. We do events. We do outreach. We travel. I do out of state recruitment.



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I'm going to college fairs. We're also involved with a lot of other things besides admissions. We handle orientation in our office. We do events and campus tours, so our whole entire campus visit program, and we have about 40 rebel recruiters that are managed in our office, so there's a lot of things that come in and out of our office. At any given day, there's a lot going on.

Genevieve G.:

What are some of your favorite events that the admissions offices put on?

Kelsey Kaplan :

[00:33:30]

My favorite event that we do is Rebel Preview. We just had our fall Rebel Preview in October, and we do Rebel Preview every spring and fall, so it's our big open house event. If you have the opportunity to check that out, it's definitely the best time to come on the campus, and you can meet with faculty. You can tour the campus. You can meet with clubs and organizations.

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Really gives you a one stop shop for everything you could want to learn about UNLV, and we do that event in the fall and spring. That's really exciting to just get all the students out there. They're prospective students so they're really excited to learn about going to college and they're taking pictures, and we have social media stuff, and just exciting time for students to come and learn and experience UNLV and you can feel the energy on campus. We get hundreds of students come out to Rebel Preview every year, so it's a really great event that we have.

Genevieve G.:

Of course the debate had a huge impact on the admissions here at UNLV. What other events have or might come up that will have another impact on the admissions?

Kelsey Kaplan :

[00:34:30]

I think the opening up of our medical school. It's not necessarily like a day that it's going to be an event, but the opening of the medical school in general I think is going to be huge for admissions. That's going to really propel us and put us with other schools that have those types of programs and for students to be able to experience the building of a medical school is really exciting. I think that is something that is extremely unique that students are not going to get the opportunity to do if they go to other colleges. The medical schools don't just pop up every year. That's something that takes a lot of economical resources and people to be involved, so I think the medical school is definitely something that is going to bring a lot of attention to the university.

[00:35:00]

Genevieve G.:

What about this Top Tier initiative that UNLV is working towards right now? How is admissions affected by that?

Kelsey Kaplan : I would say admissions isn't really affected by getting more students to come to the university ultimately. At the end of the day, students apply at their own will. We go out when we do recruitment and outreach, and we try to get these students to apply, but we also have to help those students get through the application process, so for admissions, I think this initiative is really going to impact us on getting students to come to UNLV. We're going to experience a surge in applications. I think that's inevitable, but really helping to work with those students to get them to actually come to UNLV to visit the campus and see what we have to offer them, meet with faculty, that's what's really at the end of the day going to propel the students that wanted to come here.

[00:35:30]

Genevieve G. : Is there a large influx that you experienced in admissions between like CSN, Nevada State, as well as outside schools for transfer students?

Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. We get a lot of transfer students. In our office, we actually have a transfer coordinator and a transfer admissions counselor as well. We work specifically with those community colleges, out of state community colleges as well to work with those students create a pipeline for them, to get them to UNLV if that's their ultimate goal especially with CSN.

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Genevieve G. : It's a huge job. I know you guys do so much over there, especially come fall time, summer time. Right?

Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. Fall is definitely our busy season. It's our recruitment season as we would put it over in the admissions office, so a lot of the days, a lot of the admissions counselors are out of the office. We are not on campus every day. That's not what we do.

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We spend a lot of time out of office actually meeting with students, and that's huge because that connection that you have when you actually interact with the student and meet them in person is really beneficial. It creates a longer relationship with the students, so the admissions counselors are out and about always during this time of the year talking to students and working with students.

Genevieve G. : These future college students, I'm sure they're so excited to start this next chapter of their lives. Is that something that's infectious around the office?

[00:37:00]

Kelsey Kaplan :

Yeah. It's very exciting, and throughout the year, you can see the influx with us as well as the students are going through the cycle. It's really exciting for us as it starts, and then it gets exhausting because it's a lot of work. Just as the students are applying to a lot of colleges, we're dealing with a lot of applications coming our way, and then as the students start to make their decisions, it starts to become also more exciting on our part because now, I get to see a student who yeah, they applied. Maybe they were interested, but now I'm talking to their parents and their family.

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We're talking about financial aid packages, cost of attendance, housing. As those things start to happen, it also excites us as we get to see those students through the process. I think that's the best part is getting to see the students through the entire process going from just starting their senior year in high school to about to start their freshman year in college. It's a really exciting transformation to watch.

Genevieve G.:

Do you sometimes get to build lasting relationships with these students?

Kelsey Kaplan :  
[00:38:00]

Yeah. It depends on the students always. There's students I get emails from every day. There are students that maybe will never reach out to me. It just depends on the student's need and there are students that I saw, I'm in communication with now who I worked with last year, and they just utilized me as someone if they need anything, and that's exciting for me. It's nice to be a part of that especially being an alumn of the university and they're involved in the community.

Genevieve G.:

What do you hope to see for UNLV in the coming years?

[00:38:30]

Kelsey Kaplan :

Just I hope to continue to see what is going on happening with the university now, I just hope to see as growing, keeping the excitement, enthusiasm that we have. It's really contagious. It's really obvious. I hear it from students. I've interacted with students from other states who have come up to me and said, "I visited your campus, and everyone is so welcoming, and I didn't feel that way on other campuses", and I just want to maintain that.

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That's so important for us as a university as we continue to grow. There might be bumps in the road, but maintaining that excitement and enthusiasm is so important for UNLV.

Genevieve G.:

You mentioned that you traveled to other schools and other states.

Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah.

Genevieve G. : What's the perspective about Las Vegas and UNLV when you visit these schools?

Kelsey Kaplan : It depends on the student and the family of course. Some students are super excited about it, and then I got other families who are very concerned and distant about the idea of students going to Las Vegas, but I think being on the West Coast which are the states we primarily visit, students are a little more aware of Las Vegas. People have been to the city. That is always an easy way. If families have been to Las Vegas, their assumption about the city is very different than families who have been to Las Vegas. I think once you come to the city, you've realized that there's so much more once you are on campus and you can actually see that.

[00:39:30]

Genevieve G. : Right.

Kelsey Kaplan : You don't feel like you're in a city. When you're on campus, you just feel like you're on a university's campus. That makes a huge difference for families. When I go out of state, I always really try to paint the picture of what it's like to be a student here at UNLV, but ultimately encourage them to come check it out for themselves because at the end of the day when you come to campus, that's when you can really see what we offer, and even for our local students as well. I was a local student here, and I only come on to UNLV's campus because I have concerts in the Ham Hall.

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Yeah, I never did a campus tour, and that's huge. If you're a local student and you haven't toured the campus, there's so many amazing things that the university has to offer that students don't even realize are right here on campus.

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Genevieve G. : What are some of those amazing things that you wish that you could show every student?

Kelsey Kaplan : I wish that we could show every student our labs and our facilities. I think the hidden gems of the university are definitely the facilities that we have that not every student gets to see. Even students who are in the programs don't always get to see like what we're in right now. The studio is incredible if students can see these things. Our theaters. The science and engineering laboratory.

[00:41:00] All of those things are amazing facilities. The Hospitality Hall. Just seeing those things is eye-opening for students that you could actually be a part of this, and this is what you can be doing starting your career.

Genevieve G. : It shows really how professional UNLV is and when the students leave here, how prepared they are for the careers and their respective fields.

Kelsey Kaplan : Yeah. I think experiential learning is something that's really important here at UNLV. It's something I think that's pushed within programs. The faculty want you to get that hands-on experience. It's so important. It's something I push when I meet with students from the very get-go.

[00:41:30] I let them know "Hey, if you reach out to your faculty and you want to get involved right away, you're going to set yourself apart because you are going to start your freshman year with actual experience, and by the time you graduate, you're going to have more experience than some people graduating and going in their field already", so I encourage students to take advantage of these amazing facilities that we do have on campus.

Genevieve G. : What sets UNLV apart from other institutions out there?

[00:42:00] Kelsey Kaplan : I think the value of what you get at UNLV is something that sets us apart from other universities. You're coming to first of all a large public state university that's experiencing a lot of growth and that has a lot of support, but at the same time, the cost of tuition isn't absolutely ridiculous. I want students to know that the value of UNLV is really almost not comparable. When I work with local students, I let them know, "Check out what out of state tuition costs", because it's expensive. When I work with out of state students, they always are like, "That's your in-state tuition? Are you serious?"

[00:42:30] I'm like, "Yeah. It's very inexpensive", and it's hard for students I think sometimes to conceptualize that \$40,000 a year is a lot of money to go somewhere, so to really think carefully about how much money you're spending to go to college and what you're getting with that, so UNLV is a great value. The cost for what you can get is definitely something that I don't think is really comparable.

[00:43:00] Genevieve G. : I would have to agree with you there. Definitely. Kelsey again, thank you so much for joining us. Some great insight you gave us.

Kelsey Kaplan : Thank you.

Genevieve G.: Yes.

Ben Dimalibot: Thank you for tuning in to today's episode. If you like what you are hearing, let us know by subscribing on iTunes, Google Play or wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts. Also, be sure to leave us a rating and review. We want to know what you think. If you want to learn more about our hosts, please check out [UNLV.edu/podcasts](http://UNLV.edu/podcasts). Once again, thank you for checking out this week's installment of UNLV: Different, Daring, Diverse.

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