On September 1st, Mike and I attended the opening of a new tower at Caesars hosted by the company’s chairman of the board Gary Loveman and star entertainer Celine Dion. Although this was to have been a simple celebration common to Las Vegas when new and even more grand facilities open on the strip, it turned out to be much more.

Before the ribbon cutting ceremony, Dr. Loveman digressed to talk about the tragedy ensuing from Katrina’s unrelenting destruction and about how Harrah’s would be paying 8,000 employees on the Gulf Coast for a minimum of ninety days and providing as much health care coverage as possible to those who were victimized by the ravages of the storm. Celine Dion then spoke and made a personal pledge of $1 million to Katrina victims just after she had already pledged $1 million to tsunami victims in Asia.

What struck me so forcefully about these gestures is the way in which multiple companies and individuals in our community join together to affect the human condition, whether it be in tragedy or for causes that make people less vulnerable to tragedy. Cynics may say that this is simply an attempt by the wealthy to create good public relations.

I strongly disagree with that sentiment, given how unique to America the charitable and philanthropic impulse really is. No other people in the world reach out so readily and so often to help others and to bring people together to share in their grief and to create unity and order out of chaos and anarchy. We saw that after 9/11 and we are seeing it again in the aftermath of Katrina. As Hayley Barbour, Governor of Mississippi observed, we are seeing “extraordinary selflessness from ordinary people.”

That spirit is what we celebrate today and what brings us together at this watershed moment in the life of UNLV. We are here to celebrate generosity; we are here to celebrate community; and, even more important, we are here to “invent the future” in ways that are only possible in our great country and pioneering state.

Fortunately what brings us together today is not grief: it is joy at the many ways in which the enterprise in which we are involved helps people deal with the vicissitudes of life and, we hope, inspires in them the spirit to contribute, to enhance the human condition, and to transcend the commonplace. And how have we, as a university community, evolved to this special moment in our history?

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Having just read and re-read Professor Eugene Moehringer’s manuscript, REBELS IN THE DESERT: A HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS, I was struck over and over again with how apt our “rebel” name really is. From its very inception as little more
than a collection of courses taught essentially as an extension of UNR, UNLV’s seven presidents, its faculty, staff, and student leadership, and its enormously supportive community have been fighting geopolitics and the failure of imagination for the entire history of the institution.

Over and over the potential to create a truly first class university in Las Vegas has been underestimated, misunderstood, or simply left as a dream as yet unfulfilled. But the fight to achieve that status is hardly over; we are creating—and will continue to create—one of the nation’s premier universities in this desert and you are a part of that momentum—unstoppable, persevering, unyielding—we remain ever cockeyedly optimistic.

Despite that optimism, however, as Professor Moehring portrays it, no sustained period in our almost fifty year history has ever existed in which resources were adequate to deal with either explosive growth—an almost relentless condition for UNLV—or community aspirations for the creation of a major university in Las Vegas.

Unlike older, more mature higher education institutions in state systems, there was never a period when the state provided enough money for this young university to grow and develop at something close to its need. Even as late as the 1980’s in New York, for example, colleges in the SUNY system enjoyed state support at 70–80% of operating budget levels and virtually all core campus buildings were built with state capital funds. Similar patterns existed in California until recently as well.

Not so in Nevada, however, at least insofar as UNLV was concerned. Prior to the mid-1980’s, state support was more than 50%. By the end of the 2003 biennium, the percentage of state support for UNLV as a portion of total operating budgets was less than 32%.

Now as we all know, there seems to be an ironic correlation between excellence at public universities and a low proportion of state funds, although the appearance of a direct cause and effect relationship is somewhat deceptive. The rapid diminishment in some states of tax-funded support for higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon and has produced the urgent need for major public universities to increase their reliance on external support in order to create an adequately funded enterprise.

So, to the extent that state funds will never support the development of centers of excellence, merit scholarships, funds to hire and retain star faculty, and specialized library collections and equipment, universities on the march to excellence and international recognition must, by definition and necessity, increase federal research dollars, contracts and grants with other agencies and business partners, and raise increasing levels of private funds from corporate entities and individual philanthropists.

Therefore, although it is true that such great universities as Michigan, Washington, and Virginia, for example, receive less than 10% of their funding from their states, it is also true that they are first rank universities partly because they do have significant research funds and large private endowments building and nurturing excellence in addition to as much as or more than $20,000 per student from their states, far more than double what UNLV receives.
What Professor Moehring’s book makes so clear is that UNLV has always relied on “the kindness of strangers” and the private sector to develop and advance its agenda. Having few alumni in the early years (and even fewer who had amassed significant private wealth), UNLV was also blessed with a community of supporters whose gifts of time, money, and passion allowed this yet young university to grow and, in this decade, to move even more rapidly toward distinction. Indeed, in several program areas, such as hotel administration, law, fine arts, interior design architecture, and education, rankings of graduate and professional programs have already demonstrated that we have achieved recognition on a national scale.

Today we will honor both the early pioneers who got us here (some of whom continue to support us today) and a new generation of university supporters who are moving us to the next level of development and pre-eminence.

In case you weren’t aware of it, the original UNLV—or the University of Nevada Southern Regional Division—or “Nevada Southern”—was created largely due to the feisty lobbying of community members led by one of the prominent women in UNLV’s life, Maude Frazier combined with the first fund drive in the history of the campus. Having begun classes (mostly for teachers) in Las Vegas in the early 1950s, it became clear that the rapid growth of the city and the need to provide local higher education simply could not be accommodated solely by teaching a few courses under the auspices of UNR in Las Vegas High School.

Indeed, Professor John Wright whose name graces one of our splendid buildings today (and whose son carries on his noble tradition as a professor at UNLV), noted that, relegated to teaching in the auditorium at Las Vegas High, Nevada Southern’s classes were regularly cancelled when the high school produced a play, a sad state of affairs indeed.

From such inauspicious beginnings came the very first private fund-raising drive in 1955, an activity that made it possible for the community to acquire land to begin a campus. Led by Maude Frazier and R. Guild Gray, both school superintendents, seniors from the local high schools visited every domicile in the area during the evenings trying to raise enough money to acquire land for the campus.

Due to the evening visits, the drive was called the “Porch Light Campaign,” and despite those tedious calls and an all-night radio broadcast hosted by then campus head James Dickinson, only $50,000 was raised. But that small amount of money, far short of the $135,000 goal, nevertheless assured the acquisition of land and would leverage state funds for the first building, a 13,000 square foot facility built in the dusty desert on Maryland Parkway and eventually named for the pioneering Maude Frazier. The “campus” opened in June of 1957 and became a formal “college” of the university in the north.

I tell this part of our story because it provides a template for our entire 48 year history. Unprecedented growth causes pent-up demand for higher education in an anti-tax environment and requests for funding both growth and aspirational development, if they are funded at all, are funded inadequately.
Calls for community support ensue and an extraordinary level of entrepreneurship, creativity, and passion create a groundswell for private donations to leverage public support. Although the modern UNLV plays an increasingly important and influential role in state politics, it nevertheless is utterly dependent, for the margin of excellence, on the generosity of its community and on the philanthropy of selfless, caring individuals.

Each decade in the university’s development produced benefactors without whom we would be a markedly inferior university today. With strong community involvement, every UNLV president and his or her leadership team has raised private funds that were the sine qua non for that period’s development.

We all stand on the shoulders of those who toiled before us. Each and every benefactor with whom we meet and talk now wishes—even if they determine they cannot do so—to raise the level of giving over previous years because they all know there will not be enough state money to create the “medallion” metropolitan research university we are all striving to create here in Southern Nevada.

Think of the history. During his eight years as campus Dean (a pre-cursor to the first president of UNLV), William Carlson, after whom the Education building is named, lived in cozy cohabitation in Frazier Hall with the library, all faculty offices, all classrooms, and even science labs. The place smelled like rotten eggs and there were lizards, frogs, and snakes lining the hallways.

Clearly space was a major issue, just as it is today despite the construction or acquisition of more than 100 facilities! And we have funded almost half of the $823 million in capital projects built during our history with private and non-state funds.

Named for the only Las Vegas Regent on the then five-member Board of Regents, Archie Grant Hall opened for classes in 1959, but the need for more space dominated the new school’s priorities. Fearing competition for private funds for the campus in Reno, Regents and the President at Reno (who was Carlson’s boss) restrained Carlson from raising private funds until 1962 when a non-profit corporation called the Nevada Southern Foundation, Inc. was created by local businessmen taking up the Review-Journal’s cry to create more financial support for the burgeoning—and severely under-funded—Southern campus. A goal of $100,000 was announced and the pre-cursor to a modern capital campaign was created.

In 1965, President Donald Moyer, for whom the student union is named, created the Land Foundation, an incredibly active group who did tremendous service during the sixties and seventies to acquire land for UNLV. From 1966-1977, the Land Foundation bought 164.5 acres of land using $2,284,000 in bonds authorized by the legislature.

As their children and heirs share some of that history with us today, it becomes clear that Parry Thomas and Jerry Mack used their own good names to secure some of this property on the bet that the legislature would eventually fund it, which they did.
President Moyer also created the Hotel College and hired Jerry Vallen, the superb inaugural dean, bringing, for the first time in 1966, significant money from the Nevada Resort Association to help create the hotel management program. (Until that time, the resort industry was not particularly helpful to the emerging university; today we have an entirely different situation with much help coming from our major industry and from executives therein.)

Indeed, it wasn’t until the Holiday Corporation, now Harrah’s, came forward in 1987 with a significant gift that our city’s major industry began its long-term commitment to UNLV. Combined with a gift from Mrs. Harrah on her deceased husband’s behalf, a $5 million total gift was more than sufficient in that decade to name the College and begin a relationship with the corporation that has provided a model for others in our core industry.

And, one of our primary goals in this campaign will be to create “INNovation Village,” a hospitality campus within the larger campus that will afford ample new opportunities to enhance the #1 Hotel College in the country.

Creating this new academic center was a challenge for President Moyer, but even more challenging was the job of developing a truly autonomous university in the Southern part of the State. Having worked with Regents behind the scenes—including UNLV alumnus James Bilbray (59-60 Student Body President)—Moyer proudly announced in 1966 that “each campus is a full-fledged university in its own right,” articulating a dream that would take until 1968 to complete. It was only then that full autonomy was granted to the new university and the name, University of Nevada, Las Vegas was conferred in 1969 during President Baepler’s tenure.

It was during that same period that a consultants’ study recommended the creation of law and dental schools at UNLV, the former of which would not open until 1997, the latter until 2002. Having been merely a dream for thirty or more years, the creation of both schools relied heavily on non-state funds both to get started and to thrive.

Although Donald Moyer had a relatively short tenure as UNLV’s first modern president, his aggressive approach to building a major university and leveraging state support using private funds provided the benchmark for all succeeding presidents and foundation efforts in the university’s future.

Roman Zorn and Don Baepler continued to build UNLV—adding facilities, graduate programs, and continuing the uphill battle to get adequate resources from the state to enhance the campus. Although private funds played somewhat less of a role during the seventies than it had before or since, they laid the groundwork for the research agenda that characterizes the university’s efforts today. And our progress toward enhancing research funding is almost as impressive as our increases in private funds.

On another front, taking a calculated risk that big-time athletics could put UNLV on the map, and with the support of several major community boosters, President Baepler hired Jerry Tarkanian in 1973 and the era of major athletic accomplishment put UNLV in the national spotlight and drove significant private dollars our way, including major contributions from the Thomas and Mack families, gifts that leveraged state funding for the basketball arena to house a
national championship team, a project to which the next president devoted considerable attention.

However exciting basketball was becoming, the external environment was not all rosy during Pat Goodall’s presidency. Double-digit inflation and the fiscal conservatism of the then governor combined to produce a dire situation as the 1970s moved into the next decade. By 1981, Nevada ranked 51st behind every other state and the District of Columbia in per capita spending for higher education. Suffering the results with massive budget reductions and even some temporary enrollment declines, President Goodall recognized how important private fund-raising would be to UNLV’s future.

So among several initiatives and anticipating the importance of alumni giving to the university’s future long before a critical mass of alumni existed, President Goodall launched the first ever alumni fund drive in 1980. Also reaching out to the community, Goodall created, in 1982, what has been transformed into today’s UNLV Foundation.

For those of us who migrated to Nevada from eastern and mid-western universities, it seems stunning to realize that a mere twenty-five years ago or so the “modern” fund-raising arm of our university was first created. Initially led by Irwin Molasky, a community entrepreneur and Business Hall of Fame inductee, the Foundation has always benefited from exceptionally strong and committed community leadership.

Two major gifts donated at that time gave a jump-start to the UNLV’s financial health and well-being. Future Supreme Court Justice Miriam Shearing and her husband gave a highly valued piece of land to the university and, in 1980 Marjorie Barrick gave a $1.2 million cash gift, the largest single gift ever donated to UNLV at that time. Her gift set the bar for fund-raising higher than it had ever been set before and, because it reinforced academic values—funding faculty teaching and research awards and a most prestigious lecture series that draws thousands of participants to this day—Mrs. Barrick’s gift created a watershed moment for UNLV.

Consequently, during Robert Maxson’s decade-long tenure as UNLV’s president, the commitment to raising private funds became a staple of university and foundation life. Several gifts valued at over a million dollars for scholarships, building funds, and other programs were raised or pledged during this period as President Maxson described his role as “watering the green spots” and building good will as an ambassador to the larger community. Among other major projects, Maxson worked with Elaine Wynn—who led the Foundation’s efforts for several years—to raise significant scholarship funds for students with real financial need—often the first generation to attend college. And, beginning at that time we have had spectacular success in raising scholarship funds over the years.

Likewise, although president of UNLV for less than one year, now Governor Kenny Guinn continued that effort and made it clear to me as I assumed the presidency that we would only achieve the excellence UNLV sought if we maintained a commitment to private sector partnerships and philanthropy.
And, because we have collectively committed ourselves to those goals and to a planning process that has articulated university priorities in a forceful and clear way to the larger community, we have succeeded in those endeavors in remarkable ways. This is clearly evident by the record-setting levels of private support received—more than $493 million over the past decade.

As we announce this major campaign today, we must consider certain demographic facts and cultural attitudes that are in many ways unique to our community and our state. Nevada is indeed young—an almost frontier-like state in countless ways. But unlike the centuries it has taken to develop many prestigious eastern universities, Nevada’s rapid rise in sophistication and entrepreneurship has far outpaced the slower development of major universities and their private fund-raising activities in other parts of the country.

And because major figures in Las Vegas gave to our efforts when we most needed them, we are here today a few years away from raising the largest number of private dollars of any public institution in the state of Nevada to date. The chart you are seeing now demonstrates the exponential growth of private funds and pledges as each decade of the university’s life has passed.

And who else helped us get here? Dozens of wonderful people whom many of you know well. For example, the Wing Fong family: Lilly was a Regent and, in that role, leveraged state funds for UNLV. She and her husband Wing, a wealthy developer, also contributed private funds over the years.

Like the Fongs, other prominent families helped UNLV in times of severe need. The Boyds have been giving to UNLV for many decades and, in total, have given or pledged in excess of $34 million. Beginning with the Silver Bowl renovation, Sam Boyd began the tradition that his son, Bill, and Bill’s family have continued through the years, endowing a chair in the hotel college, contributing to residence life programs, and most notably, providing the initial seed funding that leveraged state support for the long-awaited law school.

Creating another watershed moment for UNLV, Bill Boyd’s recent pledge of $25 million to enhance all programs at the Law School now named for him, is one of the leadership pledges that has permitted us to embark upon a major capital campaign. This pledge has raised the bar for major naming opportunities at UNLV and has helped us set our sights on even loftier heights than we had set them on before.

Nevada’s “first families” have indeed established the pace for giving that has put UNLV on the national fund-raising map. Thomas Beam, and later his wife Jimma and daughter Donna (a UNLV alumna), would provide funding for the business school, the engineering building, and would make it possible for UNLV to build a state-of-the-art music building that now forms the core of facilities that will characterize UNLV’s commitment to the Midtown plan on Maryland Parkway frontage.

The Greenspun family—again spanning at least two generations and including all of Hank’s immediate family members—has not only provided enhancement funds for a school named for the patriarch but has helped create a college that bears the family name. Responding to the need
to develop an academic unit that has, as one of its primary purposes, outreach to the larger community UNLV serves, the Greenspun family contributed essential funding to establish an unusual collection of programs now called the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs.

Most recently, the family has made it possible for UNLV to receive $36 million in capital funds to match $26.2 million they have pledged to build a signature building that will house virtually all departments in the College and create an anchor at the south end of the Midtown project. These gifts and pledges also rank the Greenspun family with those at the very pinnacle of community contributors to UNLV aiming to create a first class university in their hometown.

Similarly, the James Rogers family has contributed to numerous activities at UNLV and has made its mark as one of the most generous of families, joining the Bennetts, the Bigelows, the Beckers, the Wynns, the Fertittas, the Gaughans, the Redds, the Tibertis, the Maloofs, the Coxes, and the Thomas and Mack families as those who have supported scholarships, athletics, the sciences, the law school, engineering, and other major academic programs and endeavors.

As you are all aware, Jim Rogers has been an outspoken proponent of increased funding for higher education in Nevada from both public and private sources. To stimulate interest and commitments from the private sector, he and his wife Beverly have made several major gifts and pledges.

In addition to a multi-million dollar pledge to the Boyd School of Law that is already contributing significant funds to enhance legal education programs, they have also established a very substantial challenge pledge to create incentives for those who might wish to name a major College or School of the University, and in doing so enhanced its prospects for excellence immeasurably. Right now that pledge is temporarily attached to the College of Business, but the Rogers hope some other donor or Nevada family will rise to the challenge of naming that College so that their pledge can be redirected to another unnamed unit as yet another challenge to a prospect to step up to the plate.

Caring deeply about UNLV’s mission to provide superb training to prospective teachers, the Bennett family has given $10 million to various activities in the College of Education aimed at enhancing facilities and programs designed both to care for children in a pre-school setting, but, most important, to train students majoring in education in state-of-the-art pedagogies and facilities. Beginning with the late Bill Bennett’s generous contributions, his widow Lynn, daughter Diana, and nephew and UNLV alumnus, Scott Menke, have made major contributions of time and commitment to UNLV’s future.

And unlike the history at many public universities, women have made a particular mark at UNLV in both leadership roles and in the growth and development of the private fund-raising activities of the university. In addition to Barbara Greenspun, Marjorie Barrick, and Joyce Mack, early and seminal gifts from Margaret Elardi, Miriam Shearing, and Elaine Wynn, and strong and consistent support from Claudine Williams and Kitty Rodman over the years has never wavered.
Gifts to support the hotel school, student life, and athletics characterize Claudine Williams’ efforts as well as two years as Chair of the UNLV Foundation. Kitty’s company, Sierra Construction, built many of our early facilities and her own personal gifts support programs in student life, scholarships, education, and most particularly the new Physical Therapy program, without which we would not be able to mount an accredited program.

Women who are or were prominent community leaders and advocates such Maude Frazier, Flora Dungan, Judy Bayley, Lilly Fong, Elythe Katz-Yarchever, Carolyn Sparks, Thalia Dondero, Dina Titus, and former student body president Shelley Berkley not only supported UNLV’s growth and development and ensured that the university received a reasonable amount of state funding, they also gave and give generously of their own financial resources to support the institution they consider such a critical part of our community. Every single one of these women, no matter how modest her resources, has given personal funds to the endeavors she supports so enthusiastically.

And the university’s history is replete with stories of people who have seen the needs and given unselfishly over many years. People like Mel Wolzinger, who has given to the baseball program as Earl Wilson’s trustee, but also with his wife Ruth to the cohort program in the College of Education, to the Wilson Advising Center, to the football program, and most recently, to provide a major scholarship endowment for students who are involved in faculty research and scholarship, a gift that recognizes the centrality of research to the art of superb teaching and student learning.

Stan Fulton, who contributed $6 million to build the International Gaming Institute, also allowed us to use excess funds from the sale of a gift of stock to establish an almost $2 million endowment for Honors College scholarships, without which we would not be able to recruit the most able students.

Working with three presidents over several years (including Presidents Maxson, Guinn, and myself), Christina Hixson, provided from the Lied Foundation Trust not only $15 million toward the magnificent Lied library, but has supported the men’s golf program and contributed to several other UNLV programs as well, including funding the Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies.

And the list goes on, to some very interesting and novel initiatives, not the least of which are led by two philanthropists and entrepreneurs, Mike Saltman and Glenn Schaffer. Both of these men are people of substantial education and accomplishment and share a passion for the values of higher education and a desire to advance some of the more sophisticated centers of excellence only a university can develop really well.

Committing $1 million to create the Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution at the Boyd School of Law, Mike and Sonja Saltman (an alumna of UNLV) are a couple whose interests are firmly rooted in efforts to move humanity to achievements based on rational dialogue and global understanding. Involved in several efforts overseas such as the Salzburg Seminars and international negotiations efforts in the Middle East, they are also committed to the development of a university district around UNLV that will transform our neighborhood into a sophisticated
and welcoming vicinity that draws the broadest spectrum of the community into it and of which we can all be proud. A “renaissance man” of sorts, Mike Saltman represents one of the new manifestations of higher education philanthropy: people who want to be intimately involved in the actual development of a major university.

Another “renaissance man,” Glenn Schaeffer shares that vision and desire to participate personally in the creation of excellence. Creator of and benefactor to the International Institute for Modern Letters, Glenn has since committed himself even further to the development of a world-class “think tank” to be housed at UNLV named the Black Mountain Institute.

This Institute will contain three major activities: the International Institute for Modern Letters, the Northwest Association of the Cities of Asylum, and the new Forum for Contemporary Culture, an entity that will create opportunities for informed discourse among superb scholars, public figures, writers, students, and the public in general about matters that literally represent life and death issues for the future of humankind. Henry Louis Gates, Harriet Fulbright (widow of Senator William), and former Congressman Dick Gephardt, as well as Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, have all agreed to play a role in the formation of this new entity.

In a matching program with the university, and after approval by the Board of Regents, Glenn will provide significant new support for this program as well as build facilities on the northern end of the Midtown UNLV project at Cottage Grove and Maryland Parkway. The goal here is to create an integrated Institute for humanistic study, publication, translation and other activity that is virtually unique and that will catapult UNLV and our community into a prominent position in the world of modern letters.

These examples represent just a few of the major commitments our community has made—and continues to make every day—to their university.

And the university family, including alumni, is increasingly generous in their commitments. In fact, in 2003 the UNLV Alumni Association, in honor of their more than $1 million in gifts, became a member of the Palladium Society. The base upon which so many major universities depend for private giving—their alumni—is beginning to be a major factor in our friend and fund-raising efforts nationwide.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2008, our emerging maturity is defined, in part, by the prominence and successes of our alumni. That prominence is also producing a growing cadre of alumni who are beginning to make very significant gifts to UNLV. Chief among these to date are the substantial gift from Ken Knauss to create an endowed chair for the Accounting department, and a multi-million dollar gift from Mannetta Braunstein to help the Barrick Museum develop one of the world’s best collections of meso-American artifacts.

This new tradition of alumni giving is one that is critical to our future and to the success of our campaign.

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What is perhaps most amazing to me about our donor base, however, is the number of UNLV faculty and staff members—including classified staff members—who have contributed to our
university over the years. Just look at the incredible growth of this sector of giving over the life of the university. With cumulative giving approaching a million and a half dollars, members of the immediate UNLV employee family are becoming more and more mindful of how important private giving is to a major university and have given of themselves to ensure their university’s advancement.

Faculty from multiple disciplines such as Tom Wright, Gail Sammons, Ken Hanlon, David Holmes, Andy Fry, Bill Wells, Bob Ackerman, Susan Michael, Andy Feinstein, Mike Clauretie, and Mary Ann Michel (just to name several) have all given in excess of $5,000 to various programs on campus.

Emeriti faculty, such as Don Baepler, Dave and Shirley Emerson, and Jim and Mary Dale Deacon, have made—and continue to make—substantial contributions as well.

Professional staff members such as women’s basketball coach Regina Miller, most of the university’s vice presidents and deans, many members of the Foundation staff, and several of its former presidents have all given in excess of $5,000, in some cases considerably more than that.

Take, for example, Nancy and Tom Flagg. Nancy is, as you know, an outstanding alumna who has worked in various capacities at UNLV and in the system for many years. And not to embarrass them, Nancy and Tom, now an emeritus staff member, have also contributed more than $25,000 toward such programs as the Dean’s fund in Liberal Arts and KUNV in a personal effort to ensure that programs that don’t always have enormous natural sources of private funding have the opportunity to thrive.

Take Bill Sullivan as another example. Also an alumnus, Bill is responsible for the incredibly successful Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach—an effort primarily supported by federal funds to prepare students from junior high school forward to seek academic success and college as a future—and has himself contributed more than $5,000 over the years, as have many other members of our professional staff.

Perhaps most heartening and dramatic, however, are the contributions of some of our classified staff members. People like Kristene Fisher, a program officer I in the Provost’s office and Katrina Switalski, an administrative assistant II in the College of Education, have both given several thousands of dollars.

Perhaps one of the most striking examples is the gifts of Paul Dzerk, a Grounds Supervisor in Facilities. Paul has contributed $14,000 since 1996, a remarkable testimony to the loyalty and generosity of our staff.

There are many ways in which all of you in our audience today make contributions to UNLV’s advancement everyday and everyway. And we hope you continue to do so as you speak to neighbors, friends, students, and colleagues about UNLV. You are our true ambassadors and we trust you will become involved in this campaign in any of the multiple ways you are able and willing to do so.
I also know that many of you plan to make contributions and pledges to the campaign. Enhanced participation by faculty and staff is a major goal. And as you can see from the “Pyramid of Giving,” gifts at all levels will make this campaign successful.

In an attempt to provide leadership to the Faculty/Staff component of our fund drive, more than twenty-five campus citizens have volunteered their services to engage their colleagues in the campaign. Many of them are here with us today. Will you please stand and accept our profound appreciation for your willingness to serve in this important role?

And none of you needs to make a fundraising call on me as Mike and I are today making our pledge to the campaign.

I am pleased to announce that the leadership of the campaign and of the Foundation has set an ambitious goal to be raised or pledged by June 30, 2008. The honorary co-chairs of the campaign are Joyce Mack and Bill Boyd, two of the most influential and beloved and philanthropic members of our community.

The tireless Don Snyder is the Chair of the campaign and, working with Dan Van Epp, Terry Wright, Ted Quirk, and alumni Jim Zeiter, Bill Wortman, Bill Paulos, and Ralph Piercy, as well as many members of the Foundation and Alumni Boards and the university staff, we have already raised substantial cash or pledges toward that lofty goal.

We are profoundly grateful for what has already been given and pledged and are determined to blow through the goal we are setting today for the advancement of every phase of academic life at the university: for scholarships and fellowships, endowed professorships, academic centers of excellence, student life-enhancing projects, library collections, specialized equipment, research and community engagement support, bricks and mortar—whatever makes a great university, we are eager to raise the funds that will make our university great in the ways we have defined greatness for UNLV.

And although money is the means to the end, the beginning and the end are people, people first and last: all of you here today as contributors and beneficiaries alike—and many of you are both simultaneously. A great university is a collection of people ideally joined together in a labor of love.

So join us now in celebration and commitment. We are a family of over-achievers who plan to over-achieve even more splendidly in the next three years of this campaign, as we make every effort to embrace all of you in the arms of this unprecedented effort. Whatever one can give, one should be proud to give. Whatever one can pledge—however modest that pledge may seem—no gift is too small, no pledge is too insignificant for us to be profoundly grateful to receive it.

A campaign of this magnitude manifests a dream to raise the bar in perpetuity for giving to the University. Future leaders of this university and community will, from this day forward—just as they have before us—struggle to find the path to excellence and pre-eminence. They will only find it if we all commit ourselves to UNLV and continue to invent its future as an ever brighter one.
So what will be the goal of this major campaign and how do we expect to meet it? For an announcement of this importance, I think we need to “bring in the band.”

I am pleased to announce that our goal to raise by 2008, our 50th anniversary, is: $500,000,000. And more important, we have already received cash and pledges totaling $263,000,000 toward that goal.

Please join me in celebrating this transformational moment in UNLV’s history. Join with us as we “invent the future!”