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**EDITOR**
Amy Bouchard, APR

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**
R. Marsh Starks

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**
William Verrill, Shonkwiler Partners

**CONTRIBUTORS**
Amy Bouchard, APR
Jessica Impallaria '08
Brian Sodoma '06
Cate Weeks

**PUBLISHER**
UNLV Alumni Association
Raise the curtain. 
Turn on the spotlight. 
The Rebels are taking center stage.

UNLV alumni across the globe are putting on performances in boardrooms, in classrooms, and in their communities. The stages differ, but the response remains the same. With their education and experience shining through, it’s clear this is where they ought to be — on center stage.

For more than 40 years, the UNLV Alumni Association has recognized exceptional individuals who represent the ideals of higher learning and Rebel pride. Through the awards program, the Alumni Association recognizes alumni and community leaders for their outstanding achievements and leadership at the university as well as throughout our community. These recipients truly serve as inspiration for the generations of alumni who will follow.

About the UNLV Alumni Association

The UNLV Alumni Association was established in 1964 as a not-for-profit organization to promote and enhance alumni engagement on campus.

To date, the association has contributed more than $7 million to the university in student scholarships, endowments, and major capital improvements such as the Alumni Amphitheater, Alumni Grove, Alumni Park, and the $2.7 million Richard Tam Alumni Center.

The UNLV Alumni Association is a leader in:

- Connecting alumni for life to the resources of the university
- Communicating UNLV news and happenings to our alumni
- Providing a network for alumni to meet one another, students and prospective students
Special thanks to the UNLV Alumni Association board of directors for funding the Annual Alumni Awards.

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Congratulations

Dignity Health - St. Rose Dominican congratulates the honorees and friends of the 2016 UNLV Alumni of the Year Awards and proudly recognizes Dr. Tony Alamo, 2016 Outstanding Alumnus of the Year.

As the only not-for-profit, faith based hospital system in the valley, St. Rose Dominican is committed to meeting the growing health care needs of the residents of southern Nevada. Our three hospitals place a special emphasis on healing the body, mind and spirit as only St. Rose Dominican can.

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Hello humankindness.
Every year, the UNLV Alumni Association honors Rebels who stand out because of their impressive accomplishments — and this year’s crop certainly doesn’t disappoint.

They’ve climbed to the top of corporate ladders. Tackled problems in their communities. And garnered international awards.

But sometimes, their biggest life lessons have come after graduation.
Dr. Tony Alamo, a longtime Southern Nevada physician, has had a varied career. He currently is chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission and tactical physician for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s SWAT division. He previously served as chairman of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, is the first civilian recipient of Metro’s Medal of Valor, and a licensed pilot.

*My advice to myself and to any new graduate…* I would remind myself that graduation is a beginning, not an end. UNLV is a place where I acquired raw materials from which to go to the next phase of my life: medical school and residency. In fact, every aspect of life is a new beginning that builds on the last.

If you circle back to everything I do, it’s either because I grew up in a gaming environment — my father was in gaming — or because of my medical degree. People might look at my career and say, ‘Oh, you’ve done so many things,’ but the spokes of the wheel always go back to the hub.

In high school I would have told myself, ‘Do not bypass UNLV.’ [Alamo first attended UCLA but quickly transferred back to his hometown university.] If there are reasons for you to go elsewhere, they should be viable reasons. If you think UNLV is not academic enough or worthy enough of having you and will hold you back from bigger and better things, you’re blowing it, kid.

Because at the end of the day, I have a baccalaureate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. And that has made all the difference in my life.
CONGRATULATIONS

Dr. Alamo,

Congratulations on the UNLV Alumni of the year award. It is an outstanding achievement and well deserved.

We have all benefited from your loyal service and important contributions to UNLV. You have truly earned the respect of everyone who has had the pleasure of working with you.

From,
Your amazing and humble staff

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Congratualtions

DIANA BENNETT

on being an honored recipient of the
UNLV Alumni Association

SILVER STATE AWARD

WE APPRECIATE ALL YOU DO
Bennett is the CEO and co-founder of Paragon Gaming, which has developed and currently operates several Canadian gaming properties. She has held numerous executive positions in the local gaming industry and also oversees the Bennett Family Foundation.

**The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate**… would be to find a way to stand out of the crowd, especially when it comes to job searches. For every job today there could be 20 applicants. What makes you stand out? It’s not your résumé. It’s often the homework you do before the interview. Do you know your future workplace? Do you know your new boss? Are you prepared? It’s a cliché, but true. You only have one chance at a first impression.

That said, second impressions are important, too. After an interview, remember the “thank you” note. I’m old fashioned and really like handwritten ones, but an email will do the trick, too. Of those 20 applicants, the two that took the time to write a “thank you” note just improved their chances of a call back - even if they may not have been the first choice after an interview.

I’d also tell myself to start thinking about how to give back to my community. As a new graduate, it’s easy to get caught up in looking for work, but volunteering is personally invigorating and can even help you establish valuable, life-long relationships. It will all come back to you in so many ways.
Lori Marrs is the founder and managing partner of Marrs Bergquist CPAs, which specializes in tax preparation, accounting and financial planning for small to medium-sized businesses. The firm also performs reviews and audits for a diverse group of clients. She served as treasurer for the UNLV Alumni Association board of directors for six years.

The advice I would give myself as a new graduate would be to relax. When we are young, we stress out about our future and what that will look like. I picked a profession that I love, but I would want my younger self to remember that balance is important.

Also, do not compare yourself to others. If you work hard, and be diligent you will accomplish your objectives. It’s not a race. Do what you do and do it well and you’ll be fine.

The last bit of advice I’d give myself at my 1986 graduation would have been to buy land west of Rainbow Boulevard. It will make sense in 20 years. For new grads, I would say think of your future needs, your future family, and look to set down roots. It’s important to become part of the community.
Cope is the Radiology Director for Medsmart. In that role he oversees radiology services at Centennial Hills Hospital. Cope has taught Radiography courses at UNLV and also served in supervisory roles at Valley Hospital. He is completing his MBA from Western Governors University.

The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate…

would be to reinforce the message I often gave to all of my students as they went off to clinical: Treat every day like it is a job interview. Never forget that in healthcare we are caring for people at their most vulnerable; they need your compassion and strength. Strive to be that person everyone would want to have care for their mother or child.

I would remind my younger self to have goals in mind, but to remember that goals are temporary and meant to be altered or even surpassed as time goes by.

But most importantly, I would remind myself not to lose touch with those who helped me succeed and to stay close to my family, friends, and colleagues who supported me as I grew.
Garcia is the founder and CEO of The Investment Counsel Company of Nevada. Since 1978, he has been helping affluent families, corporations, foundations, and endowments establish and achieve financial goals. He has gained recognition from financial industry publications such as Barron’s, Forbes, and Financial Advisor.

The advice I would give to myself as a new graduate… would be to start with the end in mind. In other words, clarify your long-term goals in all areas of your life: professionally, financially, and personally. Then ask yourself if your goals are in harmony or conflicting with one another, and if they have a realistic level of attainment.

Define the action steps required to attain each goal in measurable terms, so you can gauge progress. Determine your timeframe to accomplish each goal. It’s important to track if you are on, behind, or ahead of schedule.

Each day, apply the same level of intensity as if training to earn a gold medal in the Olympics. Accomplishing these action steps should be your first priority. And always remember that success only counts with ethical behavior and consideration for others.
Tyson is the director of government affairs for Three Square, Las Vegas Valley’s only food bank. She has also worked as a grant manager for the state’s Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to that, she worked as a state youth suicide prevention coordinator and helped bring the first federal grant to Nevada for youth suicide prevention.

The advice I’d give myself as a recent graduate… would be to focus on healthy personal relationships and learn how to build strong professional relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and community leaders.

I was fortunate to work in public health while pursuing my master’s degree. While in school, it was easy for me to ask for help and to allow others to guide me through processes and teach me shortcuts: backdoors to get things done more quickly.

After graduation though, I saw myself, and others, struggle with overconfidence - especially with familiar processes. After all, I’d studied it and already applied those skills! If someone had advice for me, I wasn’t quick to accept.

Now I look back and realize that when I let someone “teach” me – even something I thought I already knew – I achieved so much more. This approach helped me gain a reputation for being open, a consensus builder, and accepting of diverse perspectives.

We all want to share our knowledge and be validated for our skills and expertise. Share what you have, but recognize that it’s a gift to allow another person to share with you as well.
Svihl is the founder of Fountain Valley Dental Care in Fountain Valley, Calif. She has also volunteered her dental services to those in need in South America, Ethiopia, and Mexico in addition to providing free care to the homeless population in her area.

*The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate…* is it’s going to be hard. You’ll have to stretch your mind, your stamina, and your budget way more than you thought. The linearity of your academic life will now become non-linear and complex. In business and life, you may be torn between choosing the better of several options.

Even though you’ve been awarded a dental degree, you will actually have to practice your own version of therapist, life coach, surgeon, mechanic, scientist, teacher, CEO, CFO, and COO. Let’s not forget wife, daughter, mother, and sister.

I would tell this new graduate that the people who are sitting in that dental chair, looking at you, they all have a story, sometimes an extraordinary one, and that you must try to understand this story before you can enjoy the privilege of helping them.

SAVE THE DATE

**UNLV ’16 HOMECOMING**

**Friday, September 30**
Homecoming Scarlet & Gray Experience

**Saturday, October 1**
Rebel Block Party and Homecoming Game
UNLV Rebel Football vs. Fresno State

Nora Vihn Svihl
’03 BS Biology
’07 DMD Dentistry
School of Dental Medicine Alumna of the Year
Kihuen has been a Democratic senator in Nevada since 2010. Prior to that, he served in the Nevada Assembly from 2007 to 2010. He is also a principal with Ramirez Group, a public relations, advocacy and multicultural outreach firm. Kihuen began his career with College of Southern Nevada as a recruiter and advisor.

The advice I'd give myself as a new graduate is simple… You never know where life will take you, all you can do is work hard and success will follow.

Since I was a young boy I had dreamed of playing professional soccer. I was the star of my high school team and just a few weeks before my big professional tryout, I broke my foot, ending my soccer career forever. If you’d asked me for advice then, it would have been darker. You’ll face times in your life where you can’t imagine a bright future ahead. In those moments, put your head down and focus on the task in front of you.

I finished college and worked as a student recruiter and academic advisor at the College of Southern Nevada, helping thousands achieve a college degree. A few years later, at the encouragement of my mentor Senator Harry Reid, I ran for the State Assembly. No one thought I could win. I was too young, too inexperienced, had an accent, and no money. But with hard work and discipline, I won with more than 60 percent of the vote.

Today I am a sitting State Senator, a candidate for U.S. Congress, and most proudly a UNLV College of Education alumnus of the year. Regardless of what adversity may arise, work hard and success will follow.
Vodrazka is an arterial signal engineer and project engineer for the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, which is the official administrator of the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation, one of the country’s first Intelligent Transportation System organizations. He also serves as a practitioner advisor to the UNLV American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) student chapter. In 2015, he was awarded the “Engineer of the Year - Private Sector” distinction by the ASCE Southern Nevada branch.

*The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate…*

is the same advice that I give today’s students. Stay connected with your classmates and make friends with as many good peers and colleagues as you can. You are going to be working with these people for the next 30-plus years and dealing with a friend is better than dealing with a stranger or an adversary.

Walter C. Vodrazka, Jr.

'95 BS Civil Engineering

Howard R. Hughes

College of Engineering

Alumnus of the Year

**CONGRATULATIONS WALTER VODRAZKA**

Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada

Department of Freeway Arterial Systems Transportation Project Engineer

On being chosen for UNLV’s School of Engineering Outstanding Alumni Graduate award. Your exceptional contributions and support of Southern Nevada have helped pave the road ahead for our valley residents.
George Grove

’01 Masters of Music

College of Fine Arts
Alumnus of the Year

Grove is a singer, guitarist, banjo player, and orchestral arranger for The Kingston Trio, a musical group that has performed at Carnegie Hall and traveled the globe. This year marks Grove’s 40th year with the trio.

My advice to myself and to any new graduate… would be to revel in the accomplishment, celebrate the moment, and then get to work!

Years ago, I created orchestral arrangements for my group, The Kingston Trio, so that we could perform pops concerts with symphony orchestras around the country. My undergraduate degree had given me a hammer, so I crafted some perfectly usable arrangements with it. After several years of using those scores, I realized that the hammer wasn’t enough.

Back to school I went to study with the Jazz Department at UNLV’s School of Music. Their knowledge, skill, and care gave me those additional tools I was looking for. I was proud to receive my Masters of Music degree. However, the celebration lasted only until realization set in, I had to do something with these new skills.

I threw the old orchestral scores in the waste basket and wrote new ones, far more musically interesting than the old. Audiences love our pops concerts. But far more gratifying is the fact that the symphony librarians and even the viola players tell me how interesting these new arrangements are. Arriving at that special moment of graduation is worthy of celebration, but afterwards — get to work.
Strabala was an educator for 10 years. As a teacher, she dramatically improved reading levels in her classes by facilitating one-on-one student-instructor interaction with the help of parent volunteers. Strabala later served as vice president and co-owner of a successful wholesale food distribution company and continues her career as a businesswoman.

*The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate*… would be to first seek out a principal who challenges you and invests in your professional success. You may want to work for a leader who is easy-going; however, I’ve seen so many principals who are friendly but fall short of helping teachers become better leaders.

Next, make sure you have as many classroom management tools available to you as possible. This is far too often the greatest stumbling block for many new teachers. It was certainly mine! But with a great mentor you can manage your team of parents and students well; and if you are a good manager, you never need to complain about a management team getting things wrong.

In addition, learn how to write lesson plans as efficiently as possible. You can get caught up over-planning and waste too much precious time. Seek out the advice of others who can offer tips to help you plan effectively and quickly.

Finally, become a mentor for a new teacher. Learn from your own mistakes and pass this valuable information along to others. It’s your gift to them, and the world, as an education professional.

---

**Congratulations**

**JEREMY COPE,**

*Centennial Hills Hospital Medical Center Director of Radiology*

You make us proud!
Martin is the family medicine residency program director at the University of Nevada School of Medicine in Las Vegas. She also serves as vice chief of staff for University Medical Center and is the lead physician of a health promotion program for adults with developmental disabilities at Opportunity Village.

The advice I'd give myself as a new graduate…

would be to find a way to contribute to the community where you work, above and beyond your traditional job description. Community work unites everyone in your workplace toward a common goal and it can bring a profound positive change to those who are the most in need. Whether it’s forming a corporate team to participate in a charity walk, visiting a senior center, or organizing a food drive for the local food bank during the holidays, there are endless ways you can contribute.

If you can make a lasting commitment to community service, you’ll find that your newly acquired knowledge and skills as a UNLV graduate will be even more appreciated by your colleagues and supervisors in the workplace.
Jingoli is the chief administration officer for Konami Gaming Inc. Before moving to the gaming supplier side, he served as an investigative agent for the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.

The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate… would be to remember that some of life’s best opportunities may result from what seemed like a negative experience at first. While in college, every summer my friends and I would ditch the mainland for New Jersey’s best-kept local secret: Long Beach Island, or LBI as we called it, a tiny strip of land right off the coast. It was as much a part of the year as fall and spring semesters were.

One year, however, my parents let me know that my beloved summer at LBI wouldn’t be happening. I was to get an internship instead. To appease them, I managed to secure an internship with the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.

That was 28 years ago and it completely changed my life. I’m now the chief administration officer at Konami Gaming Inc. I went into that internship just shy of kicking and screaming, and came out with a career path that has defined my life. That internship helped shape my work ethic and instilled in me a drive to succeed. It reminds me of something my father used to say, something that I never quite understood until the summer of that dreaded internship: Hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard.
Joe Cain

'01 Juris Doctor

William S. Boyd
School of Law Alumnus of the Year

Cain is a principal and general counsel for various affiliated businesses including Lev Restaurant Group, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Jamba Juice, Daily Kitchen, iLuv burgers, F. Pigalle, Lobster ME, Fifth Street Gaming, Silver Nugget Casino, Lucky Club Casino, Downtown Grand Casino, The Golden Tiki, and Fine Properties. He also spent three years as an associate attorney for Lionel Sawyer & Collins and received a bachelor of science from Georgetown University.

The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate … would be to stay flexible and future-oriented and to constantly evolve and educate yourself about new trends in whatever field you choose. The world is changing so quickly and disruption from technology and globalization only seems to be accelerating.

When I graduated from law school in 2001, I had job offers from five law firms and went to work as an associate at what many considered to be the top firm in Nevada. That firm, along with three others that offered me a job, no longer exists. What seemed like clear paths to long, prosperous legal careers turned out to be dead ends.

The good news is that where there is disruption, there is opportunity. In the businesses that our company operates, we are always incubating a few different projects and experimenting with changes to our existing operations. Only by evolving and staying flexible have we been able to survive bumps in the road and continue to grow and thrive.

Don’t be afraid to experiment with things outside your comfort zone and to take risks, as those are the only ways to raise your game to a higher level and adjust to ever-changing circumstances.
In 2015, Campo was hired as president of Ashland University in Ohio. He previously worked as vice president of academics at Regent University before becoming president at that educational institution for more than three years.

*When I consider the advice I’d give myself as a new graduate…* the clear light of 23 years’ worth of experience leads me to say don’t follow my twisted path to success.

Don’t take a part-time job as a valet parker while you try to earn a PhD. Don’t work as an academic adviser to athletics at the same time. Don’t try to complete a dissertation while trying to raise three children under 10 years of age and stay married. Don’t try to grade student essays while attending your sons’ little league games. Don’t work as an adjunct for years before you finally secure a tenure-track position.

Then I remember how much I learned as an athletic advisor, about what students were really experiencing as they navigated their way through college. I remember learning to stay focused on a task even with the wonderful distraction of a room full of screaming seven-year olds. I remember learning how rewarding and difficult it was to be an adjunct. I realized the grind and glory of completing a dissertation. I learned the discipline of prioritizing a too-busy life. And today, as a university president, all of these valuable lessons inform my work every day. So, I reconsider and say find your own twisted path and follow where it leads, learning along the way. After you find your way, it may not seem so crooked after all.
Martin recently retired after 40 years as a practicing registered nurse. She had a 32-year career as coordinator of medical services for Clark County’s Department of Family and Youth Services and later its Department of Family Services. In her role, she served youth in detention as well as children in protective services. Martin also worked with UNLV for many years, offering nursing students tours and occasional short-term practicum opportunities at the agency.

*The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate* . . . would be to never forget that even the most unpleasant patient deserves patience and understanding. This was proven to me early in my career. I met Henry who had severe pulmonary disease. Not only did Henry continually feel miserable, he continually acted miserably, always snapping at everyone, complaining about everything.

After one particular admission, Henry was transferred to a general floor to wait until he was stable enough to be discharged home. It happened that I overheard a phone conversation where Henry was almost in tears, relating how lonely he was and bemoaning the fact that no one came to see him.

Suddenly I saw Henry as a different person! He was now just a sick, lonely, old man who had driven away all who cared for him by his unfortunate way of dealing with his illness. Henry died shortly thereafter but from that moment on, I knew that underneath a person’s exterior lays the common thread of needing understanding and compassion. Thanks to Henry, I became a better nurse that day.
Brock-Hon is an associate professor of geology and associate department head of biology, geology, and environmental science at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Her work has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals on the subjects of soil mineralogy and soil development in arid regions like Nevada.

The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate… would be to understand that the learning isn’t over! What you learned in college is only the tip of the iceberg. College taught me how to think critically and to find good, solid information to solve problems. I was fortunate to get many years of problem-solving practice while earning my graduate degrees at UNLV.

Those skills have helped me to learn so much more after graduation, both as an instructor and researcher. As a professor, I am occasionally asked to teach a new class on a subject that is just outside of my specialty, or my research takes a path where I have to learn about new processes and new ideas. I must also learn how to use new technology and teach students how to apply that technology to solve problems. If I decided to close my mind to learning - thinking that was all done in college - then I certainly wouldn’t get very far; my research wouldn’t advance, my students would get the short end of the stick, and I would quickly become irrelevant.
Since 2007, Barlow has been the Las Vegas City Council Ward 5 representative. He serves on numerous boards, including the California-Nevada Super Speed Ground Transportation Commission, the National League of Cities – Community Economic Development Board, and the Southern Nevada Gang Task Force. He also holds an executive management graduate certificate from Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.

The advice I’d give myself as a new graduate… We are living in a world where employment opportunities are no longer limited by political boundaries; the world is open to us. As technology increases, boundaries are removed and business is conducted remotely; it extends outside our local communities and region and across the globe.

As you move through your career, you will have opportunities to embrace your individuality while also learning from constructive feedback and exchanges with like-minded individuals with similar goals. Life is not linear for many. In fact, the majority of us zig-zag through life to reach our goals. This should not be a deterrent on your path to reach greatness, but a permeable system you can expound on to reach your goals as you watch for opportunities.

Don’t show fear, embrace the obstacles, and understand that these are road blocks you have been equipped through your education to handle. Failure is not an option; I have instilled this belief in myself to persevere through life’s challenges. I view these moments of challenge as building blocks that provide small steps leading to larger steps to my successful and profitable career.
The Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers (AGEM) salutes its longest serving President on his Alumnus of the Year Award.
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