Fourth Annual

Inspiration, Innovation, Impact:

A CELEBRATION of

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

April 7, 2017 | 4-6 p.m. | Student Union Ballroom

Opening reception for the 2017 Graduate & Professional Student Research Forum
Wynn Tashman is a third-year joint degree graduate student pursuing a J.D./Ph.D. in law and educational psychology. His primary research focus is on LGBT youth school experience and the bullying reporting process. He is also involved in public interest legal advocacy for LGBT adults in Southern Nevada.

Tashman volunteers for the development of educational interventions, awareness trainings, and ethical conduct guidelines for key stakeholders to improve culturally sensitive representation of the LGBT demographic.

Austin McKenna is a Ph.D. student studying physiology in the School of Life Sciences under the supervision of Dr. Frank van Breukelen. The van Breukelen lab maintains a population of small mammals called tenrecs from the island of Madagascar. Using tenrecs as a model system for understanding mammal physiology may lead to novel advancements in several fields of biology. McKenna’s research revolves around the odd physiology and unique hibernation patterns of tenrecs.

Alicia Crespin is an M.S. student studying ecology in the School of Life Sciences. Her thesis research is based on the mutually beneficial relationship between local ants and butterfly larvae and the role chemical communication plays in maintaining this association. She hopes that understanding this fascinating relationship will shed light on the importance of inter-species cooperation for butterflies in the Mojave Desert and provide essential information needed to effectively manage and protect local butterfly habitat for species of conservation concern.

Adam Betemedhin expects to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering in spring 2018. He is the project engineer for UNLV’s 2017 Solar Decathlon Team as well as an undergraduate research assistant at UNLV’s Center for Energy Research. Betemedhin was born in Ethiopia and has lived in Las Vegas since he was 5 years old.

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Breanna Boppre is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Criminal Justice. Her research examines how gender and race relate to criminal behavior and experiences with the criminal justice system. Her prior research has been published in The Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice and Victims & Offenders. For her graduate assistantship, Boppre serves as the editorial assistant for a top academic journal in her field, Criminal Justice and Behavior. Her dissertation research will explore how intersectionality relates to justice-involvement among women on community supervision.

Nasko Balaktchiev expects to graduate with a master’s degree in architecture in spring 2018. He is the project engineer for UNLV’s 2017 Solar Decathlon Team as well as an undergraduate research assistant at UNLV’s Center for Energy Research. Betemedhin was born in Ethiopia and has lived in Las Vegas since he was 5 years old.

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Presenters

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Nasko Balaktchiev expects to graduate with a master’s degree in architecture in spring 2018. He works as an architectural designer at Atlas Design. Balaktchiev earned a bachelor’s degree in architecture from UNLV in 2016. His experience on UNLV’s Solar Decathlon team during his sophomore year inspired him to take a leadership role as project manager of this year’s Solar Decathlon team. Balaktchiev was born in Bulgaria and has lived in Las Vegas since he was 5 years old.
Performers

Today’s featured performance will be delivered by the UNLV Marimba Band, directed by Timothy Jones and James Bailey. This group has traveled and performed across the United States and overseas to places like Australia.

Midwest native Kyle Bissantz has made his home in the musical community of Las Vegas since 2010. Bissantz holds a bachelor’s degree from UNLV and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in percussion performance. He works frequently as a live-event and studio percussionist and has performed at major venues on the strip, including performances with the rock band 311, DJ/producer Calvin Harris, with Cirque Du Soleil, and on stage at the Electric Daisy Carnival. He has educated and performed not only in Las Vegas but around the country and world.

Ryan Harrison holds a master’s degree in music performance from UNLV and is currently working on his Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Harrison attended the Elder Conservatorium of Music at Adelaide University in Australia. He has performed in a variety of bands and ensembles ranging from top 40 cover bands to new music ensembles such as The Soundstream collective. Harrison was a member of The Raiders Drum Corps, one of the few groups of its type in the country, proving his versatility and passion for music in all forms.

Marcus LeBlanc is pursuing a master’s degree in percussion performance at UNLV. LeBlanc is a member of several ensembles, including the UNLV Wind Orchestra, Marimba Band, and is in charge of the Rebel Steel Band. Originally from Erath, La., he earned his bachelor’s degree in music education at McNeese State University. LeBlanc was a performing member of the Academy Drum and Bugle Corps 2013 and 2014 front ensemble. He then went on to teach the Louisiana Stars Drum and Bugle Corps’ front ensemble during the 2015 and 2016 season.

Before recently moving to Las Vegas, Wyoming native Lindsay Suta lived in many different parts of the West, including Montana, California and Washington. Suta is pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in percussion performance at UNLV. She earned a master’s degree in music performance from the University of Southern California and a bachelor’s degree in music education from SUNY College at Buffalo.

Australian percussionist, composer and educator James Whiting earned a bachelor’s degree in jazz vibraphone and a master’s degree in performance and conducting from the Queensland Conservatorium. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at UNLV. Whiting has provided many national and international performances and recordings, including two self-produced original albums: "Burbank" (2011) and "Hard Mince" (2015). Both albums have received international acclaim, with "Hard Mince" winning Best Jazz Album in the 2015 Akademia Music Awards.

Support Graduate Students

Graduate assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships support graduate students and make possible their innovative and impactful research. For more information on how you can support graduate education at UNLV, contact:

Elizabeth Kahane, Associate Director of Development
(702) 895-3429 | elizabeth.kahane@unlv.edu
Join us at the 2nd annual
GRADUATE STUDENT SHOWCASE
Celebrating Our Accomplishments, Imagining Our Future

The Graduate Student Showcase is an opportunity for graduate students to present their research at a featured campus and community event during UNLV’s Research Week (Oct. 9-13, 2017).

This year’s Showcase will celebrate the 50th anniversary of conferring graduate degrees at UNLV.

Look for more information coming soon.
unlv.edu/graduatecollege/showcase

Join us at the 4th annual
REBEL GRAD SLAM
Three-minute thesis competition

The fast-paced Rebel Grad Slam challenges graduate students to present their research in a three-minute, one-slide presentation. This year’s event will take place in November.

Look for more information coming soon.
unlv.edu/graduatecollege/rebelgradslam
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