WHY GREAT STUDENTS CHOOSE US AND HOW WE CHOOSE THEM

I can’t believe I did clinical work in my first year!

I love my small classes!

My professors are amazing!

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
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New leaders, new vision
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FEATURES

6 · DECISIONS, DECISIONS
Medical students and administrators demystify the path from application to acceptance and talk about what makes the University of Nevada School of Medicine a great choice.

12 · ROAD TO RURAL LEARNING
The School of Medicine’s response to training more physicians in frontier communities has resulted in exceptional learning opportunities for Nevada medical students.

16 · LEADERS RISE TO NEW ROLES
The School of Medicine recognizes three stars in their fields with appointments to significant leadership posts within the school.

18 · PA PROGRAM READY TO LAUNCH
The appointment of a founding director and Renown Health’s commitment of startup funds have the much-anticipated new physician assistant program poised to begin accepting applicants.

20 · ALUMNI RETURN TO ALMA MATER
The School of Medicine beckons to alumni who have a passion for sharing their knowledge with the next generation of physicians.

22 · SERVING SOME OF THE MOST UNDERSERVED
A grant has enabled a School of Medicine leader to improve health care opportunities for women with intellectual disabilities, who often face enormous obstacles in receiving medical care.

23 · ALUMNUS EXPANDS RURAL CANCER CARE
A cancer diagnosis is just the beginning of hardships for rural cancer patients, but thanks to an innovative University of Nevada School of Medicine alumnus, Elko patients now can be treated in their hometown.

DEPARTMENTS

2 · Dean’s Perspective
3 · Facts and Figures
4 · News and Notes
24 · Message from the Alumni Association President
25 · Class Chat
26 · Honor Roll
28 · Faculty Focus
29 · Resident Round-Up
30 · Student Spotlight
31 · Class Act
32 · Briefs
In this issue of Synapse, we answer the questions, “What makes the University of Nevada School of Medicine great? What makes it special?” There are many ways to answer this question, but the stories in this issue are a good place to start.

The short answer is the commitment of so many faculty and staff members—full-time and volunteer, in Reno and Las Vegas, in the basic sciences and clinical sciences—to teaching our students and residents, volunteering for special programs like the Student Outreach Clinic and Volunteers in Medicine of Southern Nevada, providing career advice, developing innovative educational programs and providing leadership to our continued growth and development.

In this issue of Synapse, you can learn about new department chairs who have been recruited, all leaders from within the School of Medicine or our major partner Renown Health. These leaders have emerged to provide new directions and ideas to critical programs in surgery, microbiology and neurology.

You will also learn about rural physicians who provide critical educational experiences for students and residents, contributions by the Department of Family Medicine in Las Vegas to the medical care of adults with developmental disabilities at Opportunity Village, the progress in launching a new program to train physician assistants who are so badly needed in Nevada, and the ways that School of Medicine alumni contribute to our success.

These are but a few of many examples of the amazing contributions made every day by members of the University of Nevada School of Medicine family to our mission of improving health and healthcare in Nevada.

THOMAS L. SCHWENK, M.D.
Professor, Family and Community Medicine
Dean, University of Nevada School of Medicine
Vice President, Division of Health Sciences
The Office of Statewide Initiatives for the past seven years has published the *Nevada Rural and Frontier Health Data Book*. The books have compiled an array of data covering health, population, economics and workforce for Nevada’s 17 counties. All of those numbers, enhanced by charts and graphs, now are available online in Nevada Instant Atlas.

Using advanced online mapping software, Tabor Griswold, Ph.D., health services research analyst, led the effort to make population health data more accessible to everyone—scientists, students, healthcare providers, government and nonprofit leaders, or anyone with a computer who wants to learn more about Nevada’s health facts and figures.

“Our new atlas makes it easier to explore, research and download county and regional data,” said Griswold.

“It means, for example, that an indicator of population health can be viewed at a glance for 17 counties at rural, frontier, urban levels as well as state totals. The atlas allows us to make intra-state comparisons between counties and regions.”

The health atlas facilitates connect-the-dots comparisons relating factors leading to health outcomes.

“For example, if you were looking at non-medical use of pain killers, like opioid overdoses, you might not think about comparing this survey data with inpatient hospital data and a psychosis diagnosis,” said Griswold.

The information could be essential to policymakers for making data-driven decisions when allocating funding support to counties.

The Instant Atlas charts and graphs paint a picture that can increase understanding of the complexities of our communities’ health care and ultimately lead to improving Nevada’s health.

Research office creates interactive data accessible to all

**ATLAS ONLINE**
Check out the Nevada Instant Atlas at medicine.nevada.edu/statewide/instant-atlas.
MEDICAL SCHOOL HAS A “BEST DIET” PROGRAM
A program offered by the Wellness and Weight Management Center and created by HMR Weight Management Services has been named a number one best fast weight-loss diet in U.S. News & World Report’s Best Diets of 2016. The programs focus on helping people lose weight quickly while teaching the healthy lifestyle skills needed for long-term weight management. The Wellness and Weight Management Center has offered the program for 12 years to those interested in losing weight.

RENO PEDIATRICS JOINS RENOWN MEDICAL GROUP
The school’s pediatrics office at 901 East Second Street, Suite 200 in Reno, previously part of the school’s clinical practice, has joined Renown Medical Group. The change was effective Sept. 1, 2015 and follows the partnership agreement between the School of Medicine and Renown Health.

NEVADA’S OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY AWARDS GRANT
The Nevada Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety awarded a grant in the amount of $190,289 to Deborah A. Kuhls, M.D., FACS, FCCM, principal investigator, and Nadia Fulkerson, MPH, former co-investigator of the school’s Center for Traffic Safety Research for the 2015-16 grant year to continue maintaining its database.

OB/GYN CLERKSHIP ESTABLISHED IN RENO
The School of Medicine’s Reno obstetrics and gynecology clerkship has arrived, offering medical students the opportunity to learn from Renown Medical Group — Women’s Health physicians including Myron Bethel, M.D.; Susan Hsu, M.D.; Scott Jacobs, M.D.; Vickie Tippett, M.D.; Maria Sheila Torres, M.D.; Arathi Veeraswamy, M.D. and Amy Condon, M.D. Charles Johnson, M.D., has been named clerkship director. This is the sixth clerkship based in Reno, completing the full complement of clerkships required for medical education.

SCHOOL, UMC AWARDED SURGICAL ROBOT GRANT
The school’s surgery and obstetrics and gynecology departments and University Medical Center in Las Vegas were awarded a grant by Intuitive Surgical for the advancement of robotic-assisted minimally invasive surgery. Surgical robotic technology allows patients to have Photo by Anne McMillin.
shorter recovery times, less scarring and improved outcomes over traditional procedures. Shawn Tsudo, M.D., and Heidi Ryan, M.D., Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery; Nadia Gomez, M.D., Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Ovunc Bardiocioglu, M.D., Division of Colorectal Surgery; and Randy St. Hill, M.D., Division of Surgical Oncology, submitted three distinct research proposals that will utilize the da Vinci Xi surgical console, the “command center” of a robotic surgical system.

PROJECT ECHO THANKS PARTNERS, STAFF
The School of Medicine showed its appreciation for its Project ECHO team as staff members and clinicians attended an awards reception in February. The event served to publicly recognize and acknowledge the community leaders, clinical partners and organizations that sustain Project ECHO. It was the first time since the program started four years ago that the entire team was able to gather. Project ECHO is a simple telehealth linkage connecting university-based faculty specialists to primary care providers in rural and underserved areas to extend specialty care to patients with chronic, costly and complex medical illnesses. The University of Nevada School of Medicine held its first clinic in 2012 and since then, has logged more than 1,500 patient care hours. It has been able to provide those patient care hours working in cooperation with partners such as Nevada Rural Hospital Partners, Renown Health, GI Consultants, Digestive Health Associates, Division of Public and Behavioral Health and Community Health Alliance.

PROJECT MEDICAL EDUCATION OFFERS INSIGHT INTO MEDICAL SCHOOL
The school hosted “the career of a medical student in a day” informational program, called Project Medical Education Nevada, for about 16 selected government and community leaders in Reno in February. Project Medical Education guided participants through a compressed syllabus of the four-year medical school experience including the admissions process, anatomy laboratory and clinical shadowing experience of the third and fourth years. It culminated in the residency match process when participants learned where they will receive their resident training.

MICROBIOLOGY STUDENT TO COMPETE AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Adam Kirosingh, an undergraduate student at the University of Nevada, Reno, received a fellowship grant from the American Society of Molecular Biology to further his microbiology research in preparation for the society’s 2016 conference.

The fellowship grant is aimed at highly competitive students who wish to pursue graduate careers in microbiology. Fellows have the opportunity to conduct full-time summer research at their home institution and present their research results at the 2016 American Society of Molecular Biology microbe meeting in Boston this June.

The grant Kirosingh received consists of a research stipend that will be distributed as he works on his project, and a travel stipend that will cover conference travel expenses for both Kirosingh and his mentor, David AuCoin, Ph.D. • Jordan Miszlay
WHY GREAT STUDENTS
LEARNING TOGETHER
Students discuss lectures between classes in the William N. Pennington Health Sciences Building lobby. Photo by Edgar Antonio Núñez.

WHY GREAT STUDENTS CHOOSE US

STORY BY ANNE MCMILLIN, APR

AND HOW WE CHOOSE THEM
As societal demand for health care professionals rises, the University of Nevada School of Medicine strives to continue to attract the best student applicants in order to produce the best doctors for the future.

How are the “best” applicants identified? The School of Medicine takes a holistic approach, going beyond numeric test scores to look at the applicant as a whole person. What are their life experiences? What health care work have they done thus far? What is their background and personal story?

The holistic approach to admissions assesses and folds in the applicant’s experience in health care settings, his or her personal attributes such as communication, motivation, persistence and adaptability in addition to undergraduate course work, grades and test scores.

One method the School of Medicine’s Office of Admissions and Student Affairs uses to get a holistic view of applicants is the multiple mini-interview, where applicants rotate through a series of timed mini-interviews or stations, during which they meet individually with an evaluator. Used for the past three admissions cycles at the School of Medicine, this process replaces the more familiar panel admissions interview.

The multiple mini-interview helps the admissions committee gather information from applicants about the important characteristics needed to work effectively with patients and members of health care teams. These include communication skills, ethics and integrity, professionalism and problem-solving skills.

Skills are assessed through a series of 10 encounters, a mix of acting scenarios and discussions, of seven minutes each to evaluate applicant competences in the desired areas.

Research has also shown that the multiple mini-interview, which eliminates bias by separating the evaluators from the admissions committee itself, is a good predictor of clinical performance and abilities in medical students. It is a more fair process for applicants, giving each applicant multiple opportunities to excel when rated by nine evaluators, rather than just two interviewers.

According to Lisa Kornze, the medical school’s multiple mini-interview coordinator, the nine evaluators are selected from School of Med-
Multiple mini-interview evaluators are not members of the admissions committee, but provide the applicant input needed for the admissions committee to make its decisions on whom to admit.

Another approach to identifying the best medical school applicants addresses diversity.

“By looking at things beyond the metrics, the admissions committee looks at the whole person in terms of their socio-economic background, the opportunities for health care experience and the path they traveled to get to us. Did they care for an aging or sick family member? Are they a first generation college graduate or learn English as a second language?” explains Pat Romney, admissions coordinator.

She went on to add that a homogenous class is not a desired outcome of the admissions process, because throughout their four years at the School of Medicine, students continuously learn from each other’s diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Throughout the admissions process, Romney is the primary point of contact for applicants, offering guidance and encouragement, while being firm in terms of deadlines and requirements.

“I’m honest in a kind way and outline their path for success, even if it is a difficult path,” she said, adding that she tells applicants: “My goal is to see you be successful; we do not accept applicants to see them fail as medical students.”

And, judging from notes she’s received from applicants, her approach is a good one.

One applicant wrote: “Thank you so much for believing in me…having someone like you cheering me on has given me motivation and hope to make the impossible possible.”

Another added: “I thoroughly enjoyed the multiple mini-interviews and believe the School of Medicine is an exceptional medical school. Thank you for making me feel welcome.”

Maureen Choman, Class of 2019, who successfully went through the multiple mini-interview last year, has high praise for the process. She had also applied to medical schools that had the traditional panel interview.

“The multiple mini-interview is better because it is more holistic and views the whole person. You interact with more people and are forced to think in different medical situations. If you do poorly, you can recover.”

Once admitted to the School of Medicine, students in all year-groups offer a variety of opinions on what makes the school the right choice for them. While the opinions are varied, they fall into three themes: small class size offers learning benefits, accessibility of faculty promotes learning and early clinical experiences put them ahead of the game.
These themes are essentially the same ones anecdotally repeated by alumni over the past 30 years.

Emma Garcia, Class of 2018, said the smallness of the school has allowed her to connect with fellow students, administration and the community-at-large.

“My class has 73 students and we have been close from day one of medical school,” she said, adding that she can’t imagine her first two years of medical school without her small study group of eight classmates. “I love them all.”

Interaction between classes is also a strength of the School of Medicine, according to Garcia.

“As first years, we interacted with the second-year students and as a second-year student, we interact with first- and fourth-year students.”

Fourth-year students often serve in a teaching role to her class.

Garcia said that the school is small enough to allow precepting experiences with patients since her second semester on campus.

“Seeing patients early on helps me understand the patient-doctor relationship.”

Accessible faculty also has been a strong selling point for Garcia.

“There are no barriers between professors and students. They have an open door policy and really help you understand the subject matter.”

Daniel Ignatiuk, Class of 2016, said the school’s relative small size plays to the advantage of students in terms of relationships with faculty.

“Faculty answer your questions in office hours and outside office hours. You are able to form a mentorship with faculty who help guide you through the process to find out what kind of doctor you want to be.”
For Ignatiuk, the opportunity for summer research projects also promotes ties with faculty and alumni: he completed a cardiovascular research project with alumnus Kim Eagle, Class of 1977.

Ignatiuk also is taking advantage of the Artist-in-Residence fourth-year elective and writing trumpet music that mimics heart sounds for a public performance during graduation week.

For Nolan Mischel, Class of 2017, the clinical exposure is an opportunity to get involved early on in the learning journey.

“I had 15 deliveries during my obstetrics clerkship in Las Vegas; you don’t get that at other schools,” he stated, adding that medical students are an integral part of the health care team and are known to their attending physicians, and patients, by name.

“I believe our quality of education is better than other schools because our competency is high going into our internship year. We have operated independently and at high levels of critical thinking due to our direct involvement in patient care and the high expectations to which we are held.”

He tells the story of being on his obstetrics clerkship for literally five minutes when a resident came out of the delivery room and asked for him. “The resident’s first thought was to find a medical student...I find that unique.”

Choman believes that School of Medicine faculty and staff are a strength of the school because they genuinely care about student success.

“You know you are supported and not just a face in the crowd. We are getting a quality education because faculty are into their research and know the material.”

As a BS-MD student, Jake Enos, Class of 2019, came to medical school by a slightly different path, but still gave no other medical school a thought.

He learned he was accepted to the University of Nevada, Reno for his undergraduate studies and the School of Medicine for his accelerated medical degree as a 17-year-old in Sparks, sitting in his high school Advanced Placement Psychology class.

“The BS-MD program made my life; it was amazing because it was all set up for us. If we did what was asked of us, we were in,” he said.

“They fast-tracked me through the undergraduate program and guaranteed me a spot in medical school; that was too good to be true,” said the exuberant 22-year-old, who added that the trust the medical school places in the maturity of its students is amazing.

“We have 24-hour access to our buildings. And the medical school builds in us trust in the process that at the end of it, we will be knowledgeable and responsible enough to make decisions that affect people’s lives.”

Amy Lilly, Class of 2017, said the small school size has given her individual attention and better learning opportunities. The strong resident matching list was an indication to her that the educational experiences were strong as well.

Lilly believes that fewer students per class has allowed for more patient contact for each of those students because there is less competition.

“The School of Medicine can take you where you want to go if you work hard,” she said.

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The School of Medicine tapped a scientist to assume the role of associate dean for admissions and student affairs in 2014, and when it did, it found an approachable executive with strong leadership skills to help guide the school through the changes of the coming years.

When Cherie Singer, Ph.D., was selected for the position, Melissa Piasecki, M.D., senior associate dean for academic affairs, said Singer’s leadership qualities and her commitment to students landed her the position following her 16 years as faculty in the pharmacology department, where she began as a post-doctorate fellow and moved into teaching, all while continuing her research in molecular mechanisms regulating phenotypic plasticity in smooth muscle cells.

“Her leadership skills transcend her background. She has a clear vision and the ability to form a team and create a shared vision within that team in order to bring processes and projects forward for the benefit of students,” Piasecki said, adding that her gift for using quantitative data has been a boon to the admissions process.

“Through her adeptness with data, she has been able to identify ways the multiple mini-interview process will benefit our school and its students.”

As associate dean of admissions and student affairs, Singer is responsible for all the admissions policies and programs to include directing the executive committee for admissions, mentoring and advising students and dealing with student concerns.

Singer credits her nomination for the position to her understanding and open relationship with the students, her ability to learn quickly and her outspoken nature.

“I think the reason I was chosen to be associate dean is because I am very approachable to the students, I am good at communicating with them. I also think that I am very transparent in my communications. I want to be able to respond to their needs, but also be able to be very clear about what it is expected of them,” Singer said.

Singer also credits much of her success over the years to teamwork and collaboration.

“I really believe in teamwork. It is very important for me to work with the other associate deans and all of my staff to make things happen. I am also very outspoken. I am not afraid to voice my opinion about things in an attempt to improve them and to make sure that we have the best quality students possible.”

Singer gives so much of her time to performing various roles at the School of Medicine because of her commitment to its students and their futures.

“I really enjoy the students; that’s why I’m an educator, to help train students. I really enjoy that journey and being part of the process of helping students give back to the community in their own way,” Singer said.
The rural training experience, a requirement for all University of Nevada School of Medicine students, has its roots in the school's original charter to provide primary care physicians for rural Nevada.

For most of its nearly 50 years, Nevada’s only statewide public medical school has placed students, and more recently residents, in rural rotations, with the goal of providing health care for Nevada’s underserved rural communities and exceptional growth opportunities for learners.

Jamie Anderson, director of rural medical education at the medical school, is quick to give credit for the success of rural rotations where it is due.

“It is our dedicated preceptors, some who have taken in students for 20 or 30 years, that are the backbone of the success of this program. We are very lucky to have our rural preceptors.”

She said the medical school’s rural preceptors are very open to accepting direction on skills that students need to learn during their rotations. She added that based on what she’s heard at national meetings on this topic, other medical schools often struggle with this aspect of their relationship with preceptors.

“Our preceptors work with their students until they ‘get it,’” she said.

Anderson added that the immersion experience students and residents undergo in rural Nevada, often without the luxury of state-of-the-art equipment or medical specialists, challenges their decision-making skills and allows them to see pathologies and patient conditions they may not otherwise see.

Corrine Martin, education coordinator based on the medical school’s Elko campus, added that under the watchful eyes of preceptors, learners get to “see it all” and have to make the decision about whether to treat a particular patient in the rural setting or transfer them to an urban hospital, often hours away by ambulance or air transport.

While the School of Medicine has historically placed students in rural communities, it has really been in the last five to seven years that the opportunities for rural learning have jumped. Students in all four years of medical school now can opt for a rural experience as can residents in family medicine and internal medicine.

Aaron Dieringer, M.D. ’15 and current family medicine resident in Reno, spent the summer between his first and second year of medical school in a rural community, completed his pediatrics and internal medicine clerkships of third year in Elko and did his fourth-year rural rotation in Ely.

Dieringer said the Ely hospital staff, from physicians to housekeepers, were glad to have students in their midst. He said the doctors took care of him, and, as a student, he moved quickly between the physicians to learn as much as he could; a feat that was easily accomplished in the small hospital.
RURAL LEARNING

Opposite page, a view of the Ruby Mountains in Elko County. This page, internist David Hogle, M.D., left, has guided students like Spencer VanDyck, right, through their rural rotations since the early 2000s. Photos by Keith Clark.
“I learned more in four weeks in Ely than I did in my first two years of medical school,” he said. Working with Norman Christensen, M.D., he saw urology cases in the operating room, cast broken limbs in the emergency room and delivered babies.

“Without specialists available, the primary care physician does it all. Anything that comes through the door.”

Over in Elko, preceptor Maureen Durkin, M.D., often called Dieringer in to see a variety of cases and was very dedicated to teaching through that process. As a third-year student, he was addressed as “doctor” by both physicians and patients.

Dieringer said without specialists at hand, he was forced to do his own research and learn on his own.

“I learned to talk to patients and hone my skills at researching and planning a course of treatment. My medical skills advanced quicker.”

Chris Kurnik, Class of 2017, who recently completed his pediatrics and internal medicine clerkships in Elko, said one of the most surprising aspects of his rural rotation was that he rarely had angry patients due to office delays.

“They were grateful to get in to see a doctor, even if it was late.”

Being in a smaller hospital had its advantages for Kurnik in that it was easier to track processes and people.

“I was more aware of what was happening and was able to handle patients from beginning to end. Care was not split up between hospital functions.”

Kurnik found his preceptors eager to teach and wanting to help him learn as much as he could during his time with them.

“I was very involved with the patients and had to take responsibility for them with only one attending with me.”

“I learned my rural experience because I’m thinking of primary care and I got more chances for continuity of care. I got to know my patients, their history and backgrounds. It made medicine more personal because it is someone’s story.”

Hong found the rural hospital setting less about the procedure and technology and more about the fundamentals of medicine. Because there are fewer people in the rural hospital, Hong found herself more involved with the process and health care team, even as a student.

Overall, Hong said her rural learning experiences was terrific, because she got to learn more, work with doctors and simulate putting in orders.

“Our preceptors are very supportive of our learning. They want to teach us and have us learn. They gave us the best learning experience.”

Caroline Perez, Class of 2016, was impressed by the genuine bond she witnessed between doctor and patient during her rural rotation in Minden with Sue Sanchez, M.D.

“Most of the patients I saw had been seeing the same physician for years and coming to the doctor was like seeing an old friend. In many cases, a hug was part of the physical exam! This type of relationship is really important to witness, whether going into a field that provides longitudinal care or not. It’s a great perspective to see patients in a more personal context,” she explained.

Working in a small community in a geriatric-based practice, Perez was surprised to learn that not all patients want to change, even when it is for the better.

“Some may choose to decline treatment or continue a treatment that is no longer advisable simply because they believe it is best. In these cases,
I really learned the importance of laying out the information of risks and benefits to the patient and then recognizing that at some point you have to let go, let the patient decide and understand that decision.”

For their part, rural preceptors who take in students and residents also have great things to say about the experience.

David Hogle, M.D., an internist in Elko, has taken School of Medicine students for more than 15 years and finds their “a-ha” moments some of the most rewarding, because they learn through experiencing real medical problems.

There are personal benefits to him, as well.

“It is stimulating to have students around because I’m forced to think about answering questions I haven’t thought about in a while and I have to justify my responses,” he said.

“I’ve known my patients for years and have a feel for how they present. I know their personalities and I try to prepare my students as needed based on that.”

Hogle has students see the patient first, without him, and then come out and consult with him for a treatment plan.

“Then together, we present the treatment plan to the patient,” he said.

Using this process, Hogle sees students grow and mature over just a few weeks.

“They become remarkably better at recognizing symptoms and get acclimated to the toolbox of skills they have.”

Leonard Parkinson, M.D., a family medicine physician in Winnemucca, said practicing in a rural setting is “like going back to the horse, buggy and black doctor’s bag.”

He sees teaching students in a rural community as an opportunity to have them learn by experience.

“You can’t tell it to them; they have to feel and see it to get their head around it and learn by doing,” he said.

He added that practicing medicine is a calling, not a job, and he tries to impart that to his students.

“It’s easy to get to know patients because they are your friends and neighbors. It’s a different level of involvement than in urban areas.”

As for his patients, Parkinson said most are excited to have a part in the education of up-and-coming physicians.

“Students are very well received by my patients…and they love the extra time and attention they get from students.”

Richard Davis, M.D., an orthopaedic surgeon, has a busy practice based out of Banner Churchill Community Hospital in Fallon. As a hospital employee, he can offer students many clinical opportunities due to his patient volume.

“We recognize and do what we can here and I try to teach students what we can and can’t do,” Davis explained. What he does do includes giving injections, surgery and physical therapy. His practice offers numerous opportunities to see pathology and, he believes, offers a rich learning experience for students.

After taking in School of Medicine students for four years, Davis has high praise for his charges.

“University of Nevada, Reno students are of high quality; they are smart, engaged and interested. They have excellent minds and have been well trained,” he said.

He said he is glad to have the chance to pass on what he knows to the next generation.

“That is the ethos of medicine.”

• ANNE MCMILLIN, APR
Taking another step toward improving the health and health care of Nevadans, the School of Medicine and Renown Health announced the appointment of J. Ivan Lopez, M.D., FAAN to a new joint leadership role of director of the Institute for Neurosciences at Renown Health and the chair of the school’s new neurology department.

Previously, Lopez was the director of the Renown Stroke Center and professor of neurology and internal medicine at the School of Medicine. He has a long series of academic accomplishments including director of headache medicine fellowship, director of the vascular neurology training program and director of neurology clerkship at University of Alabama at Birmingham. He has an active clinical research program in studies related to acute stroke and prevention of secondary strokes.

“I am really excited by the affiliation between Renown Health and the School of Medicine,” said Lopez.

“This partnership will only bring benefits to both institutions and to our community. The best hospitals are always teaching hospitals, and the community will benefit from the state-of-the-art medicine practiced at Renown.”

Lopez’s appointment to a dual leadership role highlights the successful academic and clinical partnership between Renown Health and the School of Medicine.

With the formation of a new academic department comes new opportunities for medical student and resident education as well as clinical research and new clinical care programs. This builds on the existing training and research activities at Renown Health and lays a foundation for a new third-year medical student clinical rotation in neurology.

David AuCoin, Ph.D., associate professor, has been appointed as the chair of the microbiology and immunology department, following the untimely death of Greg Pari, Ph.D., last summer.

AuCoin has nearly 16 years of experience in the study of viral and bacterial immunology and pathogenesis.

Currently, his research focuses on developing diagnostics and therapeutics for microbial infections. His laboratory has developed novel strategies to identify shed/secreted antigens or “biomarkers” in patients that may be targets for diagnosis. Following discovery of a biomarker, his laboratory generates monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) targeting these biomarkers. The mAbs are then used to construct point-of-care diagnostic assays that are useful in resource-poor settings.

His lab is funded through the NIH, Department of Homeland Security and multiple Department of Defense agencies. Projects include developing diagnostics for melioidosis, tularensis, aspergillosis, leptospi-
John J. Fildes, M.D., FACS, has been named chair of the School of Medicine’s surgery department, following the passing of William A. Zamboni, M.D.’84, in 2015.

A leader in the field of trauma surgery, Fildes has been with the department for 20 years and has served as vice chair for the last 14 years. He also serves as chief of the acute care surgery division.

Upon accepting the new position this winter, Fildes said his long-term plan is to complete a community needs assessment for surgery to identify and fill the gaps that currently exist in southern Nevada to better understand the underserved community.

“I want to create new training programs and surgical product lines that bring these services to southern Nevada, identify new responses to gaps in surgical care and then bring those surgical services to Las Vegas, so that this city is on par with other cities of similar population,” he said.

Fildes established the first American Association for the Surgery of Trauma approved fellowship in acute care surgery in the U.S. at the school’s Las Vegas campus in 2008 and continues to function as its program director. He is also the medical director and chair of the trauma and burns department at University Medical Center, where he also served as vice chief of staff for 1,200 physicians.

He has practiced in Las Vegas since 1996, receiving the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce’s Achievement Award in 1998. He was named as Nevada’s Distinguished Physician in 2006, received a certificate of appreciation from the White House Medical Unit in 1998 and named a University of Nevada, Reno Foundation Professor in 2012.

Also active on the national scene, Fildes has been a fellow of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) since 1990 where he has made significant contributions to the creation of the National Trauma Data Bank® and the Trauma Quality Improvement Project®. He was appointed national chair of the ACS Committee on Trauma from 2006 to 2010 and was promoted to medical director of trauma programs in the Division of Research and Optimal Patient Care at the ACS from 2010 to 2014.
SCHOOL HIRES DIRECTOR FOR PROPOSED PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

LAUF TO GUIDE NEW TRAINING PROGRAM NEXT YEAR
As the northern Nevada community prepares for significant population growth with the addition of companies like Tesla, Jet.com and Switch, the University of Nevada School of Medicine and Renown Health are continuously working together to combat the shortage of health care providers in our region.

The latest effort is proposed for 2017 with the anticipated start of a new Master of Physician Assistant program. Renown Health will be an integral partner in this new and exciting endeavor – committing $500,000 to help kick-start the program as well as providing the expertise of Renown providers and training sites for future Physician Assistants.

Physician assistants, also known as PAs, work on medical teams under the supervision of physicians and surgeons. They are trained to examine, diagnose and treat patients in primary care, family medicine and specialty practices. Everyday responsibilities include patient appointments, performing physical exams, prescribing medication and ordering tests, assisting with surgeries and counseling patients on treatment plans. This new program is key to the School of Medicine and Renown's joint focus on training tomorrow's health providers and expanding the region's workforce. Before this collaboration, the closest PA program was located in Sacramento, Calif. Statistics show medical professionals tend to stay and practice within the communities where they train, which means this collaborative program will help increase the overall number of providers in our region.

The School of Medicine already has hired Brian Lauf, PA-C, as the founding director of the proposed Physician Assistant Program. Lauf comes to the School of Medicine most recently from Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center, where he served as a PA for the past eight years. He has been practicing in northern Nevada since 1997.

Lauf said he is pleased that, once finalized, the PA program will contribute to the mission of the School of Medicine and its community partners to expand access to health care for all Nevadans.

“The program will focus on training PAs wishing to return to their underserved or rural communities to deliver high quality team-based health care. This new program is key to the School of Medicine and Renown's joint focus on training tomorrow's health providers and expanding the region's workforce. Before this collaboration, the closest PA program was located in Sacramento, Calif. Statistics show medical professionals tend to stay and practice within the communities where they train, which means this collaborative program will help increase the overall number of providers in our region.

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“The program will focus on training PAs wishing to return to their underserved or rural communities to deliver high quality team-based health care. Establishing a PA program in Reno is something I have advocated for since the mid-1990s; for this reason, being selected to lead this initiative is a tremendous honor,” Lauf said.

Lauf holds a Master of Physician Assistant studies in family medicine from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and a Bachelor of Science in Physician Assistant studies from Oregon Health Sciences University. He also has emergency medical technician training from the U.S. Air Force.

Being developed to become a signature academic program of the School of Medicine, the new PA program will offer a quality education experience that will boost students' prospects for career opportunities upon graduation.

Since most physician assistants will have extensive health care hours prior to admission, and without having to complete a residency program after their education, they can immediately begin working in the health care industry.

“Hiring Brian Lauf as the founding program director for PA studies is the biggest step yet in bringing the program to life. Brian is the complete package with experience in clinical practice in Reno and rural Nevada and administrative and leadership skills. We could not be more excited to have Brian lead the team that will create an exemplary program at the School of Medicine,” said Evan Klass, M.D., associate dean of the Office of Statewide Initiatives, under which the PA program resides at the medical school.

At present time, the School of Medicine is actively seeking faculty and staff members for the PA Program and developing a program curriculum to be submitted to the Board of Regents, the University of Nevada, Reno and the national Physician Assistant accreditation organization for approval later this year.

Upon approval of the program, the first PA class is anticipated to matriculate in June 2017 and graduate two years later, as the School of Medicine celebrates its 50th anniversary of serving Nevadans.

The PA master’s degree program at the School of Medicine is a full-time, 27-month academic professional degree program that includes academic courses, clinical skills courses and supervised clinical practice. The program will take place at the University of Nevada, Reno Redfield campus in south Reno.

Upon successful completion of this program (anticipated graduation of the first class in fall of 2019), 24 new graduates will be prepared to enter the health care workforce directly and make an immediate impact on access to health care for Nevadans.

• ANNE MCMILLIN, APR
The School of Medicine’s family medicine departments have been successful in retaining former students and residents to become faculty members over the past few years. These returning physicians cite a variety of reasons for their decision.

For Kate Martin, M.D.’06, family medicine resident ’09, it was all about staying home in Las Vegas.

“I remember the day I opened my acceptance letter from the University of Nevada School of Medicine. My dreams to attend medical school had become a reality. I would get to become a doctor and I would be able to remain in the state where I grew up,” she said.

With the support of her family and the faculty and staff at the medical school, she was able to realize that dream.

“After graduation, I chose to remain at the School of Medicine for my residency and set a new goal: to become a faculty member. I would say that I returned, but, in reality, I never really left. This is my community and the opportunity to teach and see patients here, alongside the role models who helped me get here, is an honor and a privilege,” she explained.

In becoming faculty, Martin accepted her associated teaching roles with gusto. After serving as the family medicine clerkship director for several years, she is currently the program director for the family medicine residency in Las Vegas; where, not long ago, she was a resident herself. Having come full circle, she is home.

Leslie Greenberg, M.D.’95 and Mark Stovak, M.D.’95, who met and married while attending medical school in Nevada, returned to their alma mater to join its faculty in 2015.

Wanting to further train in the Midwest following graduation from the School of Medicine, they matched into family medicine residency programs in Kansas before he went on to a sports medicine fellowship in Indiana.

Failing to find a need for sports medicine physicians on the west coast in the early 2000s after completing his fellowship, Stovak and Greenberg settled in Kansas and remained there for 15 years. She was in private family medicine practice with an emphasis in obstetrics, and he was the family medicine residency director at the University of Kansas and head team physician at Wichita State University.

Yet Reno always beckoned. Stovak had stayed in touch with Carol Scott, M.D.’91, who was the School of Medicine’s former sports medicine fellowship director, and when both family medicine and sports medicine faculty openings became available at their alma mater, Greenberg and Stovak jumped at the opportunity to return west.

“I love to teach, I love my medical school and I love my hometown,” said Greenberg, who attends residents within the training program. “I want to be a mentor for young physicians who are wondering if they can be a spouse, a parent and a doctor and show them how they can find their love within medicine.”

Greenberg said one of the major advantages that the School of Medicine offers is that the family medicine department sits in the heart of the medical school’s Reno campus, which takes advantage of the youthful energy of students and residents and allows for easy access to those at various stages of the learning process.

For his part, Stovak, who played baseball for the University of Nevada, Reno as an undergraduate, is thrilled to be back in a university athletic setting and seeing sports medicine patients of all abilities and levels, from Division One athletes to weekend warriors.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to build up the sports medicine practice in Reno and to take care of university athletes as well as community athletes,” he said. “And it is a fun atmosphere here on campus, what with teams practicing and the marching band playing.”

Stovak added that he is happy to be back
teaching with faculty he had learned from as a medical student.

“It is a good group to work with and a strong department,” he said of the family medicine department.

He enjoys interacting with the many medical students that rotate through the family medicine department, while giving them the chance to work with athletes.

“The training rooms are like the athletes’ clinic,” he said. “And more medical students rotate through the department and the residency program here (than Kansas), which provides more opportunities to teach.”

And the family connections in Reno are strong for Stovak.

“Our kids go to Reno High where Leslie and I attended high school. The athletic director at Reno High and I were varsity baseball coaches there in the early 1990s.”

Kacey Durant, M.D.’11, family medicine residency ’14, who was born and raised in Reno, stayed in touch with Dan Spogen, M.D., family medicine chair in Reno, with the intention of returning home after spreading her wings and completing an obstetrics fellowship in Texas.

“I wanted to practice both family medicine and obstetrics in outpatient and inpatient settings, and the School of Medicine offered that opportunity,” she said.

“I liked the idea of being in a teaching environment and I wanted to come home.”

Durant sees prenatal patients in the family medicine clinic and precepts third- and fourth-year medical students at Renown Health and Saint Mary’s Regional Medical Center,

“Our medical students are eager and enthusiastic to learn. They respond well to teaching and receiving instruction and are motivated, which helps them learn,” she said.

Like Stovak, she was eager to return and work alongside faculty who had taught her just a few years prior.

Jaren Blake, M.D., family medicine residency ’06, selected the School of Medicine’s Reno campus for his residency training for the program’s design and the rigorous intern year that gave him the chance to see many patients.

Following residency, he went to rural Idaho to practice for a few years, but wanted to return to Reno and the School of Medicine to expand his academic roles. He was able to do just that by assuming the role of family medicine residency program director.

“My family and I liked our time in Reno during residency, so we decided to return to the good weather, the outdoor lifestyle and the Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off.”

“The atmosphere in the Reno family medicine residency program is very collegial. Faculty are here to educate and teach and I like that culture. Our leadership is strong. I am happy to now direct the program that initially brought me to Reno back in 2003.”

Other School of Medicine family medicine alumni who are now faculty: Wade Gaal, M.D.’08, Family Medicine Las Vegas Residency ’11; Lacey Fettic, M.D.’09 Family Medicine Reno Residency ’12; Gary Johnson, M.D.’82, Family Medicine Reno Residency ’85; Marcia Lu, M.D., Family Medicine Reno Residency ’95; Catherine McCarthy, M.D., Family Medicine Reno Residency ’93; Lianne Ong, M.D., Family Medicine Las Vegas Residency ’08; Brian Passalacqua, M.D., Family Medicine Reno Residency ’93; Richard Williams, M.D., Family Medicine Reno Residency ’02; Stephanie Wright, M.D.’09, Family Medicine Reno Residency ’12; and Elena Zenkin, M.D., Obstetrics/Gynecology Fellowship ’14.

• ANNE MCMILLIN, APR
The School of Medicine plans to use a portion of grant money from a settlement brokered by the State of Nevada Attorney General’s Office to develop a Clinical Health Assessment and Promotion Program to address women’s health issues. This new initiative focuses on preventative health care in the subpopulation of women with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Las Vegas.

The State of Nevada obtained the settlement with pharmaceutical companies Wyeth, Pfizer and Pharmacia & Upjohn relating to claims regarding postmenopausal hormone therapy products.

Under the direction of Elissa Palmer, M.D., family medicine chair in Las Vegas, the School of Medicine and Opportunity Village formed a partnership to improve the health and well-being of the people helped by the not-for-profit organization that annually serves more than 3,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities through vocational training, community job placement and life skill enrichment in southern Nevada.

Palmer explained that population studies of women with disabilities have demonstrated that they do not receive the same level of preventative health care as their peers.

“For women with intellectual disabilities, the new grant-supported Clinical Health Assessment and Promotion Program will determine appropriate evidence-based, gender-specific preventative health care recommendations and develop and distribute training curricula for care providers,” she explained.

While many of the clients at Opportunity Village are seen by School of Medicine doctors, it became apparent that clients were not receiving proper preventative care prior to seeing their physician.

“One of the things that is very difficult with clients who have intellectual disabilities is that they cannot always communicate their health care needs,” Palmer explained.

“Usually you can tell when an individual is ill, but what happens is that these clients have various complicated health problems, so when they see a physician, the physician is always dealing with the complicated problem and the preventative health care doesn’t always get addressed,” she said.

Palmer plans to alleviate this problem by focusing on two main goals. The first is to enhance the education of care providers on evidence-based preventative health care recommendations for women with intellectual disabilities and then to expand access to these services for women with intellectual or developmental disabilities at Opportunity Village.

Specifically, for women who are clients at Opportunity Village campuses in southern Nevada (801 clients between the ages of 18 and 70 years, 49 percent of whom are women), the program will create a process to identify the women in need of services; educate these women, their families and care providers on the recommendations; collaborate with the women’s primary care provider through an interdisciplinary team to enhance care delivery; and deliver on-site screenings to increase access.

Connecting with community providers through the project is instrumental. The School of Medicine’s Department of Family and Community Medicine will collaborate with students, residents, fellows and faculty internally through an organized plan of curricular delivery and care delivery elective opportunities. For students, scholarly research opportunities will be available between the first and second years of undergraduate medical education.

Working in conjunction with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Department of Athletics, William Rosenberg, M.D., the jointly-appointed UNLV head team physician and School of Medicine sports medicine fellowship director will work to lend expertise to the curriculum pertaining to exercise in this special population.

Furthermore, Palmer plans to use this program not only to improve preventative care in Nevada, but also nationwide.

“We are trying to make sure that we are educating medical students and physicians, we are developing curricula that can be used not just at Opportunity Village, but elsewhere, to enhance the care given to patients with developmental disabilities. We are working on the national level so that this curricula could be spread within the family medicine community,” she said.

Currently, Palmer and her team are developing and distributing the guidelines for this program nationally. The development of guidelines allows physicians from different regions to implement the program in a way that would be effective for their respective communities.

• JORDAN MISZLAY
Rather than traveling to Reno or Salt Lake City, cancer patients in rural northeastern Nevada now can receive treatment in Elko, thanks to an enterprising School of Medicine alumnus. Doug Debenham, M.D.’94, opened Nevada’s first rural cancer center, the Northeastern Nevada Radiation Oncology Center, on the campus of Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital.

While the center’s primary service is radiation treatment for malignancies, Debenham coordinates other cancer treatments, often with Reno oncologists, for chemotherapy. He also coordinates testing and treatment with specialty surgeons at Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City, which is the largest cancer center near Elko. The Northeastern Nevada Radiation Oncology Center serves 10 to 12 patients a day under treatment.

“We have a nice trend of services going up since we opened, so we are able to help more people and keep them from traveling,” he said.

His patients live across a large portion of northeastern Nevada. Debenham is proud that his center has been able to help people from the whole region. Debenham was motivated to open the center in part because of his love for northern Nevada. He grew up in Alaska and had not lived in Reno before attending the School of Medicine. He had “a fantastic experience” at the school and enjoyed living in Reno, where his wife’s mother, brother and sister also lived. Although he went to Cleveland for his residency, he prefers smaller communities. He had been thinking about opening the cancer center for several years and choosing Elko meant a return to Nevada and a return to family.

“It’s a beautiful rural area, which we really enjoy,” said Debenham. Now that he lives in Elko, more family has migrated there, including a younger brother.

In his 20 years of practice, Debenham always has specialized in general radiation oncology. He treats brain, gynecologic, prostate, lung and bowel cancers, but refers pediatric radiation treatments to children’s cancer centers elsewhere in the U.S. Before the center opened, patients traveled to Salt Lake City, Reno or Twin Falls, Idaho for treatment. Debenham heard stories of patients living in a hotel for six weeks during radiation treatment. Since the center opened, he has heard from many people who are grateful to have his center, so they can stay at home while undergoing treatment. Debenham described the challenges that he faced in opening the cancer center.

“There was no cancer ecosystem here,” he explained.

None of the ancillary service providers who help cancer patients were in the local area, so he went to a lot of effort to coordinate those services. He found the work rewarding as he helped resolve problems that patients faced and arranged the services that they need.

The whole exercise was an anxiety-provoking experience, according to Debenham.

“You want to offer those services, but you have to be careful about viability.”

Opening a practice or facility in a location not previously served requires due diligence regarding the number of patients for whom a physician can provide care and the services that can be offered. To open the center, Debenham partnered with RBSE, a company in Nashville whose mission is partnering with physicians to bring cancer services to rural areas. His is the third center with which they have partnered. The other two are in Alaska.

Debenham remembered that while the cancer center was being built, the community held an event called “Written in Stone,” in which residents wrote messages of hope and inspiration on the center’s inside walls where the radiation machine would be installed. They took pictures for a book and held a candlelight vigil for those lost to cancer.

“It has been gratifying to see the support from the community. It has been a wonderful thing,” said Debenham.

Maintaining relationships with alumni has led to a rewarding development: in January 2016, Debenham held a tumor board cancer conference. Working with the school’s Frontier Area Health Education Center, they were able to obtain approval for this conference to give continuing medical education credits.

• DEAN SCHERMERHORN

RURAL CANCER CARE
Northeastern Nevada Radiation Oncology Center staff in Elko offer services to cancer patients. From left are Brian Hulse, Lacy Hermann, Doug Debenham, M.D., and Aimee Hulse. Photo by Keith Clark.

ALUMNUS OPENS ELKO CANCER CENTER
THANK YOU, LIFETIME MEMBERS

As another medical school class matriculates, I find myself reminiscing about my years at the School of Medicine and how they helped to shape and form me into the physician I am now.

I am proud to be able to say that I graduated from the University of Nevada School of Medicine. I know that moving forward as our state’s medical school system evolves, our school will still support and promote physicians who will become passionate caregivers and strong leaders of many communities.

Some of these leaders have also done their part in remembering where their journey started in the form of contributing back to our school as Lifetime Alumni members. I want to acknowledge all our alumni, but especially those who have been able and willing to continue to be a part of our medical school family.

As I write to you today, we are at 98 lifetime members. I understand the challenge of juggling our careers and personal lives, which often impedes us giving back in the form of time, but I know that each one of us can make a difference in supporting our future physicians and association by becoming not only dues paying members, but becoming lifetime members. I encourage you to get that number of lifetime members up to 100 and even more!

Once again, thank you to all of you who stay connected to the School of Medicine and a very special thank you and recognition to our lifetime members.

To inquire about lifetime membership, email Rebecca Rumbaugh at: rrumbaugh@unr.edu.

HELEN GRAY, M.D.’08
President, University of Nevada School of Medicine Alumni Association

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- Justin J. Sonderegger, ’09
- Joshua L. Martinelli, ’10
- Edward W. Petrik, ’11

*Deceased
JOSEPH HOLLEN, M.D. ’76, right, was honored by the Washoe County Medical Society with the Presidential Service Award at the association’s presidential inaugural ball dinner and awards ceremonies held on Jan. 23. Hollen practiced emergency medicine in northern Nevada for 23 years and is a lifetime fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

During his medical career, he was the president of Northern Nevada Emergency Physicians at Renown Health. He has been dispensing financial advice in lieu of medical care for the past 12 years as president and founder of Open Window Financial Solutions and is a board member of the University of Nevada School of Medicine Alumni Association.

GERALD MACCIOLI, M.D. ’84, has joined Sheridan Healthcare, based in Florida, as chief quality officer, where he will lead the mission to improve patient outcomes through the ongoing development and improvement of quality management program across all clinical specialties and divisions.

SUZANNE NORRIS, MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY, ’85, who serves in Northern Nevada Medical Center’s clinical laboratory, received the 2015 Regional Member Award for the American Society for Clinical Pathology’s southwest region. Norris was recognized for promoting and enhancing the field of medical technology and for professional service, leadership and support of ASCP activities.

CLINTON PURVANCE, M.D. ’96, assumes a new role as president and chief executive officer of Barton Health after eight years as chief medical officer.

CECILIA STUOPIS, M.D. ’96, vice president and executive medical director for accountable care at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock health system in New Hampshire, joined MIT as director of MIT Medical. She became vice president in 2015, adding to her role as the health system’s executive medical director for accountable care since 2012.

TRAVIS KIECKBUSCH, M.D. ’98, founder and owner of Great Basin Orthopaedics, presented to physicians, athletic trainers and allied health personnel who take care of Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association athletes at the “Caring for the Injured Rodeo Athlete” conference in Las Vegas. Kieckbusch is chief of orthopaedics for Northern Nevada Medical Center.

ALISON NETSKI, M.D. ’01, chair, Department of Psychiatry, University of Nevada School of Medicine Las Vegas campus, completed the 2015 Chairs and Academic Administrators Management Program (CAAMP). CAAMP is a top-notch leadership and management course designed specifically for department chairs and academic administrators within colleges and schools of the health professions.

MARIA ANDERSON, M.D. ’08, joined Saint Mary’s Women’s Health Center as an obstetrician and gynecologist. She was previously assistant clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California, Davis School of Medicine.

CARA STREIT, M.D. ’08, joined Saint Mary’s Women’s Health Center as an obstetrician and gynecologist. Previously, Streit was an obstetrician and gynecologist at Providence Medical Group, Hood River Women’s Clinic in Hood River, Ore. She is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology, and her clinical interests include minimally invasive surgery, family planning and low-risk obstetrics.

KYLE YAMAMOTO, M.D. ’09, opened his own practice, Sierra Nevada Cosmetic and Laser Surgery in Reno. He completed his residency in head and neck surgery at the State University of New York-Buffalo, followed by a fellowship at Emory University in Atlanta, subspecializing in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery.

JYOTI DESAI, M.D. ’11, joined the obstetrics and gynecology department as assistant professor at the School of Medicine. She was previously a resident in the department’s training program.

JENNY CAMACHO, M.D. ’12, is chief resident at the University of New Mexico Department of Pediatrics, where she will complete residency training this summer.

LAUREN MAXHAM, M.D., INTERNAL MEDICINE RESIDENCY ’14, joined Southwest Medical’s Montecito Health Center in Las Vegas.

RAHEEL ISLAM, M.D., INTERNAL MEDICINE RESIDENCY ’15, was named assistant professor of internal medicine in Reno.

TY JONES, M.D., SPORTS MEDICINE FELLOW ’15, joined Proliance Orthopedic Associates in Renton, Wash.
HONOR ROLL

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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» Brian A. Trimble, ’84
» Dante F. Vacca, ’83
» Michael C. Van Tuyl, ’88
» Kamin B. Vanguilder, ’09
» James A. Moren, ’73
» Timothy E. McHugh, ’88
» Logan A. McLean, ’05
» John W. Millis, ’73
» Kevin M. Miramond, ’93
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CORPORATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

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» Andor Technology, Ltd.
» Business Link, LLC
» Estate of Edwin L. and Kathryn L. Cantlon
» Carson Tahoe Health System
» Children’s Cabinet, Inc.
» Children’s Lung Specialists, Ltd.
» Clark County Medical Society Alliance
» Clark County Medical Society
» Davis General Surgery, LLC
» Division of Gastroenterology, Samsung Medical Center Seoul
» Donatic
» The Emerson Family Trust
» EMP Management Group, Ltd.
» Estate of Evelyn English
» Farmers and Merchants Trust Co.
» Sons of Italy Giuseppe Verdi Lodge No. 1441
» Integral Life Systems, Inc.
» Kufuor Kingo Pediatrics
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» Nevada Health Care System
» Nutrition Association No. 1441
» Samsung Medical Center Seoul
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» Union Pacific Foundation

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» Mary Jane Ajlouny-Johnson
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» Anonymous 2015
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» Joshua A. Bardin
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» Lisa Dinwiddie
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» Alaa A. Eldemerdash
» Amy L. Ellwood
» Romel A. Empedrad
» Cynthia Ewer

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» Community Foundation of Western Nevada
» The JAF Family Foundation
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To support the medical school, call (775) 784-7341.
Community physician gives back to medical school

Community faculty members are inspired to give back to the School of Medicine for a variety of reasons. Paying it forward. Love of teaching. Self-improvement.

Andrew Pasternak, M.D., a family medicine physician in Reno, points to these reasons and others as fueling his passion for being involved with the School of Medicine for nearly 20 years.

Pasternak, who moved to Reno in 1998, stated that School of Medicine alumna and faculty member Jennifer M. Hagen M.D.’93, sparked his interest in working with the medical school with a tour of the campus and the Reno area. After that, Pasternak and his wife knew this was where he wanted to launch his career.

He began teaching medical students right away, citing his passion for paying it forward as his main motivator.

“I had a lot of community faculty members that provided outstanding educational opportunities for me, which made me feel like I should give back and do the same,” he said.

Initially working for Renown Health, Pasternak decided to open his own practice, The Silver State Center for Family Medicine, 11 years ago.

Each semester, Pasternak allows one first- or second-year medical student to come to his office on a weekly basis and learn through gathering information from patients, conducting exams and going over the patient’s history and results with him.

“Working with Dr. Pasternak was a really engaging experience,” said Selasi Nakhaima, Class of 2018, who precepted with Pasternak. “He let me see a lot of patients and gave me plenty of useful feedback. Working with Dr. Pasternak was the most rewarding precepting experience that I’ve had.”

Nakhaima also went on to elaborate on Pasternak’s effective style of teaching.

“He would let me see the patient on my own first, and then let me present the patient’s case to the best of my ability. Then he would give me his feedback. This style of teaching was very helpful because it was in a relaxed environment that allowed me to learn,” said Nakhaima.

Pasternak has mentored about 36 students in this fashion and plans on helping more.

In addition to precepting, Pasternak also lectures at these meetings and brings in guest speakers for additional learning opportunities.

Pasternak chooses to be involved with the School of Medicine to contribute to the educational advancement of medical students as well as improving his own skills.

“I like being involved with the School of Medicine because it makes me a better physician. I really enjoy private practice, but I also like having the ability to do research and expand my knowledge of medicine,” he said.

“Having the ability to work with the School of Medicine is really fun, and I love to teach. The students are high quality, and they have interesting questions that force me to challenge myself.”

• JORDAN MISZLAY
Good things are happening in the Reno psychiatry residency program that can be attributed to teamwork between faculty and residents working together to improve the program for the betterment of mental health care in northern Nevada.

That’s according to David Carlson, M.D., the new residency program director, who arrived in Reno in the fall of 2014, and, after a time of observing the program, is initiating changes for improvement.

“We’ve redone the didactic curriculum from an organization-al standpoint across all four years of the program,” he said. The reorganization brings about several new programs and clinics with learning opportunities for residents.

One of the didactic changes is an expanded psychotherapy program for first through third-year residents that has been reorganized and standardized in concert with faculty and resident input. The program has new curriculum for first-year residents, more advanced instruction in years two and three and allows fourth-year psychiatry residents to practice the art of teaching psychotherapy to their colleagues in years one through three.

“This enhanced curriculum takes advantage of our excellent faculty and their ability to teach psychotherapy,” Carlson said.

A half-day psychotherapy clinic now is available, which allows new opportunities for third-year residents to be observed and receive feedback on their patient encounters. This is accomplished by having faculty psychologists observing residents’ interaction with patients and then providing immediate feedback through a group debriefing session. Residents continue to receive individual weekly supervision for psychotherapy encounters in their other outpatient clinics.

Finally, a new department residents’ clinic for third-year residents permits attending faculty, including Carlson, to review each patient with the resident and again, provide constructive feedback to the resident while the patient is still in clinic.

Carlson hopes the half-day clinic will grow psychiatry and community-based care.

Another strategy of Carlson’s is to grow the psychiatry residency program from four residents annually across all four years of the program to six per year.

“This will help us meet the needs of Nevadans and is part of the graduate medical education strategic planning process for the medical school,” he said.

Brian Kirkpatrick, M.D., psychiatry department chair in Reno, said Carlson also has been using a different approach to selecting the program’s residents.

“He is being more selective with the screening process from the hundreds of residency applications we receive and inviting fewer, but higher quality, applicants to interview with us,” he said, adding that current residents also are becoming more involved in the recruitment process under Carlson’s leadership.

Carlson, who spent 20 years in academic medicine as the director of psychiatry residency and director of undergraduate medical education in neurosciences programs at the University of North Dakota, said family ties drew him to Nevada, since his wife was working at University Medical Center in Las Vegas.

“I wanted to be involved in growing this forward-looking department in Reno, and when I came and looked, I fell in love,” he said, adding that when he talked to northern Nevadans about living in Reno, no one said they liked Reno. “They all said they loved it and they ended up staying here after only intending to stop for a brief time.”

• ANNE MCMILLIN, APR
Twenty years of providing care for the uninsured

The University of Nevada School of Medicine’s popular Student Outreach Clinic, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, was founded by students in 1996, with the goal of providing quality health care to the uninsured and underinsured residents of northern Nevada.

For two decades, the clinic has provided invaluable clinical experience to medical students interacting with patients and working with health care professionals to improve the health of Nevadans.

The Student Outreach Clinic model sees students providing free monthly medical care for the uninsured in Washoe County under the direction of faculty.

Current outreach clinic faculty advisor Dan Spogen, M.D., came aboard in 1996 as a community physician to help with the clinic when he heard some medical students wanted to start a clinic for those who couldn’t afford medical care.

“I was involved at the beginning when Medicaid gave us a grant for child exams and we put together a pediatric clinic on Ninth Street in the Medicaid office. Then we got a grant for women’s health care and created a women’s clinic on Second Street in the medical school’s internal medicine office. We also created a general clinic at the Salvation Army until 2005 and then moved it all to the Family Medicine Center,” he said.

Spogen notes that there have been many changes for the better over the last 20 years.

“I remember having to write a prescription on a napkin, because we didn’t have any prescription pads. The old clinics were very makeshift and somewhat limited.”

When Spogen left private practice, he wanted to continue his involvement with the outreach clinic and stepped up to be its faculty advisor.

“I have a passion for teaching. I also have this passion for the patients in need, and this is an opportunity to help them. It’s incredibly rewarding,” he said.

“I think it’s a unique service for patients who have no access to insurance and medical care,” Spogen said.

“Our students provide that care. The patients and the students both benefit as the students get hands-on experience working with patients and running a clinic.”

The Student Outreach Clinics are managed by current first- and second-year medical students, supervised by faculty in the Department of Family Medicine and assisted by community faculty members. All patient care is supervised by licensed medical professionals.

The Student Outreach Clinics offer services including screenings, diagnosis, lab services, x-rays, EKGs, blood pressure monitoring, immunizations, physicals and some treatments and referrals. Specialized clinics providing women’s services, geriatrics and dermatology are offered in addition to general and pediatric care.

Clinics are held in the Family Medicine Center on the University of Nevada, Reno campus near Mackay Stadium at the corner of 17th Street and East Stadium Way.

The Student Outreach Clinics are made possible through support of local organizations including: the Nell J. Redfield Foundation, Abowd and Rose Financial Group and Patricia D. Cafferata, Esq. and the many volunteers over the years who have dedicated their time to improving health care in Nevada.

Second-year medical student and outgoing clinic executive director Jeremiah Pavelka, who has a background as an EMT and service with the National Guard, said that he acts as an intermediary between the students, patients and management.

“I work with the board and management. I’m the troubleshooter working outside of the clinics to address clinical operations. I’m also a point of contact for our clinic assistants, student leadership, student volunteers, the local community and medical institutions.”

Pavelka said there have been recent changes physically and organizationally to the clinic structure that allows more efficient and effective care for patients, including increasing the number of clinics and the services offered.

“It could very likely become the most memorable thing I do in medical school. My goal after I graduate is to go into surgery and rural medicine. Working with the Student Outreach Clinic has helped me so much and helped build my confidence. As a result, my long term goal is to hang my white coat in Nevada.”

• ANNE PERSHING
Students of the Class of 2019 consider themselves honored and look forward to celebrating their graduation in 2019 during the 50th anniversary of the medical school. Four students from this class are thrilled about getting the opportunity to boast about graduating on that special anniversary.

Carson City native Tim Grunert, who is class president, said he has absolutely loved his time thus far in medical school.

"I've been surprised as I didn't know how medical school would be, and it's like being in a family. We all support each other and share ideas. There's so much togetherness with each of the classes, and the students and faculty watch each other's backs to make sure we get the best education and training possible."

He added that his class was encouraged to go beyond the required curriculum and start a "Music in Medicine" class that was initiated by Lauran Evans for students who wanted to get together and play their instruments for fun.

Nicole Duster, who serves as class vice president and hails from Minden, Nev., said that she loves the size of the school.

"It's like a small town where everybody knows your name, and members of our faculty definitely want us to succeed. They listen to our discussions and they are always there when we need them. As for the school, there have been changes and improvements that have helped our learning experiences," she said.

"As for graduating in 2019, it's exciting to be part of the 50th anniversary of the school. It would be interesting to see what classes were offered to the first class members back in 1969."

Class Secretary Diana Andres of the Philippines and later Las Vegas, pointed out that one of her favorite things about being in the medical school is the Student Outreach Clinic, where students get to practice patient skills.

"Our professors are experts in their field and so effective; we benefit from that. The school improves each year, and I don't think most of us have much to complain about," she said.

"As for the school's 50th anniversary, it will be exciting to see how the community embraces and reacts to the celebration of which we will be part. The medical school is and has been such a gift to so many."

Crystal Phares, who serves as class treasurer and is from Las Vegas, also shared her appreciation of the medical school.

"I am very impressed with how the medical school has exceeded my expectations. There's such camaraderie because we are all sharing the same experiences and it pulls us together," she said, adding that her professors are open to change and are always supportive.

"The school is progressive and willing to change and I'm very proud of it."

She hopes to meet some of the School of Medicine's first graduates at any celebration that is planned for the golden anniversary.

"That would be so great and I believe other students would enjoy that as well. It will definitely be something special to look forward to."

The class is 70 students strong, with 37 men and 33 women. All but four call Nevada home. The average undergraduate GPA is 3.69, and 25 graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, 11 graduated from UNLV and two from Nevada State College. The remainder of the class attended college out of state.

• ANNE PERSHING
Preview day offers glimpse into admissions process

The School of Medicine hosted its annual event for undergraduate students who are interested in medical school from the University of Nevada, Reno, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Nevada State College. About 50 students from these three institutions attended the day-long event on the Reno campus designed to introduce them to the admissions process through a series of workshops and presentations by School of Medicine faculty and staff.

Attendees learned about how the School of Medicine prepares doctors from Tim Baker, M.D., associate dean for medical education and about the admission process and requirements from Cherie Singer, Ph.D., associate dean for admissions and student affairs.

They then took a tour of the anatomy lab and had lunch with current medical students for some one-on-one question-and-answer time.

A scavenger hunt around the medical school campus led by medical students from the medical education outreach committee followed lunch. In order to “collect” the locations for the scavenger hunt, the participants took pictures with their group in front of the building/landmark holding a sign that had the School of Medicine logo and their team name before posting it to Instagram using the hashtag #UNSOMPreMedTour.

The afternoon ended with rotations through workshops discussing the multiple mini-interview process, strategies for taking the MCAT exam and tips for writing their personal statements.

Mark your calendars for Friday, May 13 at 1 p.m. at Lawlor Events Center, when hooding keynote speaker Howard Markel, M.D., Ph.D., will address the Class of 2016 at commencement.

Markel is the George E. Wantz Distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine and director of the Center for the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan. He is a professor of pediatrics, psychiatry, public health management and policy, history and English literature and language and the editor-in-chief of the health policy journal, The Milbank Quarterly.

An acclaimed medical historian, Markel is the author, co-author, or co-editor of 10 books including the award winning “Quarantinet,” “When Germs Travel,” and the national best-seller, “An Anatomy of Addiction: Sigmund Freud, William Halsted, and the Miracle Drug Cocaine.”

Beginning in 2000, he has been a frequent contributor to the New York Times. From 2010-2012, he was a regular contributor for National Public Radio’s Science Friday. From 2012 to the present, he has contributed a monthly column on important events in the history of medicine for PBS NewsHour.org.

In addition, Markel has contributed more than 450 articles, reviews, essays and book chapters to a wide range of scholarly publications and popular periodicals.

For the past 10 years, he has served as the principal historical consultant on pandemic preparedness for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. His historical work served as the evidence base for many community mitigation strategies employed by the World Health Organization, the CDC, and the Mexican Ministry of Health during the 2009 influenza pandemic.

Markel has delivered hundreds of prominent lectures at numerous major universities, museums and libraries across the U.S. and in Europe, as well as U.S. government agencies, departments and at the White House. He has been a frequently commentator on numerous national radio and television news broadcasts for NPR, ABC, NBC, PBS, BBC, CNN, MSNBC, C-SPAN and the History Channel.

Markel has appeared in several critically acclaimed PBS film documentaries including “Rx for Survival: A Global Health Challenge,” “Forgotten Ellis Island” and the Ken Burns and Siddhartha Mukherjee documentary “Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies.”

To receive hooding updates and to register to attend the event, visit http://bit.ly/nv-md16.
Celebrate Nevada’s newest physicians

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