



## The CenterPoint Newsletter

### TRiO

PRESIDENT

Dr. Len Jessup

VICE PRESIDENT  
STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dr. Juanita P. Fain

ASSOCIATE VICE  
PRESIDENT RETENTION  
& OUTREACH

Dr. William W. Sullivan

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

Keith Rogers

EDITOR

Danielle Gross

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Zhanna Aronov

Dr. Michael A. Wilde

### PROGRAMS

Adult Educational  
Services

Educational Talent Search

Family Support Services

### GEAR UP

McNair Scholars Institute

Student Support Services

TRiO Training Institute

Upward Bound

Upward Bound Math &  
Science Center

### Upward Bound Students Explore California College Campuses during Annual Trip

by James Archibald, Upward Bound  
Academic Counselor

On the morning of July 27, 2014, students and staff of the UNLV Upward Bound Math & Science Center (UBMSC) journeyed to Northern California for a week-long academic adventure. The annual UBMSC tours of Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), and Sonoma State University exposed the students to undergraduate education and life outside of Las Vegas. The students and staff traveled to historical landmarks, such as Alcatraz Island, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the California Academy of Sciences.

The tour began at one of the nation's most prestigious institutions, Stanford University. Here, students had the opportunity to speak with Stanford students about freshmen curriculum, dormitory life, and the history of the University. From there, they traveled to UC Berkeley where they were greeted by faculty, admissions representatives and experienced a different campus culture. UBMSC students said that the



*Upward Bound students are given a walking tour of the University of California, Berkeley*

highlight of the tour was UC Berkeley's students sharing their experiences on campus and explaining why they chose that school. The final tour was at Sonoma State University, a liberal arts college, where students received answers to questions concerning financial aid, tuition expenses, and course options. The goal of this annual trip is to expose participants to a variety of schools, small and large colleges, as well as private and public universities.

Cultural experiences are an important part of the UBMSC experience and provide opportunities for fun and hands-on learning. We visited a four-story rainforest, aquarium, planetarium, and natural history museum, all in the same place! The California Academy of Sciences, one of the largest natural history museums in

the world, allowed us to learn about the roles outdoor creatures and geology play in our ecosystems and why humans should protect them. Students and staff enjoyed their time at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, riding the roller coasters and viewing marine exhibits. A tour of Alcatraz Island allowed students to experience one of the world's most infamous prisons, while also meeting the prison's last surviving inmate, Mr. William Baker.

The college tours allow students to understand the importance of finding a postsecondary institution that suits them. During each Upward Bound Saturday session, staff emphasize through instruction and activities the importance of a college education.

## McNair Scholar Recognized as Outstanding Graduate at Fall 2014 Commencement

by Afsha Bawany, UNLV Media Relations Specialist



Krystal Belmonte, McNair Scholar  
(photo courtesy of UNLV Photo Services)

Krystal Belmonte spent her final summer as a UNLV Rebel researching the biomarkers for

## UNLV Upward Bound Math & Science Center Aids in the “Fight Against Hunger”

by Geannine Jordan, Assistant Director for Upward Bound

To kick off the 2014-2015 academic year, the UNLV Upward Bound Math & Science Center (UBMSC) juniors and seniors stepped in to do their part in the fight against hunger by volunteering at Three Square’s Sort-a-Thon in late October 2014.

To aid in the fight against hunger, UBMSC brought two busloads of students and staff to volunteer at local food bank, Three

Alzheimer’s disease. Selected for a summer undergraduate research fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, Belmonte’s work at the prestigious institution solidified her commitment to piecing together the puzzle that is Alzheimer’s. Belmonte’s motivation to find solutions for patients comes from personal experiences. Her family members have suffered from the disease and her parents have served as primary caregivers, so the disease has always had a part in her life. “It may be a long time before we find a cure, but at least we are taking steps, and I want to be a part of those steps,” Belmonte said.

Under the mentorship of psychology researcher Dr. Jefferson Kinney, Belmonte studied the links between diabetes and Alzheimer’s. As a Ronald E. McNair scholar, she completed a research paper on neurological systems that could affect the progression of Alzheimer’s. In the Honors College,

Square giving back to the Greater Las Vegas Community. The UBMSC participants worked hard sorting donated products, verifying expiration dates, repacking products, and assembling pantry boxes. Some students weighed boxes, other students filled plastic containers with toiletries and loaded crates to be shelved for distribution. The UBMSC seniors, juniors and staff sanitized enough bins for seventy-five hundred Kids Café® meals, a program that provides free meals to low-income children, and packed fifty-four hundred pounds of dry goods to be distributed to local families.

she taught a first-year seminar course to introduce freshmen to campus resources and research opportunities available at the undergraduate level. Whatever students choose, she encourages them to pursue passion first rather than settling for something they have to do. “I want them to enjoy their time. You don’t have to go in one direction,” Belmonte said.

Belmonte will graduate summa cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in biological sciences, a minor in Mathematics, and a 3.8 GPA. Her accolades include the Academic Advising Student of The Year award and a Ronald E. McNair Scholar Summer Research Institute scholarship. Following graduation, Belmonte will work as a technician continuing Alzheimer’s research at the Mayo Clinic before graduate school in the fall of 2015.

More than half of the students in the Clark County School District struggle with hunger and are on free and reduced meals. Hungry children have a harder time learning not being able to truly focus due to hunger. Three Square provides more than thirty-million pounds of food and grocery products, the equivalent of more than twenty-five million meals per year to nearly six-hundred program partners, including non-profit and faith based organizations, schools and feeding sites throughout Southern Nevada.

## Institute for Teaching & Mentoring conference

by Michael Curtis, McNair Scholar

As a Ronald E. McNair scholar, I benefited from the wonderful opportunity to attend the 2014 Institute for Teaching & Mentoring conference in Atlanta, GA. Now in its twentieth year, the Institute focuses primarily on the issue of faculty diversity and provides scholars with the strategies necessary to survive the rigors of graduate school, attain a doctoral degree, and succeed in higher education. The 2014 conference was the Institute's largest to date with over twelve-hundred attendees.

For a student currently applying to graduate school, the most valuable aspect of the conference was the question and answer sessions offered by renowned author and speaker, Dr. Don Asher. He offered a wealth of advice on how to minimize potential weaknesses in your application, such as GPA or GRE scores, while emphasizing strengths, such as work and research experience. He stressed the importance of speaking to



*From left to right: Dr. Robert Belle (Director, SREB-AGEP Doctoral Scholars Program), Ernesto Bedoy (McNair Scholar), Michael Curtis (McNair Scholar), and Dr. Freeman Hrabowski (President of The University of Maryland, Baltimore County)*



potential advisors and how to build mentor/mentee relationships. Dr. Asher also gave those of us who had already submitted applications great tips to make us stand out; tips, such as submitting fall grades once posted, and updating our curriculum vitae with additional publications or conference presentations.

I found the Institute for Teaching & Mentoring conference to be an educational and rewarding

experience. I gained extensive knowledge regarding the graduate school application process, while building my networking skills, as I had the chance to speak with peers interested in my chosen field. Interacting with them inspired me to achieve my higher education goals. The road to success is long and difficult, but the end result is worth it.

## Educational Talent Search Students Selected for Annual Breakfast with Elected Officials

by Rocío Rodriguez, Academic Counselor for  
ETS

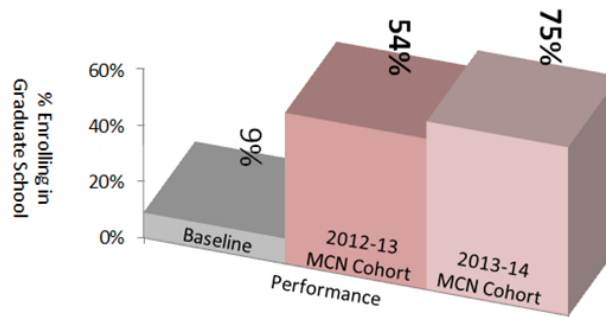
More than four hundred high school students from around the Las Vegas valley were invited to attend the annual Mayors Prayer Breakfast at the Texas Station Hotel and Casino. Five students from Desert Pines High School and Canyon Springs High School were selected to introduce the mayors. This event not only gives students the opportunity to interact with a variety of local officials, it also aims to encourage the Las Vegas community to utilize diversity to find creative solutions to the various challenges facing Southern Nevada. David Copperfield, keynote speaker, focused on the importance of education, leadership skills, and diversity. Following the breakfast, students were invited to participate in a town hall meeting to discuss their concerns and ask questions of local mayors and other officials in attendance.

Two of the five students selected to introduce the mayors were UNLV TRiO Educational Talent Search students Mariyah Espinoza from Desert Pines High School and Ayleen Perry from Canyon Springs High School. Both Mariyah and Ayleen are on track to graduate with advanced diplomas at their June graduation ceremony.

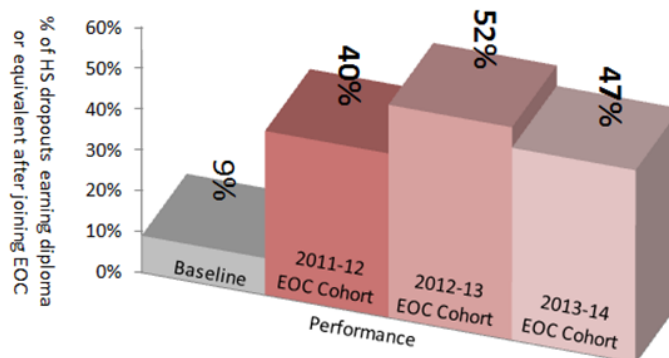
**Did you know ... 99% of CAEO's TRiO Talent Search (TS) senior participants graduate from high school ?**



**Did you know ... more than 50% of UNLV CAEO's TRiO McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program (MCN) participants enroll in graduate school in the fall semester after they complete their bachelor's degrees?**



**Did you know ... at least 40% of high-school dropouts who become CAEO TRiO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) participants earn a secondary school diploma or its equivalent (e.g., GED)?**



# Upward Bound Math & Science Center: A Day in the Life of an Engineer

by Kelly Yurchick, Upward Bound Academic Counselor

The Upward Bound Summer Residential Program (SRP) allows students the opportunity to engage in academic activities designed to provide educational and cultural experiences, while getting a glimpse of what college life is like. The UNLV Upward Bound Math & Science Center (UBMSC) collaborated with the UNLV Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering in an effort to expose students to a wide range of career choices in that field of study.

During the 2014 SRP, students participated in multiple activities to illustrate what engineers encounter on a daily basis. Students toured the Clark County Water Reclamation District, where they learned about the reclamation and purification process. Additionally, they toured the Las Vegas Wash Project, where the lead engineer taught the students about city planning and flood control. Claire Kohatsu, a civil engineer who runs a local large materials testing lab, invited the students to her lab to show how building materials are tested and graded. There, the students created their own concrete cylinders and then tested its strength after the concrete had cured. Participants also toured the Clark County Wetlands Park, learning about weirs and had the opportunity to assemble a truss bridge as a team.

The students enjoyed the engaging activities which were both fun and educational. UBMSC plans on continuing and expanding this partnership, as it has proven to be a great experience for all involved.



*Teamwork allows Upward Bound students to finish the final leg of their truss bridge*



*Upward Bound students proudly display the final product*

## Technology Creates Innovative Classroom Instruction

by Isabelle Langham, Upward Bound Academic Counselor

When thinking of classroom instruction, specifically in the area of career exploration, many instructors will not push the limits to seek opportunities beyond the route of traditional lectures and internet research. It is simple to ask community partners and friends to facilitate classroom discussions or assign students research projects to increase their awareness of career preparation and paths; however, it is not always easy to see the possibility beyond the traditional approaches.

From swiping an iPhone screen to performing a Google internet search, students interact on a daily basis with technological products and services without giving much thought to the brilliant minds behind the scenes. Learning more about the innovative process and the ways in which students can strategically prepare for the workforce is a gap not often addressed. The Upward Bound Math & Science Center prioritizes the student experience when creating Saturday sessions and Summer Residential Program courses. Upward Bound has piloted the eSTEAM Project Webinar Series to bridge the gap between traditional and non-traditional approaches to career exploration.

During the pilot webinar session in October, Upward Bound participants interacted with an engineering recruiter at Google using Zoom Video Conferencing. Throughout the 2014-2015 academic year, students have the opportunity to interact with volunteer professionals from several companies, including Apple, General Electric, and General Motors. With each session, students are not only exploring multiple career paths, but they are learning how to land internships/jobs, critically think, and strategically plan for postsecondary success.

## Follow the Money Academy for Parents Debuts at Gibson Middle School

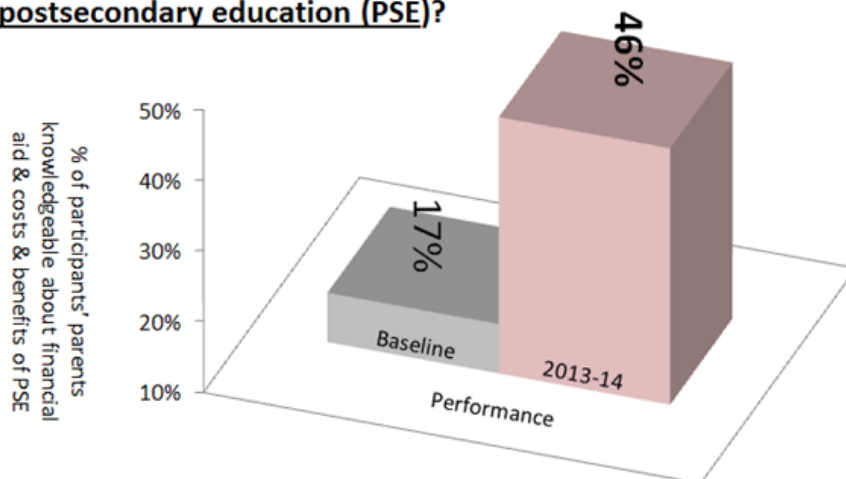
by UNLV GEAR UP

Nationally, ninety-two percent of middle school students want to go to college, however sixty-eight percent reported they have little to no information about how to prepare. UNLV GEAR UP Family Engagement utilized financial literacy as a viable way to prepare families for college and increase their ability to triumph financially by developing the Follow the Money Academy (FMA) at Robert O. Gibson Middle School.

Designed to increase the skills of parents, FMA coupled financial literacy and college preparation into a workshop series providing information on effective ways of attaining financial and academic success. Financial literacy not only impacts financial decision-making, but also impacts college preparation particularly savings, borrowing practices, and overall perception of postsecondary education.

Family Engagement offered fourteen workshops through FMA on Saturdays covering tuition savings plans, credit, savings, scholarship planning, insurance coverage, and Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) majors. In addition to FMA, Gibson parents attended GEAR UP Parent Outreach meetings every other Tuesday to further increase their knowledge of parent engagement strategies and college preparation. Collaboration with various community entities, contributions from The Financial Guidance Center, Public Education Foundation, UNLV STEM Departments, and Metro Police Department, provided parents with insight and action steps to secure college and financial success. Carl Gatson, budget coordinator at The Center, was instrumental in the coordination and delivery of FMA's curriculum ensuring the veracity of its content.

**Did you know ... more than 45% of UNLV CAEO GEAR UP participants' parents report being knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education (PSE)?**



# IT'S REBEL DAY!

by Diane Zagorski, Assistant Director for ETS



ETS staff and volunteers showcase their UNLV Rebel spirit at Jim Bridger Middle School

Jim Bridger Middle School hosted its annual college week October 20-24, 2014. The school had different local colleges come out all week to showcase their programs. The TRiO Educational Talent Search (ETS) program was charged with creating a Rebel Day experience for the students. On Friday, October 24th, the Bridger cafeteria was resplendent in Rebel Mania.

The ETS program decided to turn it up a notch. Since Bridger Middle School emphasis is in S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) studies; we showcased all eleven colleges at the school site. We were fortunate to have the assistance of staff from the UNLV Admissions Office, Vaune Kadlubek, director from the Division of Health Sciences Advising Center, and a representative from the College of Education to assist our staff. Each

member of our staff designed a poster for each academic college within UNLV and also identified careers that are a part of different majors. Students loved interacting with the staff and asking questions about the different programs. Students were given a punch card to ensure they visited all eleven colleges, the admissions area, and our giveaway table. Once their card was full, it was then entered into a raffle for UNLV Rebel gear. Jim Bridger administration and staff were thrilled to watch their students take such an active part in the college experience.



A Jim Bridger student speaks with Vaune Kadlubek, about careers opportunities within the UNLV College of Health Sciences

## Employee of the Quarter

3rd Quarter

### Professional Staff



**Christina Hargrove**  
GEAR UP  
Academic Counselor

### Part-time Staff



**Shayla Johnson**  
GEAR UP  
Program Assistant

## Employee of the Quarter

4th Quarter

### Professional Staff



**Rommel Cabrera**  
Information Technology  
Coordinator

### Part-time Staff



**Isaiah Henry**  
Student Support Services  
Program Assistant