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### **AT&T gift allows Dean's Future Scholars Program to expand**

*More northern Nevada students from low-income families will be encouraged to graduate from high school and be the first generation in their families to attend college*

RENO, Nev.— The University of Nevada, Reno will expand a one-of-a-kind program to help students from low-income families set their sights on college, thanks to a \$200,000 grant from the AT&T Aspire initiative. The Dean's Future Scholars Program, offered through the University's College of Education, will now include 20 more students from Sparks High School. Along with the 300 middle and high school students who already participate in the program, these freshmen at Sparks will be on track to be the first generation in their families to attend college.

"The program began with a simple idea: before middle and high school students can consider teaching as a career, they must first believe that college is a possibility," said College of Education Dean Bill Sparkman, who founded the program in 2000. "With this gift, more of these young people will set the goal of a college education, and they will have incredible help along the way."

There are other programs across the country that reach out and encourage students fitting this demographic to graduate from high school and attend college. However, Sparkman believes the Dean's Future Scholars model — that includes an intensive mentoring component — is unique.

Through the program, University students apply their training to help the middle and high school students persist through adversity, learn study skills, and prepare for and apply to college. These mentors visit the schools and students weekly, a greater frequency than in most mentor programs. Now that the program has been in place for several years, it has come full circle: nine of the program's 11 mentors participated in Dean's Future Scholars as middle and high school students themselves.

"Having this experience with the University made it more comfortable to come here as a student," said program participant Manuel Ortiz, who is pursuing a degree in secondary education.

Ortiz, now a Dean's Future Scholars mentor, says the program has had a remarkable impact on him and his family. His sister was a Dean's Future Scholar and went on to attend college, and his two brothers at Hug High School are also in the program.

As Dean's Future Scholars progress through middle and high school, they attend on-campus programs to gain a familiarity with the surroundings. The highlight for many is a seven-week academic summer program at Nevada. About 25 University students mentor and tutor about 225 Dean's Future Scholars each summer.

"We need continuous support from all levels of education to help strengthen our education system — and the Dean's Scholars Program does just that," said Senator Majority Leader Bill Raggio. "This program bridges our school district with the higher education system to give that extra hand to students who may not have succeeded otherwise — that is real a partnership and dedication that can be a great example across the state."

The nationwide AT&T Aspire program has committed \$100 million through 2011 to schools and nonprofit organizations that are focused on high school retention and better preparing students for college and the workforce.

"We are passionate about this for many reasons. As a major corporation, we are concerned about our workforce competing in the global economy; as a corporate citizen, we are perplexed by the enormous

loss of human potential. By helping students graduate from high school and encouraging them to continue their education and start building their careers, we can help students succeed – not just in high school, but in life,” said AT&T Nevada president Hal Lenox.

The AT&T grant to the University of Nevada will provide \$50,000 annually for the next four years. In addition to allowing 20 more high school freshmen to join the program, the grant will fund an additional University mentor to support these students. It will also cover the cost of tutors and textbooks for their academic summer program through 2012.

There are currently more than 100 students enrolled at the University who progressed through the Dean’s Future Scholars Program. These students also qualify for a \$10,000 scholarship through GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), a federally funded program designed to reach low-income students in middle school and support their preparation to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

“Of the first 150 students who participated in the program, 108 went on to attend community colleges or universities,” said Sparkman. “The program has been an extraordinary success and demonstrates the impact that intensive support and resources can have.”

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*Nevada’s land-grant university founded in 1874, the University of Nevada, Reno has an enrollment of nearly 17,000 students. The University is home to one the country’s largest study-abroad programs and the state’s medical school, and offers outreach and education programs in all Nevada counties. For more information, visit [www.unr.edu](http://www.unr.edu).*



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