TRACKING

Winged Sentinels

A U professor works to conserve birds’ dwindling numbers

• FACES OF CHANGE: The University’s New Enrollment Plan
• FOSTERING EDUCATION: U Alumni Help Refugee Students
• PROVING DARWIN: A Professor Presents the Evidence
• STILL A TEAM: Three Former U Players Start in the NFL
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Ten years have passed, and Martha continues to hope and dream. But now her dreams are for Rosemary, the daughter she always wanted.

www.healthcare.utah.edu
FEATURES

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A U professor travels the world to document birds’ crucial role and conserve their dwindling numbers. By Elaine Jarvik

Faces of the Future 14
A new enrollment plan aims to increase the academic quality and success of the University’s student body. By Stephen Speckman

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

I wanted to comment on the article in the recent Continuum about “A House for the Future” [Winter 2011-12].

Back in the late 70s, there was quite a “push” for passive solar home design. In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, my partner and I designed and built passive solar homes, office buildings, and additions in northern Wyoming and southern Montana. We used many of the same ideas mentioned in your article. We didn’t have the advantage of some of the recent technology available today; however, our buildings performed very well, and we never needed a backup heating system other than sometimes a wood stove.

I am glad to see someone is still utilizing what nature has given us. I agree 100 percent that proper siting and proper construction details are the key to success. We always oriented them by using the sun at noon and always stayed within the 15 degrees suggested by Professor [Jörg] Rügemer. A few homes we bent in the middle 15 degrees to form a “V” shape. Depending upon which way we bent the building, we obtained the maximum advantage in either the west or east wing in the morning and the opposite wing in the afternoon. Several of our homes were “earth bermed” for further shelter from the cold.

Passive solar has a difficult time competing because there is nothing to sell other than your knowledge and building skills. The sun’s energy is free. All you have to do is capture and contain it as long as possible. I hope Prof. Rügemer can influence the building trades, and the general public, to use more of the simple and inexpensive technology available.

Leroy Kingery MS’63
Douglas, Wyo.

EFFICIENCY IS KEY

I totally agree with Professor [Jörg ] Rügemer’s comment on focusing on the efficiency of the shelter versus thermal or solar energy “A House for the Future,” Winter 2011-12]. Having recently installed a solar array on my RV camper (totally thermally inefficient), I can attest to the fact that solar arrays are costly, inefficient, and still require standard utility backup for the systems they power. Associated solar arrays, batteries, and inverters are very inefficient and costly compared to raw utility power. Prof. Rügemer noted the use of gas (natural or propane), which in today’s [market] is extremely expensive. All information I learned from my RV experience tells me to focus on conserving heat and minimizing the need for cooling, [and to] use appliances that work using the most efficient, least costly fuels. Highly efficient homes would be a giant step forward in reducing the amount of electricity and fuel required to run the various systems and appliances found in today’s homes.

Edward Meisenbach BS’71
Comment submitted via continuum.utah.edu

KUDOS FOR CONTINUUM’S NEW WEB SITE

What a great way to provide info regarding the U, especially for those of us who no longer reside in the shadow of the U. More great articles are presented, along with video and links. This was a pleasant surprise.

Steven M. Hansen BS’66
Richmond, Texas

A TIP OF THE HAT TO SORENSON

What a beautiful story “A Quiet Force,” Winter 2011-12]. Thank you, Beverley [Taylor Sorenson], for sharing your love of children and passion for the arts; you’re an inspiration.

Rick Cordova
Comment submitted via continuum.utah.edu

MARVELOUS MUSEUM

The new Natural History Museum of Utah is an absolute gem “Reflecting the Land,” Winter 2011-12]—everyone associated with the University should visit and show it off to guests. The setting, the building, the angles, the displays, are all outstanding. Kudos to Sarah George and the staff and donors.

Kristin Madden BA’71 MBA’83
Comment submitted via continuum.utah.edu

We’re eager to hear from you. Please send letters to editor Jason Matthew Smith, jason.smith@ucomm.utah.edu, or to 201 Presidents Circle, Room 308, Salt Lake City, UT 84112.
The copper exhibit is on the outside.

Kennecott has supported the Natural History Museum of Utah for decades. When the Museum needed a new home, we decided to dig deeper. As part of our $15 million contribution, we supplied more than 100,000 pounds of copper from the Bingham Canyon Mine for the new building's exterior surface. The Natural History Museum of Utah at the Rio Tinto Center is a valuable addition to our community, and we are proud to be a part of it.

Some of the things we're excited about at the Natural History Museum of Utah at the Rio Tinto Center:

- **Sustainability Trail**: Explore strategies for sustainable living
- **Research & Education**: Research facilities and learning labs for students
- **Mineral Science**: Utah's largest collection of rocks and minerals

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More information at: kencott.com
On January 20, the State Board of Regents announced that David W. Pershing had been selected as the 15th president of the University of Utah, capping a seven-month national search.

Pershing, senior vice president of academic affairs at the U since 1998, joined the University as an assistant professor in chemical engineering in 1977. The 20-member presidential search committee, appointed last summer by the regents, picked him as one of two finalists on January 17 after several days of comprehensive interviews. Kumble R. Subbaswamy, provost at the University of Kentucky, was the other finalist.

The search committee—composed of regents, faculty and staff members, a student leader, and outside donors and advisors—had worked with a search firm and considered more than 80 potential candidates to fill the position following the departure of former president Michael K. Young in 2011. After months of soliciting public input through statewide public meetings and online submissions, the group narrowed the field to four individuals qualified to take the helm, but two withdrew their candidacy because they didn’t want their names to be made public.

“The support of U faculty, students, and staff, along with the statewide community as a whole, has been tremendous throughout this search process,” notes the search committee’s chair, Regent Nolan Karras.

The search committee faced a particular challenge in the hunt for a new leader. Several top universities—including the universities of Arizona, California-San Diego, and New Mexico, as well as Iowa State, Temple, and Rutgers universities—had also initiated national searches for top talent, and some of those who applied for the job at the U had also applied at other schools.

At the news conference announcing his appointment, Pershing indicated that improving undergraduate education would be one of his top priorities. He pledged to make sure the University encourages and assists those who seek a college education. “I want every well-prepared high school student to think about coming to the University of Utah,” he said. He pointed out that the U’s enrollment strategy would be undergoing a change (see “Faces of the Future,” page 14) and that the University of Utah would strive to help students graduate in a timely fashion.

Pershing received many honors during his prior academic and administrative career at the U. He was named a Presidential Young Investigator by the National Science Foundation in 1984 and became dean of the College of Engineering in 1987. He has more than 80 peer-reviewed publications, more than 20 research grants, and five patents to his credit. Pershing has won both the Distinguished Teaching and Distinguished Research awards and is the 1997 recipient of the Rosenblatt Prize for Excellence, the U’s highest honor. He was the director of the University of Utah’s Center for Simulation of Accidental Fires and Explosions, fueled by a $40 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Pershing holds a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from Purdue University and a doctorate in the same field from the University of Arizona.

Pershing will take office as president in March. His inauguration is slated for October. An in-depth profile of Pershing will appear in the Fall 2012 issue of Continuum.

Travel and Learn With an Expert from the U

Ever wanted to go on a truffle hunt? How about wine tastings or cooking lessons—in Italy? Now, a University faculty expert on all things Italian will lead the way when Continuing Education’s new Go Learn program offers its first trip May 5-15. Travelers will be guided on a custom tour through the heart of Italy, loaded with discoveries and learning.

After nearly a decade without a travel program for the community, the U is initiating Go Learn to once again engage participants in meaningful educational travel. The trips include both domestic and international destinations.

“I am really excited to have University experts lead trips and to reach out to the community in such a way that we truly connect campus to the rest of the valley and beyond,” says Christoph Dressler, the program’s director. Go Learn is open to community members, friends, and alumni of the U who want to explore the world with the expertise of University faculty and academic leaders.

Find more information at golearn.utah.edu.
University’s School of Business Opens Spencer Fox Eccles Business Building
The David Eccles School of Business cut the ribbon in early November 2011 on the Spencer Fox Eccles Business Building, the school’s new flagship educational facility. The building has been named in honor of Spencer Fox “Spence” Eccles BS’56 (banking and finance), chairman emeritus of the Intermountain Region of Wells Fargo & Co., and former chair and CEO of First Security Corporation. The building’s Phase 1 space was occupied by students and faculty in January of this year, and Phase 2 is slated for completion in May 2013. Included in both phases of the “green-friendly” facility is the latest in state-of-the-art wireless technology, podcasting, and video-conferencing capabilities.

University of Utah Gets $12 Million from Prestigious Federal Program
The University of Utah is launching a six-year effort to conduct basic research aimed at developing new materials for uses ranging from faster computers and communications devices to better microscopes and solar cells. The new Center of Excellence in Materials Research and Innovation is being established and funded for six years by a $12 million grant from the National Science Foundation, $6.5 million for major equipment from the Utah Science Technology and Research initiative, and $3 million from the University. The new center involves more than two dozen researchers from seven departments in the College of Science, College of Engineering, and College of Mines and Earth Sciences.

Pioneer Theatre Company Names Azenberg as New Artistic Director
Pioneer Theatre Company has named Karen Azenberg as its new artistic director. She will become just the fourth artistic director in PTC’s 50-year history, and the first woman in the job. Azenberg assumes duties in July from Charles Morey, who will have held the post for 28 years when he retires in June. Azenberg was previously a New York-based freelance theater director, but Utahns should already be familiar with her work: She has choreographed and/or directed such PTC productions as Next to Normal, Rent, and Miss Saigon.

Torti Leading U’s Honors College
Biologist and writer Sylvia Torti PhD’98 has been appointed dean of the University of Utah Honors College. Torti joined the U faculty in 2003 as research assistant professor in biology and has been associate director of the University’s Rio Mesa Center, a research and education center located near Moab, Utah. Torti also has a parallel career as a literary writer, having so far published one novel, several short stories, and essays. In addition to a doctorate in biology from the U, she holds a bachelor of arts degree from Earlham College. She did her graduate work in tropical biology in the Congo, Panama, Mexico, and Trinidad.

Middle East Center to Be Restructured, Two Interim Co-Directors Appointed
The U’s Middle East Center is embarking on a two-year restructuring program. The process will be overseen by interim co-directors Kirk Jowers and Bob Goldberg, who have agreed to provide oversight for this period. Jowers heads the Hinckley Institute of Politics, and Goldberg leads the Tanner Humanities Center. The Middle East Center’s former director, Bahman Baktiari, was fired in June 2011 following accusations of plagiarism. Under the restructuring plan, the Middle East Center will suspend its graduate program and eliminate joint faculty appointments. At the conclusion of this two-year interim period, a search for a new director will begin.

In Memoriam
Chi-Bin Chien, 46, professor in the U’s Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy
John W. Ryan BA’51, Ph.D., 81, president emeritus of Indiana University and founding chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Boston, among many other higher education leadership positions
Ralph Thomson BA’62, 74, a longtime member of the U’s National Advisory Council and policy adviser to five presidential administrations

For more on these and other memoria, visit continuum.utah.edu.

Ed Catmull to Speak at U Commencement
Ed Catmull BS’69 PhD’74, president and co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, will deliver the University’s general commencement address on May 4. Catmull contributed to the world of computer graphics while a student at the U, but his main goal was always to one day create a full-length feature film entirely generated by computer graphics. In 1995, Catmull achieved his goal and revolutionized the film industry with the Pixar motion picture Toy Story. Catmull received bachelor of science degrees in physics and computer science as well as a doctorate in computer science from the University of Utah. Since producing Toy Story, Catmull’s Pixar has created dozens of short and feature-length animated films, such as Finding Nemo and many others.
In the fall of 2008, the University of Utah launched the public phase of Together We Reach: The Campaign for the University of Utah, with the ambitious goal of raising $1.2 billion through gifts to scholarships, research, new facilities, and program support. Despite the recession, the campaign has thrived, thanks to the overwhelming generosity of University alumni and friends.

Early in 2012, the campaign realized its original goal, but there is much to accomplish before the campaign ends in late 2013. Since the campaign began, the University has more than doubled the number of new donors to a total of more than 103,000, meaning that more than 56,000 new donors have pledged their support to the U.

The success of the campaign to date has been overwhelmingly positive and has revitalized interest in the U’s threefold mission of teaching, research, and service. The campus has never looked more beautiful, the caliber of students and faculty has never been higher, and technological advancement from U labs continues to find its way to those who need it most.

“One of the goals the University is still pursuing in the campaign is enhancing the overall educational experience at the University, particularly for undergraduate students—including dramatically increasing funding for both merit and need-based scholarships. Other priorities include strengthening opportunities for students through the MUSE initiative, construction of the Student Life Center, and further promoting student innovation through the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program. In addition, the U sees the extension of the campaign as an opportunity to completely fund building projects already under way, including the Spencer Fox Eccles Business Building, the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts and Education Complex, the Thatcher Chemistry Building, and the Crocker Science Center.

The University also has embraced other opportunities that have presented themselves since the campaign began, which include a new home for the law school, improved facilities for football and sports medicine, a center for international activities, a film and media arts center, a “net-zero” facility for the College of Architecture + Planning, and new student housing. Plans to grow support for U research and provide backing for arts, athletics, cultural services, and facilities are also in the mix.

For more information about the campaign, please visit togetherweach.net.
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Still a Team

Paul Soliai

Koa Misi

Photos courtesy Miami Dolphins
It’s uncommon to have two starters on an NFL team who come from the same college or university. The rarity increases when an NFL team has three from the same school who all play on one side of the ball.

Yet three former Utah players—Paul Soliai ex’06, Sean Smith ex’08, and Koa Misi ex’09—all start on defense for the NFL’s Miami Dolphins.

The only other time that anyone can recall this situation happening in the modern era was more than a decade ago, with the NFL’s Baltimore Ravens, when former University of Miami Hurricanes cornerback Duane Starks, safety Ed Reed, and linebacker Ray Lewis were Ravens starters during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

“It doesn’t happen very often,” says former longtime Dallas Cowboys Vice President of Player Personnel Gil Brandt, who has been a superior evaluator of NFL talent for more than 50 years and now is the primary personnel expert for NFL.com.

“It’s obviously something the University of Utah should be very proud of,” Brandt says. “They have such a good program.”

Brandt notes that Starks, Lewis, and Reed were all first-round draft picks. The three former Utes, however, didn’t have such auspicious beginnings. “The thing that makes it interesting is that these three guys weren’t first-round choices and are starting. That’s the rarity.”

Soliai was a fourth-round pick in 2007, Smith was drafted in the second round in 2009, and Misi was selected in the second round in 2010. And back when they were eyeing their college possibilities, Utah was pretty much the only option for all three, so the fact that they were even drafted at all is something of a miracle in itself.

Soliai—who was born in Orange County, Calif., and grew up in Pago Pago, American Samoa—had a difficult path. “At Coffeyville [Kansas] Community College, I was an offensive lineman before starting one year as a defensive lineman [at Utah] and then being drafted by the Dolphins,” says the 360-pound nose tackle who appears up close to be nearly as big as a Smart car. “Utah gave me another chance. I thought football was done for me. I thank Utah for everything in terms of getting me where I am right now.”

Although Soliai was very successful in college, especially as a senior in 2006, when he recorded 35 tackles, 3.5 for a loss; two sacks; four pass break-ups; a forced fumble; a fumble recovery; and a blocked kick, his transformation into an elite player took place with the Dolphins.
“Coming up into the NFL, learning how to play a real true nose tackle [in a 3-4 defense] in the league, was kind of hard,” Soliai admits. “Before that, I was a 4-3 guy, so it took me a couple of years to learn the system and become one of the best nose tackles in the league.”

He worked his way to become a full-time starter in 2010. For those who don’t know, in a 4-3 defense, a lineman doesn’t play the same position or technique as in a 3-4. An interior 4-3 lineman is called a defensive tackle, and a 3-4 lineman who is in the middle is a nose tackle because he tends to line up over the nose of the opposing center. The nose tackle in a 3-4 has to clog up the middle and constantly take on double-team blocking from the offensive line to free up linebackers to make plays. In short, it’s a thankless position that leaves little room for individual statistics and accolades.

“You have to stay stout and always hold your ground so you can take on the double teams,” Soliai says. “You pretty much want the ball to always go outside instead of inside.”

Soliai’s emergence on the NFL level earned him Miami’s franchise player tag and a one-year salary in 2011 of approximately $12 million. The mammoth defender will be a highly sought-after free agent when the recruiting season begins March 13.

The Dolphins hope to re-sign Soliai, who is 28, for his skills on the field and for being a mentor off of it. Not only does he regularly host his fellow Utah alums and other Dolphin players at his famous barbecues, he has also been an invaluable resource to his younger counterparts about what the NFL is like. “Paul made things a little bit easier for me,” Misi says. “He helped me get acclimated [to the NFL]. I didn’t really feel like I was a newcomer in the league, even though I really was.”

Soliai played a similar role in Smith’s arrival. “Paul took me in and talked to me,” Smith says. “He explained to me how things go in the NFL.”

Smith, who is now 24, was an extremely successful running back for Blair High School in Pasadena, Calif. But with his six-foot-three frame, he was actually a little too tall for the position at the college level. “Utah was the only place to give me a chance to play Division I football,” Smith says. “The University of Oregon kind of backed out at the very last second—which kind of only left me with one option.”

Not that Smith isn’t extremely grateful—even if it meant trying a new position or two at the University of Utah. “It was difficult at first. Initially, I tried out for safety, and that didn’t go so good,” he says with a laugh.

“I went from there to corner, and I went to Coach [Kyle Whittingham] and said, ‘I don’t know if I can play that,’ but he gave me a shot at it, and things just worked out from there,” Smith says.

“They are able to get guys in there at Utah that know how to play football really well. The coaching staff there is exceptional, and for them to send guys to the NFL like they’re doing really says a lot about the program.” —Koa Misi, Utah alum and Miami Dolphins linebacker
Now Smith is succeeding with the Dolphins, despite once again fighting concerns that he is too tall for his position. In fact, he is the tallest starting cornerback in the NFL.

“Corner is pretty much a small man’s game,” Smith acknowledges. “It’s all about being quick and fast. Those aren’t really my strengths, so my coach [secondary coach Todd Bowles] has me spend a lot of time in practice staying low and using my technique. Tall guys tend to get tired and then play high. That will get you killed at corner.”

While Soliai and Smith certainly have overcome their share of challenges, Misi is perhaps the most improbable NFL player of the three. Coming out of Montgomery High School in Santa Rosa, Calif., Misi had scholarship offers to go play at Oregon and San Diego State.

“I took a year off from football and went to [Santa Rosa] Junior College, concentrated on being a student, and got a job,” he recalls. “I got my own place and paid my own rent. But I missed football.”

“Throughout the whole recruiting process, I ended up getting overwhelmed with the whole thing,” Misi says.

Misi, who is now 24, played one year of junior college ball before Utah came calling. It was a perfect match for a man who values those closest to him. “I actually have a lot of family out in Utah,” Misi says. “Kalani Sitake, the current Utah defensive coordinator there, is a member of my family, too. My grandma was really happy because I had family around me. [On the field], it was a great group of guys. Utah felt like my second home.”

Misi’s extended family has found its way to Florida, as well: Miami’s assistant strength and conditioning coach Dave Puloka and Misi are third cousins.

On the field, Misi had 4.5 sacks as a rookie in 2010, but his numbers are somewhat down in his sophomore campaign as he tries to develop his all-around game to go with his nonstop motor and athleticism. The Dolphins also brought back longtime stalwart Jason Taylor during the offseason to play on passing downs, so Misi’s ideal sack opportunities have—for the moment—been diminished.

While Miami struggled in 2011, none of these three players has shown the least bit of drop in his resolve.

“The only thing I can control right now is doing what I have to do, which is cover receivers and come up in run support,” Smith says. “I am...
definitely not satisfied [with how we are doing as a team], but at the same time, I know I can definitely play better and help the team.”

Overall, the general consensus among NFL personnel evaluators is that all three players appear to have bright futures in the NFL and aim to be in the league for a long time. Their success is just one reflection of a Utah program that has several other players currently playing in the NFL, including quarterback Alex Smith BS’04 (San Francisco 49ers), offensive tackle Jordan Gross BS’02 and wide receiver Steve Smith ex’00 (both Carolina Panthers), and defensive tackle Sione Po’uha ex’05 (New York Jets).

“They are able to get guys in there at Utah that know how to play football really well,” Misi says. “The coaching staff there is exceptional, and for them to send guys to the NFL like they’re doing really says a lot about the program.”

—Robert Hoffman is a communications instructor at Pennsylvania State University and a freelance sportswriter who is a member of the Professional Football Writers Association.

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U freshman Betymaya Foott stands in front of the Donna Garff Marriott Honors Residential Scholars Community, which is slated to open this coming fall.
A new plan aims to increase the academic quality and success of the University’s student body.

The University of Utah almost lost honors freshman Betymaya Foott to one of several other colleges she had considered while in high school in her hometown of Moab, Utah. “I really wanted to get out of Utah,” says Foott, who now spends some of her spare time showing off the U to prospective undergrads. Academically, Foott fits the profile of what the U wants more of on its campus. She graduated from Grand County High School with a 4.0 GPA. She was valedictorian, captain of her soccer and debate teams, and she was a volunteer at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center. A full-ride Eccles Distinguished Scholar Award and the University’s study abroad and student exchange programs sealed the deal for Foott, who at first was fearful of attending a big university. “I really like it,” she says of her University experience. “I’m surprised how much I like it up here.”
Foott is in it for the long haul now at the U, concentrating on environmental studies and Spanish. “My goal is grad school and beyond,” she says. Her honors advisor, Charlotte Hansen Terry HBA’10, says a lot of bright students like Foott might overlook a good thing in their own backyard. “This happens in every state,” Terry says. But that—and a lot more—will gradually change during the next few years if a new first-of-its kind enrollment management plan being put in place by U officials is a success. Foott is exactly the kind of well-rounded, bright student U leaders want as the University works to shift its overall academic profile.

Starting this year, admissions requirements for incoming freshmen will change, as the U has dropped its so-called admissions index in favor of a more comprehensive evaluation of students’ accomplishments. Dovetailing on that plan will be the fall 2012 opening of the new Donna Garff Marriott Residential Scholars Community, a unique 309-bed residence hall that U officials are counting on to help woo and retain some of the nation’s best college students.

In 2010, the U brought in consultants from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers to help orchestrate a new enrollment plan. And U officials plucked an enrollment expert from Louisiana State University—Mary G. Parker—to put the plan in place. Parker, now the U’s associate vice president for enrollment management, arrived in September 2011 and was given responsibility for bringing together the entire enrollment process, including student recruitment, admissions, registration, financial aid, and network support. She also has the task in the coming months of writing the University’s first Integrated Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. The new enrollment plan is expected to be ready for implementation by the start of the new recruiting season in August.

Parker will be working from a one-page snapshot of change that lists overall enrollment profile goals. The goals document also sketches an “ideal” freshman class of the future, with average ACT scores for incoming students migrating upward from 24.4 to 26 (the upper 15 percent in the nation). Half of those students would live on campus, compared with the current 34 percent. And ideally, 30 percent of freshman students would qualify for the U Honors College, and 20 percent would enroll in it, instead of the current 10 percent. Average SAT scores would be up by about 90 points in each of the test’s three categories. Another ambition is to raise the graduation rate, within the current standard of six years.

In short, if the plan’s goals are achieved, the U student body soon won’t look quite like the one left behind last spring when Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning Paul Brinkman retired. Part of his job during his 20 years at the University was to help piece together the U’s enrollment puzzle. He helped
arrange the funding for and hiring of the consultants for advice on creating an integrated enrollment plan unlike any previous strategic plan at the U. The puzzle pieces included a growing university, lack of student housing, changing admissions requirements, and entry into the Pac-12. “It’s just a lot of things coming together to where you sense the need to develop a more coherent vision,” Brinkman now says.

The U has gone from an open-enrollment policy in the ’80s to being “moderately selective” today, he says. “It has come a long way, but it can go further. We need to do a better job of recruiting
students who will succeed and in retaining them. That’s a complex process.”

The U shouldn’t strive to be an “ivory tower” or a Stanford University, Brinkman says, but it should be among the “upper echelon” of public universities while still providing opportunities for “reasonably able” students in Utah. Going after more students like Foott fits with Brinkman’s idea of a slowly changing campus makeup.

With the number of high school graduates in Utah on the rise (while many other states are in decline), the new plan is expected to help shape exactly how the University grows. Utah Higher Education Commissioner William Sederburg is cheering the U’s efforts, including the plan to “ratchet” up GPA and ACT requirements, and says, “I think this is a little of a new game for the U.”

He wants to see the U avoid becoming a “mega” university like Arizona State University as public institutions in Utah continue to grow. He’d prefer that the U zero in on its research and flagship functions and maintain high standards while the state’s other public institutions absorb some of the projected growth.

Student Affairs Vice President Barbara Snyder says the U’s entry into the Pac-12 provides a perfect opportunity for re-examining enrollment. The U for years used an index system that weighed a student’s high-school GPA and ACT scores in correlation with one another. Students with higher ACT scores could have a lower GPA, and vice versa, and still qualify for admission to the University. Under the new admission profile that will be used starting this year, grades will have twice the importance of test scores. U officials also plan to take a closer look at the whole academic profile of an applicant and ask more probing questions.

What did the student do outside of school? What activities did the student participate in during school? What kinds of classes did the student take? Were there any honors classes?

The days of an “I’m getting in” attitude, with just the minimum required GPA and ACT score, are fading away. “We are no longer doing that,” Parker says. “There is no more guarantee.” Qualified Utah students are the U’s first priority, and they will be
Higher education is an expensive proposition. The number of bright, talented, deserving students grows every year. Thanks to donors whose gifts fund more than 1,200 scholarships, capable students find their path to the future.

Thank you.

www.togetherwereach.net
admitted. The U also will continue recruiting qualified out-of-state students who have Utah ties.

U Student Recruitment Director Mateo Remsburg BA’94 (who holds a master’s from Kansas State) says that as word is spreading about the new profile goals for incoming freshmen, he is hearing a common refrain from high school counselors, who are saying, “Well, it’s about time.” One ripple effect will be that as U admissions requirements tighten and the University starts asking high schools for students’ final transcripts (instead of merely confirming that a student graduated), those students may be less likely to squander their senior year.

Change will be gradual. “It’s like a cruise ship; you can’t turn it on a dime,” Remsburg says. The challenge, he says, will be to become known as a "highly selective" school without being perceived as "elitist." But morphing enrollment expectations will likely mean that marginal students who would have barely made it into the U in the past might not get a nod from the U down the road.

And more of those who do make it in will live on campus, if the U has its way. “I hate the term commuter campus,” Snyder says. She wants to see higher retention rates and students who are more invested in their university, and she believes more campus residents can help achieve those goals. But a new honors dorm won’t be enough, and estimates for new digs put the need at 1,000 to 2,000 beds down the road if the U wants to meet its campus living goal.

Getting students to stay through to graduation will be a key indicator that all of the elements of the new plan are working. The U’s freshman to sophomore retention rate now is around 87 percent, and the six-year graduation rate is 57 percent. That graduation rate ranks the U at third from last in comparison with 21 research-focused institutions nationwide, according to a November 2011 report released by the Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General. Auditors noted that the University’s low rate also doesn’t compare well with the U’s new Pac-12 peers. The University “enrolls a relatively large percentage of students who are not ready to succeed,” the auditors said. “In mathematics and science in particular, many enrolled students [at the U] appear to be ill-prepared.”

Utah has a few more unique reasons why college retention
“We need to do a better job of recruiting students who will succeed and in retaining them. That’s a complex process.”

—Former U Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning Paul Brinkman

and graduation rates lag. Snyder notes that many U students from Utah postpone college until after serving a mission for The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints—young LDS men typically serve two-year missions, while women may serve 18 months. Some students drop out to get married and start families. Others attend classes only when they believe they can afford them.

U officials hope that luring higher-achieving students from Utah and across the nation, in addition to more students living on campus, will mean more graduates. Parker knows she has a huge task: She will craft and put in place the new plan by August, and then there will be yearly analyses. In three to five years, the U will assess how it’s doing with the plan and its enrollment goals, including whether more academically stellar students like Foott have opted to attend the U.

“It is an ongoing process that we will continue to build upon,” Parker says. “It is the way we should be doing business.”

—Stephen Speckman is a freelance writer and photographer based in Salt Lake City.

To view an online gallery with more photos, go to continuum.utah.edu.
A U professor travels the world to document birds’ crucial role and conserve their dwindling numbers.

By Elaine Jarvik

With its bald head, its preposterous neck, its tendency to hunch its shoulders while waiting for something bad to happen, the vulture is a bird that makes us cringe. But look what happened in India. First, the vultures’ habitat was cut down to make way for human villages and farms, and then farmers began medicating their cattle with a painkiller that caused the birds’ kidneys to collapse when they ingested the cattle remains. Vulture populations began to decline—to near-extinction levels in some areas of the country—and then the land was littered with rotting carcasses, which caused the feral dog and rat populations to increase, contributing to a bubonic plague outbreak and the deaths of 48,000 people from rabies.

As Çağan H. Şekercioğlu tells it, this is one more cautionary tale about the perils of diminishing biodiversity. And it’s why, in 2009, he opened the first “vulture restaurant” in his native Turkey (that is to say, a place where the scavengers could get a safe meal, not an eatery with roast vulture on the menu.)
Sentinels

U professor Çağan H. Şekercioğlu radio-tracks Costa Rican forest birds.
 Çağan H. Şekercioğlu (pronounce it cha-HAN shay-KER-joh-loo) is a conservation biologist, ornithologist, and tireless advocate for biodiversity. Last year, he was honored as one of 14 “emerging explorers” by National Geographic for his work in tropical and mountain outposts from Costa Rica to Ethiopia. The distinction recognizes Şekercioğlu as being among the “uniquely gifted and inspiring adventurers, scientists, and storytellers making significant contributions to world knowledge through exploration while still early in their careers.” In 2008, he received Britain’s prestigious Whitley Gold Award for his conservation efforts in Turkey, from the Whitley Fund for Nature. At 36, he is already one of the most cited environmental scientists in the world.

Since 2010, Şekercioğlu has called Salt Lake City home. When the University of Utah wooed him in 2009, he was impressed by both the Department of Biology and its generous offer: a brand-new lab, a generous start-up fund, and enough time away from teaching duties each year to pursue his far-flung fieldwork. During the 2011 Fall Semester, he traveled to Ethiopia, where he set up six bird-banding stations in a remote forest to explore whether climate change is forcing birds to seek higher elevations. He also went to Turkey, where he worked with his nonprofit organization, KuzeyDoğa, on projects including Turkey’s first wildlife corridor and the vulture restaurant, which is modeled after similar safe havens in India and Nepal. And at year’s end, he traveled to New Zealand to participate in the International Congress for Conservation Biology, where he urged the world’s university-based conservation scientists to not just go into the wild and then publish papers, but also to work with local groups that can make conservation happen. Decision-makers, especially in the developing world, he told them, are more likely to follow the recommendations of academics than those of independent NGOs, which they often suspect of having political agendas.

To save birds, he believes, you’ve got to encourage humans to get involved. Increasingly, that means working with grassroots organizations to help them see that saving species can be a win-win for local economies. It also means dealing with bureaucrats to get permits and garner support for ventures such as the 58,000-acre wildlife corridor and a man-made bird-nesting island that Şekercioğlu spearheaded in Turkey’s Lake Kuyucuk.

Sometimes it also means drinking endless cups of tea with government officials. Writer Elif Batuman, in her keenly observed profile of Şekercioğlu published in The New Yorker last fall, quotes him on the matter of tea drinking:

“I should just put on an adult diaper and drink tea all day long,” Çağan reflected, rubbing his eye. “They’ll be like, ‘That Çağan, he’s a really good guy—the other day he had tea with us for five hours. Let’s declare this a protected habitat.’ ”
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Even a short conversation with Şekercioğlu is often a winged migration, a flight that starts in the tropics, perhaps, and then veers off-course toward an even better story.

He might begin with his historical idol, Alfred Russell Wallace, a contemporary of Charles Darwin, and then detour to the 19th-century extinction of a flightless songbird called the Stephens Island wren; then take a sharp turn toward the Ottoman Empire; and then veer east to Papua New Guinea, where the construction of a gas pipeline is destroying habitat yet also making the area accessible to birders. Then, suddenly, he will realize that he is going to be late to a meeting.

"I'm talking too long," he will say then. It is part apology, part the clear-eyed observation of a scientist observing his own behavior. "I often give myself to things. Being a professor these days means doing three, four jobs at once. I am still learning to balance my life."

It is this passion—for stories and work, for life and all living things—that first impressed University of Utah College of Science Dean Pierre Sokolsky. "You can tell immediately that this is not just an academic subject for him," Sokolsky says of Şekercioğlu. "His whole face lights up."

In hiring a new faculty member, Sokolsky says, "what you're really trying to hire is the intellect and the energy," rather than to more narrowly find a person who does a particular type of research. The dean was also struck by Şekercioğlu's ability to reach out to the world's millions of bird watchers, and beyond them to the general public, to make science not just accessible but a heart-pounding experience.

Bird "watching" hardly captures the lengths to which Şekercioğlu goes to find the planet's nearly 10,000 bird species. He is No. 69 in the world in number of bird species observed (last count: 5,781) and one of the handful in their 30s who has seen more than half the world's bird species. "If I live to an old age and am able physically," he says, "8,000 species is possible."

To track down, keep track of, and study the habitats of everything from the scruffy bald ibis to the showy keel-billed toucan, Şekercioğlu has endured the following: He was chased by a machete-wielding mob in Costa Rica (they thought he was a thief when in fact he was searching for a Pacific screech-owl); he was charged by an elephant in Tanzania; he acquired the skin disease form of leishmaniasis in Peru from the bite of a sand fly; he almost lost his legs to a lymph system infection in Papua New Guinea; he came face to face with a grizzly bear in Alaska; and he was carjacked by AK-47-toting tribesmen in Ethiopia. Still, he says, it's safer to do fieldwork than to drive a car in his native Istanbul.

Fieldwork—not just studying the habits and habitats of birds but working with local communities to save species—is essential for solving the world's conservation problems, he says. But with the growing pressure on academic scientists to publish quickly and on big topics, biologists tend increasingly to work with existing data sets. And funding to do long-term field research gets harder and harder to come by.
On a recent afternoon, Şekercioğlu re-enacts what it was like to come upon the book that changed his life. He gets up from his desk in his office in the U's South Biology Building, walks to the bookshelf, and picks up the *Collins Field Guide: Birds of Britain and Europe*. He was 14 when he first found it on the shelf of his high school library in Istanbul and was awed by what the world offered.

His father bought him a pair of Russian-made military binoculars, and, despite the fact that their heft gave him a neck ache, he wore them everywhere. Before it was birds, it was insects. And frogs. And hedgehogs. He made his first insect net out of his mother’s wedding veil. He taught himself to read when he was 4 years old (his parents wearied of reading him yet another book about animals). He read about Darwin at age 5 (although he thought Darwin had written *On the Origin of Türks*, since the Turkish word for “species” is “Tür”).

Worried that he preferred insects to soccer, his parents took him to a psychiatrist, who assured them that he was normal. But in Turkey at that time, he says, there was not a single role model for a boy who wanted to study wildlife. “If you’re good at science,” the conventional wisdom went, “you should become a doctor or an engineer.” To this day, no university in Turkey has an ecology department, and in all of Istanbul, there isn’t a single natural history museum.

Because there also weren’t many natural history books in Turkish, he read them in English. And that, he says, eventually boosted his college entrance exam scores, and that helped him get a full scholarship to Harvard University. It also probably didn’t hurt that at age 16 he contributed a rare beetle to the Harvard entomology collection. He got his doctorate at Stanford University, studying with famed population biologist Paul Ehrlich. While still in college, at age 23, Şekercioğlu initiated a study of a community of more than 400 bird species in Costa Rica. (So far, the project has mist-netted more than 60,000 birds of 262 species, radio-tracked about 450 birds, and monitored hundreds of bird nests.) The work has helped reveal how tropical forest birds respond to agriculture and deforestation. He also organized a worldwide bird ecology database that covers all of the world’s 10,000-plus bird species—one of the world’s most comprehensive archives of any class of organism, he says—and which he updates based on the literature and his field experience.

And that brings us to the heart of Şekercioğlu’s work.

Farming, logging, cities, roads: Over the centuries, birds have had to make room for human pursuits and have sometimes become extinct in the process. Now, add to that the threat of climate change, says Şekercioğlu.

“Even if we were oblivious to the present changes in Earth’s climate,” he writes with co-author Janice Wormworth in the 2011 book *Winged Sentinels: Birds and Climate Change*, “a careful look at birds’ patterns of responses over recent decades would warn us that some sort of widespread and systematic change is afoot.”
When and where and how often they breed, for example, can give us a clue that their ecosystem is awry. They are nearly literally the “canary in the coal mine,” warning of what might follow for other species, says Şekercioğlu. And their diminishing numbers could have a direct effect on the planet. The seeds of rainforest trees, for example, are mainly dispersed by birds. If the birds dwindle or become extinct, eventually, the trees will, too. As part of his efforts to help preserve those tropical species, Şekercioğlu co-authored the 2011 book *Conservation of Tropical Birds*, another exploration of how climate change, habitat loss, and invasive species affect birds and other wildlife.

In a 2008 study published in the journal *Conservation Biology*, Şekercioğlu and his colleagues at Stanford predicted that if the Earth’s surface temperature rises 2.8 degrees Celsius by the end of this century (a moderate scenario, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), it could trigger the extinction of 400 to 550 bird species. Part of that is due to what he calls the “escalator effect”—as habitats get warmer and vegetation changes, birds move to higher elevations; eventually they run out of places for escape. A worst-case scenario of habitat loss plus 6.4 degrees Celsius warming could mean more than 2,500 land birds would become extinct by the year 2100, about 30 percent of all land bird species.

The good news, though, is that even a reduction of 1 degree Celsius of warming can make a huge difference, Şekercioğlu says, resulting in up to 500 fewer bird extinctions. We can also make sure there are vegetation corridors between forest fragments; we can improve the “hospitality” of farmland so birds can thrive.

Our economic system is based on constant growth, notes Şekercioğlu, and we humans are a “short-sighted species... Our brains are not wired to deal with long-term, catastrophic threats” such as climate change. At the other extreme, though, by the time scientific data are condensed into a magazine article or summarized in a misleading headline, projections can look worse than they are. It’s a constant struggle to make sure the science reporting is accurate, he says, and that the real environmental threats aren’t overlooked.

Like any scientist, he sometimes uses fuzzy phrases like “bird-mediated ecosystem process” and “avian extinction correlates.” But Şekercioğlu is also a photographer and a storyteller, a cheerleader for every bird that flies or swims or waddles. If he could be any bird at all, he says, he would be a raptor. In English, his first name translates as “hawk.” But it’s not just that. He would rather be the bird that isn’t eaten, the one that lives long enough to see every other bird. He would rather be a long-distance traveler, spreading the word.

— Elaine Jarvik is a freelance writer and playwright based in Salt Lake City.

Visit continuum.utah.edu to view two videos and a photo gallery with more images of Şekercioğlu and his work.
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Two figures are bent over *The Diary of Anne Frank* where it lies open on the library table. The one with the distinguished fringe of white hair is John Bennion, the immediate past president of the University of Utah’s Emeritus Alumni Board, whose members graduated from the University 40 or more years ago. The other is much younger, 12 to be exact, her hair hidden beneath a beautifully embroidered Muslim headscarf, her brown eyes dancing as she reads about a girl not much older than herself.

It’s partly due to Bennion’s efforts that Binti Aden, whose family came to Utah as refugees from Somalia when she was a toddler, is able to read Anne Frank’s story. Binti’s parents, although they are very supportive, don’t speak much English, so they’ve never been able to offer her help with homework or reading in English—the everyday help many American students take for granted. Binti and more than a hundred other refugee and immigrant classmates at Bryant Middle School in Salt Lake City are below grade level in English and are struggling to gain the reading and writing skills that will mainstream them out of the school’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program and on to a path toward successful adult careers.
That’s why Bennion BS’61 MA’62, an educational consultant and former University of Utah professor of urban education, established the Emeritus Alumni Board’s Bryant Scholarship Project. The grandson of Milton Bennion (former dean of the University of Utah School of Education) and son of M. Lynn Bennion BS’26 MS’31 (former superintendent of the Salt Lake City School District), John Bennion obtained degrees in humanities from the U before going on to finish a doctorate in educational administration and leadership at Ohio State University in 1966. He was superintendent of school districts in Rochester, N.Y.; Bloomington, Minn.; and Provo, Utah; and then eventually followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming superintendent of the Salt Lake City School District from 1985 to 1994.

Bennion has spent a lifetime helping children get the education they need to succeed, working hard to bridge the achievement gap between students of varying economic, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds. In 1998, he organized the Utah Urban School Alliance, and in 2002 he was awarded the American Association of School Administrators Distinguished Service award for his lifetime contributions to education.

Bennion was inspired to establish the Bryant program several years ago while serving as chair of the Emeritus Alumni Board’s Service Committee. “I thought that a very worthwhile service project would be to recruit emeritus alumni to tutor in a school that was full of students with diverse backgrounds,” Bennion says, “including students who were refugees and had traumatic experiences before coming to the United States. Bryant Middle School seemed like a good bet.”

Located near the Avenues neighborhood of Salt Lake City, Bryant Middle School (which sits on the same site as the former Bryant Junior High, of which Bennion was an alum) is fed by several elementary schools from the inner city. This year, of the 540 students in Bryant’s seventh and eighth grades, 45 percent speak one of 30 languages other than English at home. More than a hundred of Bryant’s students are considered “English learners” who aren’t fluent in English and are enrolled in its ESL program, and nearly two dozen are refugees from coun-

“The idea emerged of finding a way to incentivize students we’ve tutored as they leave Bryant—those who showed academic promise—so they have a reason for doing their best in high school and being college-ready when they leave high school.”

— U alumnus John Bennion
tries such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, and Bosnia.

Bennion contacted Bryant’s principal, Frances Battle, and the school’s ESL teacher and Alternative Language Services (ALS) coordinator, Michelle Stimpson BA’00 MEd’03. Both were enthusiastic about having University of Utah alumni tutor some of their students.

Now the tutoring project Bennion envisioned is in its fourth year, with 18 tutors helping 19 students this academic year. According to Stimpson, the pool of tutors includes not just Emeritus Alumni Board members, but also other alumni, University students, and friends and families of alumni. Tutors don’t need formal training. They just need to read with the kids and help them talk about what they’ve read. Ted Nagata MFA’60, a tutor, former Emeritus Alumni Board member and retired graphic artist, says when he meets with his students, “we talk about everything. I always want to know how their day went, what they do in the evening, what TV programs they watch. We talk about the Jazz or football. I spend a good portion of the time just conversing with them. That’s part of learning.”

As the tutoring project took off, Bennion says, “the idea emerged of finding a way to incentivize students we’ve tutored as they leave Bryant—those who showed academic promise—so they have a reason for doing their best in high school and being college-ready when they leave high school.” When Bennion suggested a scholarship program, another Emeritus Board member, who wished to remain unidentified, generously donated a $5,000 scholarship to the University of Utah for each of nine candidates Bennion identified.

The next year, the Emeritus Alumni Board raised another $10,000, the original donor and the Alumni Association matched that, and additional contributions filled the coffers until five more promising students could receive the same scholarship. The board hopes to fund a $5,000 scholarship for at least four more students every year.

While many students are tutored by the volunteers, not all will qualify for the scholarship. Candidates are tracked beyond Bryant, throughout high school. “This scholarship will only be given if the students meet certain challenging criteria in high school,” Bennion says. The students must maintain good grades, score well on the ACT, and meet with their cohort a few times a year for progress reports and positive peer support.
Binti Aden, who is from Somalia, works on her writing with University of Utah alumnus John Bennion.

In addition to being the driving force behind the tutoring and scholarship project, Bennion is also a tutor. “Mr. Bennion, he helps me understand the words. He helps me spell the words and hear their sounds,” says Binti. “It’s been good.”

Binti isn’t just learning to read books. She’s writing one. In fact, she’s already 7,000 words into her novel, which she calls “a fairytale-ish story.” She’s also writing the story of her life, which includes siblings left behind in Africa. She credits Bennion with helping her learn to write so that other people can understand her stories. “Sometimes when I write, I don’t know what I’m writing, I just can’t stop. When I read it, I don’t even understand it!” she says, laughing. But with Bennion helping her, she says, “It’s getting better.”

Successes like Binti’s excite Stimpson and Principal Battle. “I’m just pleased that we have this opportunity,” says Battle. “There are many schools where [the Emeritus Alumni Board] could be doing this, but they chose Bryant. …I feel strongly about a community being invested in the growth and development of our students, and that’s one of the things that this program is definitely providing. It’s a wonderful partnership.”

“It’s a partnership that’s working. Bryant continues to pass Annual Yearly Progress requirements (part of the No Child Left Behind program) every year in language arts, showing that their English language learners are making progress according to federal guidelines. “We credit our tutor program with having helped us to achieve this goal each year,” Stimpson says.

But there’s more to the tutoring program than test scores. “The tutoring is wonderful in the academics,” says Battle, “but it’s also great to help the students with transitions during middle school. There’s another person who’s invested in what the student is doing, helping to mentor. Being in middle school and dealing with adolescence is one thing, but then when you have a language barrier coupled with that, that’s even greater.” Stimpson agrees, saying, “The difference I care most about is the looks on the faces of the kids when their tutor shows up.”

Carolyn Kump BS’53—president of the Emeritus Alumni Board, former educator, and community volunteer—has tutored at Bryant all four years. “I wouldn’t give it up for anything,” she says. “The one-on-one makes the student feel like someone cares enough to take the time.” She admits it’s not just the kids who benefit. After a particularly successful session with a student, Kump says, “It is so exhilarating to me. I feel a high, like maybe you touched someone’s life in a positive way, and that’s the best thing you can do in this world.”

The Bryant Scholarship Project depends on the generosity of alumni and caring community members, both as tutors and as donors to fund future scholarships. Battle and Stimpson worry that some of their ESL students don’t have a tutor, and many kids have come to them requesting one. They’re always on the lookout for more tutors, because the impact on kids like Binti is encouraging. “Parents have expressed to me that a tutor does for their kids what they wish they could do,” says Stimpson. “They wish they could sit down and help them with their homework, help them with what they’re reading, so they are grateful.”

As the first group of tutored students navigates their way through high school now, Bennion enjoys watching their progress. “I think it’s reinforced my belief that to help at-risk kids be successful and fulfill their potential, there needs to be a lot of positive intervention in their lives,” he says. Because of Bennion’s contagious belief and tireless drive to make a difference, tutors from the Emeritus Board are helping ensure that at least some of Bryant Middle School’s ESL students have a better shot at getting the education they deserve. And that’s why, for an hour every week, anyone looking for Bennion will find him sitting in the library with a determined seventh-grader named Binti, helping her learn to spell words like “success.”

— Kelley J.P. Lindberg BS’84 is a freelance writer based in Layton, Utah.

If you are interested in becoming a tutor in the Bryant program or donating to the scholarship fund, contact Joanne Beardshall at the Alumni Association at joanne.beardshall@alumni.utah.edu.

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Anthropologist Alan Rogers’ book aims to convince skeptics that Darwin was right.

By Marcia C. Dibble
Photos by August Miller
E ven as a child, Alan Rogers was fascinated by evolution and fossils. During a boyhood visit to an uncle's home in a fossil-rich area of Texas, young Alan had soon gathered dozens of the ancient remains, and by looking them up in a volume about the state's fossils, he learned that his were from creatures that had lived in the upper Cretaceous period, between 65 and 100 million years ago. His uncle, however, was skeptical. "Couldn't God have created those rocks all at once," he asked, "with the fossils right in them?" The boy was at a loss to reply.

Rogers was born in Texas, where his father was a Southern Baptist minister. Rogers' father eventually left the ministry to practice clinical psychology, the field in which his mother worked, as well. The family lived in Louisiana until Alan was about 7, when they moved to Charleston, W. Va., and began attending an American Baptist church. Rogers' mother had grown up on a farm, while his father came from a poor family in north Texas, and scientific endeavors and intellectual inquiry weren't considered significant by most. Many of their relatives viewed Alan and his family as "objects of curiosity," he recalls, but the couple were educated and wanted their children to be.

Many years after that conversation with his uncle, Rogers went on to become an anthropologist specializing in population genetics and evolutionary ecology. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas-Austin, completed his doctorate at the University of New Mexico in 1982, and came to the University of Utah in 1988. During his studies, he notes, he learned that his uncle had made the same argument first presented by Philip Henry Gosse in the 1850s—and that it had been tackled many times over in the decades since.

Yet despite more exchanges similar to that with his uncle, it wasn't until around 2006 that Rogers felt the need to share "proof" of evolution in his U. undergraduate course Evolution of Human Nature (Anth 1050), after reading a poll reporting that only about half of Americans believe humans evolved. Rogers began spending a week or two in this introductory class focusing on the evidence. And finding no adequate textbook to help him in the task, he finally wrote one, The Evidence for Evolution, published in June 2011 by the University of Chicago Press.

Rogers sat down with Continuum to talk about the book and his own evolution as a thinker and teacher.

[Danielle Flores listens to Alan Rogers in his class.] (Growing up attending an American Baptist church in the South, were you aware of what other people talked about versus what your church talked about?) I was engrossed in evolution from about the age of 9 or 8, and I don't remember any difficulty with that in the church in West Virginia. It wasn't as though they were teaching us evolution, but they weren't opposing it. However, when I went to visit the church where my father was ordained in Texas, when I was about 10... the Sunday school teacher gave a little presentation about evolution. It was mainly a presentation about Genesis, but then he said, 'Now, there's some people who think that first of all there was this big ocean, and they don't say where that came from. And then something appeared that was alive somehow by magic in the middle of it, and it grew arms and legs and crawled out on land and that was man.' So, my hand went up, and I said, 'Pardon me, but I don't think that's quite how it went.' And so we had this conversation, this 40-year-old man and me at the age of 10. And it went back and forth. I don't remember all the details of it, but I remember at the end, he said, 'Now, wait a minute. Do you or do you not take the Holy Bible to be the literal word of God?' And I knew from my parents what the right answer was to that. I knew that you weren't supposed to interpret the Bible literally, that there was a lot of it that was metaphorical. So I said, 'Well, no.' And he said, 'Then I have nothing further to say to you.' And that was the end of the conversation. And I
students recently or over the years that hadn’t been noticed things from the esoteric details of how evolution works to a bunch of students who didn’t make much sense to be teaching science to students who were among the people who had these doubts?

I had had the odd student come to me privately and say, ‘I just want you to know that I don’t believe any of this stuff. I’m going to try to memorize it so that I can get a good grade, but I don’t believe it.’ And I have always responded, ‘Well, that’s fine. As long as you can answer the questions on the exam, that’s all that’s required.’ I haven’t had many such occasions, and there haven’t been many open objections during class, either, but all of this is understandable. People would not be likely to sort of expose themselves in a big classroom like that. I’ve found out a little more about that kind of thing in the last couple of years when I’ve been teaching the evidence for evolution more, because I really do try to get discussion going.

So you started trying to go over some of this underlying knowledge in your introduction to evolution course: ‘Before we start talking about how it happens, let’s prove that it has happened, it does happen, it continues to happen.’

That’s right.

And then, you realized you wanted a textbook to help with this, and there was nothing you could find that was satisfactory?

People who write textbooks like this, they’re all college professors, mainly, right? So we have this tendency to think that when we speak, people are gonna believe what we say. So, textbooks are written that way, as though the reader is just this vessel into which you have to pour knowledge, rather than a skeptical critic of everything you say. So, I tried to write for that skeptical critic.

led you to believe that some of your students were among the people who had these doubts?

And yet, after you started teaching evolution, you taught it for some 25 years with jumping right into, ‘Let’s talk about the mechanics of evolution and how it happens.’ And it was only fairly recently that you went, ‘Wait, something is going on. I have to address the foundations.’

That’s right. It was during the Dover trials, if you remember those [Kitzmiller v. Dover Area (Pa.) School District in late 2005, when plaintiffs successfully argued against the teaching of intelligent design as an alternative to evolution in ninth-grade science classes]. ...It [the trial] got a lot of press, and as part of that press, they went over some of the polling data that had come out. And it was at that time that it dawned on me that it didn’t make much sense to be teaching about the esoteric details of how evolution works to a bunch of students who weren’t at all clear that it worked at all.

Had you begun noticing things from students recently or over the years that sat there, a little pariah at the age of 10 in Sunday school class. It was very, very awkward. So that was my first introduction to the anti-evolutionary perspective that is widespread, certainly in the American South.

And after you started teaching evolution, you taught it for some 25 years with jumping right into, ‘Let’s talk about the mechanics of evolution and how it happens.’ And it was only fairly recently that you went, ‘Wait, something is going on. I have to address the foundations.’

That’s right. It was during the Dover trials, if you remember those [Kitzmiller v. Dover Area (Pa.) School District in late 2005, when plaintiffs successfully argued against the teaching of intelligent design as an alternative to evolution in ninth-grade science classes]. ...It [the trial] got a lot of press, and as part of that press, they went over some of the polling data that had come out. And it was at that time that it dawned on me that it didn’t make much sense to be teaching about the esoteric details of how evolution works to a bunch of students who weren’t at all clear that it worked at all.

Had you begun noticing things from students recently or over the years that...
You saved the discussion of people until [near the very end of the book]. And the question of the evolution of people is, I think, obviously the biggest. I think a lot of people who are skeptical about some aspects can accept evolution in general...

Absolutely.

They understand that bacteria can evolve and that we need to be concerned about that. They understand and accept all these small things. People—humans—are the sticking point.

It’s interesting. Everybody who writes these books saves people until last. For me, there were sort of two reasons. One was that I didn’t want to talk about people until the reader was onboard with the notion of all this other stuff, with the notion that evolution really does happen, so that if people were different, they really would be an exception. ...I wanted to introduce [the foundations] in a less controversial and less threatening context... so that by the time the reader gets to that chapter on people, they have the tools they need to understand the evidence.

For some of the people who are just general skeptics of science, lay people, do you think part of the problem is the scientific use of the word ‘theory’? We talk about the ‘theory of evolution.’ Evolutionary scientists mean that this is basically fact, well-supported by broad evidence. But does this word ‘theory’ create a problem and an opening for skeptics?

Well, certainly it has been used by skeptics. But my own hunch about that is that the word ‘theory’ doesn’t really affect anybody’s thinking much. We’re all comfortable with lots of words that have multiple meanings. The word ‘fly.’ We’re really familiar with words like fly that can mean different things. And ‘theory’ is such a word. And because it has different meanings, it’s possible for people in a debate, if their minds are already made up, they can misconstrue the argument by adopting an inappropriate definition of the word theory, and then misconstrue what is said. But I think it’s a debating tactic. My hunch, and I could be wrong, is that it isn’t really the thing that convinces people; it is a tactic that they employ once they’re already convinced. So I have never really been concerned with this issue.

Is gravity a theory?

Well, it’s also a fact. Just as evolution is a theory and also a fact.

Have you ever tried to tackle head on the idea that ‘the Earth was created in seven days’? Have you ever tried to address, well, ‘Maybe that means God days? God is not human, God is different...’

That was my father’s argument.
The final tally from the Utah vs. BYU food drive is in! A remarkable total of 616,398 pounds of food and $153,792 in cash donations were raised for the Utah Food Bank and the United Way Food Bank of Utah County. Of the combined total, University of Utah organizers were responsible for 421,798 pounds of food and $108,045 in cash donations that went to the Utah Food Bank, an increase of 69,573 pounds and $15,011 in cash donations over the U's 2010 record.

The generous donations came despite the lack of a rivalry football game with Brigham Young University this year during the time of the food drive; in past years, the rivalry game had helped spur donations. But the Student Alumni Board of the University of Utah Alumni Association, The MUSS Board, the Associated Students of the University of Utah, and volunteers worked with community members in November in a big effort to fight hunger in Utah.

The U food drive ran Nov. 12-25, with collection spots on campus, in local grocery stores, at the Utah Food Bank, and at Rice-Eccles Stadium when Utah played Colorado on November 25 during the last Pac-12 football game of the season. The results were unprecedented.

“The increase is directly attributable to the University of Utah community not being willing to let someone go hungry simply because there wasn’t a rivalry week football game,” says John Fackler BS’89 BS’94 Mpra’95, the Alumni Association’s director of business and outreach. “We did a reality check in mid-October and realized that despite difficulties, we’d go back to the food drive basics: promoting school spirit, beating BYU, providing hope. That’s when members of the Alumni Association’s Community Service Committee, Student Alumni Board, and The MUSS Board redoubled their commitment to the cause.”

In addition to the food drive, efforts to raise hunger awareness took place all over campus during the month of November. The U’s College of Social Work challenged community members and faculty to take part in the Utah Food Stamp Challenge Nov. 8-14. Participants in the challenge experienced what it’s like to rely on a food stamp budget for a full week. More than 293,000 Utahns use food stamps to feed their families, and the average allowance they get is a daily budget of $4 per person—roughly $1.33 per meal.

The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center hosted its annual Hunger Banquet on November 22. Community members ate a dinner of soup and bread at the banquet, which focused on exploring hunger in Utah. Every day, 63,000 people in Utah eat dinner at a soup kitchen. Proceeds from the banquet went toward supporting the food drive.

“This year’s food drive is a great example of the ability of Utah alumni and students to come together and help the community, even without a big rivalry week game,” Fackler says. “Some individuals and businesses made large individual donations of food and money, which are greatly appreciated. But the heart and soul of this effort were literally thousands of Utah supporters giving what they could. Students bringing cans to their schools. Shoppers donating to volunteers at grocery stores. And we received extremely generous donations from fans and tailgaters on game day.”
Four outstanding graduates of the University of Utah and one honorary alumnus have been presented with the 2012 Founders Day awards.

Actress Klea Blackhurst BFA'85, businessman H. Roger Boyer BS'65, former U vice president J. Michael Mattsson BS'60, and scientist Arthur L. Ruoff PhD'55 received the Distinguished Alumnus/a Award at the University of Utah Alumni Association’s Founders Day Banquet on February 22. These awards are the highest honor the Alumni Association gives to U graduates, in recognition of their outstanding professional achievements and/or public service.

Gary Crocker, a Utah entrepreneur, received an Honorary Alumnus Award, in recognition of his support of the University.

Blackhurst, who graduated from the U with a degree in theater, lives and works in New York and currently plays Shelby Cross on The Onion News Network. Her first big break was in Oil City Symphony at Circle in the Square Downtown. Since then, she has performed on both New York and London stages. Her homage to Ethel Merman, Everything the Traffic Will Allow, was met with critical acclaim when it opened in 2001 and was honored with the inaugural Special Achievement Award from Time Out New York magazine as well as the 2002 Manhattan Association of Cabaret and Clubs award for Best Female Vocalist.

Boyer is chairman and founder of The Boyer Company, which has developed commercial properties throughout the Intermountain West, including The Gateway shopping center in Salt Lake City and several buildings in the U’s Research Park. After graduating from the U, Boyer went on to obtain a master’s degree in business administration from Harvard University. He was an executive with Terracor, a Salt Lake-based land and residential development company, until he founded The Boyer Company in 1972. He is a former chair of the Utah Division of Business and Economic Development Board and a former member of the University of Utah’s Board of Trustees.

Mattsson was the University of Utah’s vice president of development from 1985 to 2006. At the time of Mattsson’s retirement, former U President David Gardner said, “I can think of no other individual from the time I first knew Mike in 1973 to today who has had more influence on the University’s efforts to make friends and secure private funding.” Mattsson graduated from the U with a degree in political science in 1960. He became the director of development and communications for the University of Utah Medical Center in 1972. Under his leadership as the University’s first vice president for development, the U raised a then-unprecedented $1.7 billion.

Ruoff has had an influential and award-winning career in the field of materials science. He has been a professor at Cornell University since he graduated with his doctorate in chemistry from the University of Utah in 1955. Ruoff won the Westinghouse Award for Outstanding Teaching, wrote two influential books on materials science, and served as chair of the Department of Materials Science at Cornell from 1978 to 1988. His research has focused on the structural and electronic behavior of materials at extreme pressures. “His award-winning research has changed our fundamental understanding of how matter behaves under extreme conditions,” says Henry S. White, Distinguished Professor and chair of the U’s Chemistry Department.

Crocker is president of Crocker Ventures and chairman of Merrimack Pharmaceuticals, and has been honored as Entrepreneur of the Year for Utah by both Ernst & Young and the MountainWest Capital Network. He received both a bachelor’s degree and an MBA from Harvard University. He currently serves as chair of the University of Utah College of Science Advisory Board. And he is the lead donor in the renovation of the historic George Thomas Building (former home of the Natural History Museum of Utah), which will become the Crocker Science Center, a state-of-the-art center for scientific research and teaching for the College of Science.

The 2012 Founders Day Award recipients, from top, are Arthur L. Ruoff, Gary Crocker, Klea Blackhurst, J. Michael Mattsson, and H. Roger Boyer.
The University of Utah community is being called upon to support higher education in 2012 at the most fundamentally important and influential level of Utah politics—the delegate selection process.

Utah has a rather unique political nominating system: It is one of seven states that use a caucus/convention system as a method for bypassing primary elections. This means that Utah’s candidates for state and federal office often are chosen by delegates, not by voters in a primary election. How are these delegates chosen? By ordinary citizens who attend neighborhood caucus meetings one night of the year (even-numbered years only) in March. This year’s meetings are March 13 at 7 p.m. for Democrats and March 15 at 7 p.m. for Republicans.

Historically, only about 2 percent of Utahns have attended their caucus meetings, meaning the other 98 percent choose from the candidates that this sliver of the population has nominated. It’s important to become part of the process by selecting those who do the nominating—the delegates—or by becoming delegates. Without voices for higher education among the delegates, the higher education community is fighting an uphill battle for support at the Utah State Legislature. It’s not enough to try to influence what the decision makers are deciding. Utah residents need to influence who those decision makers are, and that begins with the delegate selection process at the precinct caucus meetings.

To help faculty, staff, students, and alumni learn more about how to become a delegate, a nonpartisan group called Education First conducted precinct caucus training sessions on the University of Utah campus and on other campuses across the state in February. The University of Utah Alumni Association helped mobilize people who had signed up to be political advocates for the U by getting the word out to them about the sessions. The purpose of these training sessions was to give people the basic tools and knowledge needed to attend their local meeting and be an effective voice. The training was a free service provided by the University of Utah and Education First. Alumni in other parts of the state were able to attend training sessions on other public-college campuses that were closer and more convenient for them.
Moran Eye Center

Night for Sight

Dinner and Auction Benefiting the Division of International Ophthalmology at the Moran Eye Center
Saturday, March 24, 2012, 5:30 p.m., Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort

The Division of International Ophthalmology at the Moran Eye Center has a proud tradition of providing eye care and critical training to areas of the world where specialized care is inadequate or nonexistent. The World Health Organization reports that over 150 million people living in the developing world are “functionally blind,” and of those cases, four out of five could be cured through simple surgery. With a dedication to international ophthalmology, Moran’s physicians are using their surgical and academic expertise to reduce unnecessary world blindness.

For more information, see our website, www.moraneyecenter.com, or contact Heidi Reid at (801) 213-4103 or heidi.reid@hsc.utah.edu.

John A. Moran Eye Center, 65 Mario Capecchi Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84132
through the years

'60s

Clayton J. Parr BS’60 MS’65 JD’68 has received the Clyde O. Martz Teaching Award. Established in 1993 by the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation’s Board of Trustees to honor excellence in the teaching of natural resources law, the award is given only when merited. Parr joined the law firm of Parr Brown Gee & Loveless in 1976. He first taught at the University of Utah in 1977-78 when he served as a visiting associate professor to teach legal writing and research. From 1994 to 2009, he regularly taught the mining law class as an adjunct professor. He also served for 20 years as professional advisor to the Utah Law Review and participated for many years as a member of the law school’s alumni board, including a term as chair.

Frank C. Overfelt BA’69 MBA’70 (who served as University of Utah student body president 1969-70) recently received the Excellence in Management Engineering/Process Improvement Award from the worldwide Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS). Overfelt has been a healthcare consultant with Kaiser Permanente, Intermountain Healthcare, and KPMG Peat Marwick and principal of his own consulting practice for 33 years. A former national vice president and board member of HIMSS, he has served more than 100 hospitals in 25 states, the District of Columbia, and two foreign countries.

'70s

Ross C. “Rocky” Anderson BS’73 (J.D., George Washington University), former mayor of Salt Lake City, has launched a new national political party, the Justice Party, and is its U.S. presidential nominee. Anderson, one of Utah’s most liberal politicians and now executive director of High Road for Human Rights, first threw out the idea of a new political party last summer, when he renounced his affiliation with the Democratic Party. Anderson says he wants the new party to bring about the shift in

Former U.S. Ambassador John Price Recounts His Career In Memoir

John Price BS’56, a successful Utah businessman and former international diplomat, has published the memoir When the White House Calls: From Immigrant Entrepreneur to U.S. Ambassador (University of Utah Press, June 2011). The memoir recounts his life story, beginning with his birth in Germany through his years as a successful builder and real estate developer with business interests in broadcasting, manufacturing, distribution, and banking. The book goes on to recount his life as a diplomat, serving as U.S. ambassador to three Indian Ocean island nations off the east coast of Africa, and his thoughts on the future of sub-Saharan Africa, where he has spent considerable time, both prior to and since his ambassadorship. In a world concerned with the global war on terror, Price reflects on the nations where he served and on the region’s increasing strategic importance to the national security of the United States. Price currently lives in Salt Lake City with his wife, Marcia. They have three children and eight grandchildren. The Prices are the namesake donors of the University of Utah’s Marcia & John Price Museum Building, home of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. In 1996, the Prices pledged a gift of $7 million for the new museum, then the largest single gift ever given to a cultural organization in the state. Even before it opened, the Price Museum Building won numerous honors, including awards for excellence in design from the Boston Society of Architects and the New England Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Learn more about John Price at his Web site, www.ambassadorjohnprice.com.
American politics that he says citizens desire. In a KSL Radio interview in November, he said, “I just hope we can be involved in the debate, because if we don’t, we’re just going to be hearing a bunch of sound bites from people who between their two parties have colluded in so many ways in serving the interests of their campaign contributors, the wealthy and the powerful.” Anderson said that government has driven up the deficit while cutting taxes for those most capable of paying them, and that leaders have failed to provide affordable, essential health care for all Americans.

Daniel L. Orr II MS’79, DDS, Ph.D., J.D., M.D., received the 2011 Daniel M. Laskin Award for an Outstanding Predoctoral Educator from the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. In 2007, after 28 years in a successful Las Vegas oral and maxillofacial surgery (OMS) practice, Orr embarked on a career in academe at the University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine, where he currently serves as professor and director of oral and maxillofacial surgery and advanced pain control. Orr is also a clinical professor of surgery and anesthesiology at the University of Nevada School of Medicine and chief of oral and maxillofacial surgery at University Medical Center. He is the postmortem coordinator for the U.S. Public Health Service National Disaster Medical System for Nevada, chair of the Anesthesia Committee of the Nevada State Society of OMS (of which he is also a past president), and the editor of the Nevada Dental Association journal. He also serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and the Journal of Dental Education.

Healthcare Administrator Wins Deming Cup From Columbia U

Brent C. James BS’74 (computer science) BS’76 (medical biology) MD’78 MS’84 (master’s of statistics), chief quality officer at Intermountain Healthcare, was presented with the 2011 Deming Cup prize from Columbia University’s Business School. The award is given annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions in the area of operations and has established a culture of continuous improvement within his or her respective organization. In November, James was also named by Modern Healthcare among its “Top 25 Clinical Informaticists.” The magazine’s new awards and honors program recognizes medical professionals who excel at using patient-care data to improve both the clinical and financial performance of their healthcare organizations. James is recognized among the most influential leaders in healthcare nationally and has often given testimony before congressional committees. As the leader of Intermountain’s Institute for Healthcare Delivery Research, which offers advanced training program courses for healthcare executives, James has instructed more than 5,500 healthcare leaders from throughout the world in his courses in Salt Lake City. An additional 7,500 people have been trained at one of James’ 50 sister training programs in the U.S at places such as the University of Texas’ MD Anderson Cancer Center and California-based Sutter Health, and at locations internationally. Raised on a ranch in Idaho, educated in Utah, and trained and established as a surgeon in Boston, James returned to Utah from Harvard University and joined Intermountain Healthcare in 1986.

LM Lifetime Member of the Alumni Association  AM Annual Member of the Alumni Association
Ronald L. Weiss MBA'89, M.D., FCAP, has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the College of American Pathologists. According to the college, the award honors members “who have made a broad and positive impact on patient care through the specialty of pathology.” Weiss is a professor of pathology at the University of Utah’s School of Medicine and currently serves as a staff hematopathologist at ARUP Laboratories, where he has previously served in management positions including president/chief operating officer and chief medical officer/director of laboratories. Weiss received his medical doctorate from the Creighton University School of Medicine. He trained in anatomic and clinical pathology and completed a fellowship in medical microbiology at the University of Utah before joining the Department of Pathology faculty in 1986. LM

DeBernard MAr'96, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C, has been named senior vice president and director of acquisitions for Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm headquartered in Fairfax, Va. With more than 25 years of architectural experience in small, medium, and large firms, DeBernard’s skills include design, construction, project management, team development, operations, leadership, and strategic planning. In her most recent role at Leo A Daly, she was responsible for leading an acquisition team including transition and integration planning. In addition to a master’s in architecture from the U, she holds a bachelor’s in environmental planning from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is a registered architect in Virginia and Arizona and is a member of the American Institute of Architects, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the National Council for Architectural Registration Board.

Deborah (Mohr Pincolini) DeBernard MAr’96, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C, has been named senior vice president and director of acquisitions for Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm headquartered in Fairfax, Va. With more than 25 years of architectural experience in small, medium, and large firms, DeBernard’s skills include design, construction, project management, team development, operations, leadership, and strategic planning. In her most recent role at Leo A Daly, she was responsible for leading an acquisition team including transition and integration planning. In addition to a master’s in architecture from the U, she holds a bachelor’s in environmental planning from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is a registered architect in Virginia and Arizona and is a member of the American Institute of Architects, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the National Council for Architectural Registration Board.

Claudette A. Larsen BS’00 (formerly Claudette Everett), who turned 77 in December, continues to work full time in special education/special needs at elementary schools in the St. George, Utah, area. A former longtime resident of Bountiful, Utah, who worked as an executive secretary in distance education at the University of Utah, Larsen raised six children, putting her own education on hold until she reached an age when most people start thinking about retirement. She received her bachelor’s degree in psychology from the U at age 65. After retiring, Larsen moved to Ivins (west of St. George) in 2001. The following year, she began working as a special ed/special needs aide at Red Mountain Elementary School in Ivins before moving in 2009 to Vista Charter School, where she continues. In 2010, Larsen became the oldest graduate in Utah from the University of Phoenix when she received her master’s degree in mental health counseling. She says she enjoyed the process so much she is considering pursuing a doctorate. “There’s so much to learn and so much to do,” Larsen says. “No one needs to slow down just because they hit some number on a calendar.”

Gohar Stepanyan MBA'04 recently joined the IESEG School of Management Lille-Paris (France) as an assistant professor of finance. She had previously been living in Lisbon, Portugal, where she was an assistant professor of international finance at the Catholic University of Portugal. A native of Armenia, Stepanyan received an undergraduate degree from the Yerevan Institute of Architecture and Construction, Armenia, in 1998 before coming to the University of Utah to attend the David Eccles School of Business, where she received her master’s degree. She went on to receive a doctorate in management (finance) from the Krannert School of Management at Purdue University in 2009. In her home country, Stepanyan worked for the Ministry of Finance and Economy, in the private sector, and in a nonprofit international organization. As president of the University of Utah’s European Alumni Association, Stepanyan coordinated and planned the 2011 European reunion for U alumni.

We want to hear from you! Please submit entries to Marcia Dibble, marcia.dibble@alumni.utah.edu. To read more alumni news, check out the “Honor Roll” column in the latest issue of the Alumni Association’s online newsletter at alumni.utah.edu/u-news.
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The year was 1944, and the University of Utah’s Einarr Nielsen Field House, which was to have been the home court for the men’s basketball team, had been requisitioned by the Army to serve as barracks for troops. All the team’s senior players had been drafted into the military. The only freshmen who were eligible for the team were premed, predental, or engineering students—who could all postpone military enlistment until after graduation—or those who couldn’t enlist because of health issues. Few colleges had teams, and wartime restrictions on gasoline and buses made it difficult to even schedule games.

Despite the stringencies, U Basketball Coach Vadal Peterson cobbled together an unlikely team with four freshmen as starters: Bob Lewis ex’47, Herb Wilkinson ex’46, Dick Smuin BS’50, and Arnie Ferrin BS’66 (who later returned to the U for his degree). A pre-med sophomore, Fred Sheffield BA’45, was the fifth starter. Wat Misaka BS’48, a talented player and a transfer student in engineering, was one of two Japanese Americans on the team, and he at first sat on the bench, although he later played a crucial role in the team’s success. The team’s tenacity and skill, combined with the unique circumstances of college athletics during World War II and a terrible accident for a top team in the nation, the University of Arkansas, led the Utes to the 1944 NCAA championship. The Utes beat Dartmouth, 42-40, in the first overtime game in NCAA Tournament history.

That story of March Madness in a different time has now been told by Ferrin’s son Tres Ferrin BS’71 and grandson Josh Ferrin BA’04 in a new book, Blitz Kids: The Cinderella Story of the 1944 University of Utah National Championship Basketball Team, published in February by Gibbs Smith. Arnie Ferrin went on to play professional basketball with the Minneapolis Lakers for three years, was general manager of the Utah Stars of the American Basketball Association, and eventually became the U’s athletics director, until his retirement in 1989. Josh and Tres Ferrin say they grew up hearing his recollections of that memorable 1944 team and decided they should be the ones to tell the story in its entirety.

The resulting book tells the story in narrative form. “We wanted this to read like a movie,” Josh Ferrin says. Indeed, the two authors sold the movie rights to the book before they picked a publisher. The movie is in preproduction, with a screenplay written and co-producers and distributors in place.

For an online photo gallery, as well as a video with original footage from the 1944 game, go to continuum.utah.edu.
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