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Dr. Keith E. Whitfield
President
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

UNLV

UNLV provides students with a special place to grow

Nevada's largest research university boasts a long list of achievements that are changing the world.

When Dr. Keith E. Whitfield, president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), said the institution is truly a special place, he was not exaggerating.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has given the university the nation's highest recognition for both research and community engagement. The public urban research institution is also one of only two universities in the country that have multiple scientists working on the NASA project to Mars. It offers 76 undergraduate majors and more than 175 graduate degrees and certificate programs, with highly respected programs in engineering, law, hospitality and health care. UNLV also displays a genuine commitment to the future economic success of its students.

"Our mission is to be a world-class research university that provides students with limitless opportunities while connecting with communities and the world," says Dr. Whitfield, an accomplished researcher and administrator who joined UNLV as president in August 2020. "UNLV mixes excitement with education, research and experiences. It's a wonderful combination of all of those things that makes our university a unique place."

Located in the entrepreneurial and thriving city of Las Vegas, UNLV is among the top in the nation for campus ethnic diversity, according to the *U.S. News & World Report*. About half of its more than 31,000 students are also the first in their families to graduate from college, thus changing their economic circumstances.

UNLV is home to Nevada's only law and dental schools and has been named by the White House as a model university for its cybersecurity program. Its commitment to solving community issues is shown in its efforts to train more teachers and nurses, while its Department of Brain Health is home to the world's only Alzheimer's drug development observatory.

"What makes UNLV really magical is our incredible faculty that truly cares about our students," says Dr. Whitfield. "That's a piece that we've been doing really well on top of being a leading research university, and it gives our students opportunities they wouldn't get elsewhere."



Dr. H. Neil Matkin
District President
Collin College

COLLIN COLLEGE

Collin College supplies critical skills needed by businesses

Relevance, partnerships and a sense of urgency are driving the success of graduates in high-demand fields.

Nestled among 32 acres in Allen, Texas, sits the Collin College Technical Campus. The academic facility reflects the community college's tremendous effort to educate students across multiple high-need fields, from construction management, electrical and plumbing to HVAC, welding and automotive. The Technical Campus is also the home of a Texas A&M Engineering Academy and the Collin College Academic Alliance. It is the fastest-growing among Collin College's 10 campuses, centers and the iCollin Virtual Campus, all of which are focused on providing relevant education to almost 60,000 students every year.

"It's an exciting time to be here," said Dr. H. Neil Matkin, Collin College district president. "If I could sum up the keys to our success in one word, it's 'relevance.' It's listening to the community and understanding their needs. Our students come out of programs with the necessary skills to fill the employment needs of the businesses and industries around us."

Driven by a sense of urgency, nimbleness and extensive collaboration with industries and businesses, Collin College offers more than 200 degrees and certificates. The college also awards bachelor's degrees in four academic areas including nursing, cybersecurity, construction management and clinical operations management, some of which are available fully online. These degree programs were created with input from advisory committees comprised of business leaders committed to developing essential workforce pipelines. Pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, the college plans to introduce a Bachelor of Applied Science in software development, its fifth bachelor's degree program, to continue to serve the needs of businesses and the community.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025, the college looks forward to building on its successes in the year ahead. It launched the Texas A&M Engineering Academy at Collin College, a program in which students can pursue an engineering degree while co-enrolled at Texas A&M University and Collin College, thus saving thousands. Similarly, a new Academic Alliance partnership with Texas State University and The University of Texas at Dallas will also add multiple new bachelor's and master's degrees for the community at significant savings.

"We have a singular focus, and it's educating students," said Dr. Matkin. "We're trying to help students develop critical skills and expose them to things that will help them make their own decisions. Through our outstanding faculty and university partnerships, we have developed a wonderful environment focused on student success."

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS



Kristina Scala
Founder and CEO
Aspen Academy



We hope to keep our middle school and elementary school students at our Greenwood Village Private School in a space of curiosity, fascination and wonder so they can identify problems and reach deep inside themselves and out to others to figure out appropriate solutions and create businesses. Our LIFE™ Program develops extraordinary leaders who know how to take good care of themselves while having the inclination and capacity to help others.



Stephen W. McCanless
Superintendent
Cleveland ISD



Our out-of-the-box approach is solving the teacher shortage puzzle. We're hiring associate and bachelor's degree holders as part of our IAT (Interim Assignment Teacher) Program. We use eGlass, a lightboard that allows a certified teacher in one class to interact with other classrooms guided by IATs. With our financial support, our IATs eventually become certified teachers.



Dr. Steve Olmos
Superintendent and Executive Director
Visions in Education



Visions In Education has been changing student lives in Northern California for 25 years. Their free, personalized, at-home learning options let students learn in a safe environment. Visions provides technology, clubs, mental health support and more to help students reach their full potential. Learn more at visionsineducation.org.



Christa Augsburger
Director
SHL Schweizerische Hotelfachschule Luzern



Our institution is known in Switzerland and around the world for developing hands-on skills among students. They are not only academically trained but are really ready to work even before they graduate as they have already accumulated a lot of job experience while studying. This is something other institutions do not have.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

**Nick Davies**

Head of College
Brighton College
(Singapore)



While the academic success of our pupils will always be our most important educational goal, we're also looking for opportunities to build their confidence, develop their curiosity about the world around them and discover the power of kindness. Our vision is to build a superb all-through school where children will feel supported and cared for.

**Su Fen Cheong**

Founder
Preschool Market



Our primary focus is to empower educators and parents with the tools and knowledge needed to create engaging, inclusive and effective learning environments for young children. We aim to bridge the gap between learning needs and available resources to foster a community of support and collaboration in early childhood education.

**Tammy Murphy**

Head of School
XCL World Academy



We're shaping the next now. Through the guidance of our amazing and experienced teachers, we feel we've developed a truly world-class, holistic curriculum. We try to be a beacon of light for our students as we leverage innovation, continually adapting to all the changing realities around us to make this world a better place.

**Dr. Chad Weidner**

Teaches Film, Media and Rhetoric
University College Roosevelt



We are small-scale, intensive and residential. We allow our students to build their own program from more than 200 courses in science and engineering, social science, and arts and humanities. We're continuously developing truly interesting and innovative ways to offer a curriculum that speaks to sustainability in a broad sense.



Daniels College of Business
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Daniels College of Business real-world experiences create ethical leaders

The college's experiential learning model produces graduates who make a big difference in the world.



Daniels College of Business

▶ Cable television innovator Bill Daniels agreed to be the namesake of the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver on one condition: He wanted the school to teach business leaders what it means to be ethical. The college has successfully driven this core philosophy through its commitment to experiential learning.

"Our vision at Daniels is to nurture business pioneers for the public good," says Lowell Valencia-Miller, assistant dean of MBA programs at the University of Denver's Daniels College of Business. "We raise the bar in creating ethical leaders using our learning-by-doing mantra."

The college differentiates itself through its challenge-driven model, which takes students from the classroom to the boardroom, beyond theories and concepts. In the full-time program, students take on four challenges centered around entrepreneurship, social good, corporations and international business—which is completed in a country of the cohort's choosing. In each challenge, students serve as consultants to real companies to solve real problems they are facing. Daniels offers four MBA programs—full-time, part-time, online and executive—meeting the needs of any business professional at any stage of their career.

"If you are looking for an opportunity to learn, apply and grow with our industry-connected faculty as your guide, then the Daniels College of Business is the place for you," says Valencia-Miller. "Many come here to learn, and a lot of them stay to be hired by the large companies in Denver's growing and vibrant entrepreneurial community."



Merced Union High School District transforms public education

Fearlessly addressing issues to make the student experience more powerful and relevant than it is today.

**Alan Peterson**

Superintendent
Merced Union High SD

▶ Every year, Alan Peterson, superintendent of Merced Union High School District (MUHSD), sits down for lunch with chosen senior high school students from all the district's various high school campuses. He values their insights on what changes they would like to see if their siblings were to enroll at MUHSD. This feedback is then transformed by the district's Board of Trustees into goals for actual implementation moving forward.

"We're not afraid to try new things and push the edges of public education, which needs to change in a lot of areas," says Peterson, who introduced structural reforms to MUHSD when he took on its leadership in 2015. "Each of our students has distinct dreams and circumstances, and we have to react to deal with those. We've changed what we could to make education more relevant."

MUHSD is among the few school districts that started requiring CTE (Career Technical Education), which provides students with relevant industry and academic skills. The district is also the first to sign up with the UC (University of California) Merced Automatic Admission Program, which gives priority to MUHSD students coming to UC Merced. To support these initiatives, MUHSD has increased its class periods from six to seven per day.

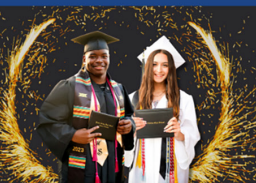
"Our society changes every year, but schools are famous for being decades behind society; that just can't happen anymore," Peterson says. "High school is foundational, and it is where we hold our kids' hands and walk them through. We've come in with new requirements, goals and outcomes to help our students overcome the barriers and challenges they face in life."



MERCED UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Redefining Readiness:
WHERE EVERY GRADUATE

is Equipped for Tomorrow's Success



About
MUHSD!

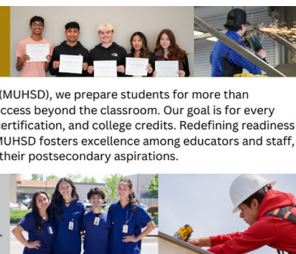
At Merced Union High School District (MUHSD), we prepare students for more than graduation; we guide them towards success beyond the classroom. Our goal is for every student to leave with a diploma, CTE certification, and college credits. Redefining readiness for the real world in Merced County, MUHSD fosters excellence among educators and staff, supporting students daily in pursuing their postsecondary aspirations.



35 Career Technical Educational Pathways



Merced College Dual Enrollment Program



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information
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Spirings Charter Schools breaks tradition to make learning fun and flexible

Close partnership with parents, communities and colleges gives students real-world education on their own terms.

 A study by CREDO (Center for Research on Education Outcomes) at Stanford University reports that charter schools have started to outperform traditional public schools, especially in math and reading. Charter schools' excellent performance can be attributed to the passion and nontraditional mind-set of institutions such as Spirings Charter Schools.

When the publicly funded, tuition-free school was founded in 2000, it had only 17 students. Today, it has grown to teach more than 12,000 learners across seven schools in 21 locations. Parents have flocked to Spirings Charter Schools because of its hybrid programs including home-schooling, genuine relationships with students and plenty of opportunities for real-world experiences—all of which embody a nontraditional take on education.

"Nurturing a lifelong learner requires two things," says Spirings Charter Schools Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer, who has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of the Pacific. "Firstly, the student has to be excited and curious about the world, an attitude typical schools sometimes don't encourage. Secondly, students need to learn how to learn and not just wait for the teacher to teach something to them. We want the students to really own and have agency over their own learning."



Dr. Kathleen Hermsmeyer

Superintendent
Spirings Charter Schools

A Leader in Home-schooling

At the forefront of the home-schooling uptrend, Spirings Charter Schools offers a fully virtual Montessori Homeschool Program and hybrid models that require students to come only on selected weekdays. Parents are thus the school's fully invested partners in this endeavor as they guide their children's education at home. The programs are complemented by traditional school activities such as field trips, science fairs, parent/student events, prom nights and traditional graduation ceremonies.

"The five-day-a-week factory model of education is absolutely not the only way. The more flexible school environment works best for families and children, and people need to open their eyes to alternate possibilities of education," says Dr. Hermsmeyer. "This is the right model and the way of the future; we believe we are the model of the future."

Spirings Charter Schools' dominance in home-schooling should not come as a surprise, considering its expertise in online learning platforms. During the pandemic, the school received the "Above and Beyond" award from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools for giving the entire world free access to its online courses and live teachers, which was already available even before the health crisis.

Forging Deep Relationships

With a smaller student population than most other schools, everybody at Spirings Charter Schools knows just about every other child's name and circumstances. The school also ensures that the same children are together for at least two years to create a genuine bond among themselves.

"Ours is a personalized model giving every student what they need in many facets," says Vivian Price, assistant superintendent of Spirings Charter Schools. "We know their specific academic requirements but also their social and emotional needs. We really know the whole child."

The CREDO at Stanford University study likewise noted Spirings Charter Schools' success in improving the academic performance of special student populations. This has resulted in closing the achievement gap normally observed in kids with disabilities, English learners and those from minority groups. This feat only proves how well the school knows and understands the situations and needs of every student.



Vivian Price

Assistant Superintendent
Spirings Charter Schools

Internships and a Taste of College

"Our mission is to make the community part of the classroom," says Price. "For us, learning happens beyond the school building walls, and so, we have students who are not only completing internships and work experiences but also enrolling in college."

Spirings Charter Schools requires students to take a college course before graduation. This is aimed at acquainting them with the upcoming new phase of their academic life and thus building self-esteem.

Following its 21st center in Smyrna, Tennessee, the school is set to open more sites. Spirings Charter Schools is also strengthening its real-world education. It has a school at an airport where students have hands-on learning experience focused on aviation. The institution is also in the process of opening a farm school in Georgia, which will offer a practical learning model.

Strengthening the Foundations

Spirings Charter Schools wants to elevate the status of teachers to propel the school to new heights. To this end, it has developed its own teacher program in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Global, an accredited and consistently ranked online university.

"We want teachers to love their work, and so, we have committed our time and efforts to helping develop people who have a heart for teaching," says Price, who has extensive work experience in traditional, charter and private schools.

"At Spirings, we are focused on developing teachers who embrace our mission and vision and who believe in every student's ability to achieve at high levels," Dr. Hermsmeyer says. "This is the cornerstone of personalized learning. We believe that our model, which breaks from the traditional school model, will revolutionize education."