

Dear Student,

Congratulations on your admission to UNLV and welcome to the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs!

By now you have probably received several welcome letters in recognition of how much we look forward to you becoming a Rebel this fall. We would like to take this opportunity and invite you to participate in a very special and innovative program during your first year within the Greenspun College.

We in the GCUA are committed to helping you achieve your educational and career objectives and are constantly working on ways to facilitate reaching those goals while simultaneously creating a unique, enjoyable and well-rounded college experience for you. Across the country many colleges and universities are developing “learning communities,” and UNLV is no different. This fall we will be launching four such learning communities within the GCUA, each designed around a specific topic while providing several benefits to students that they do not normally receive. Based upon your interests and past accomplishments we want you to be a part of the inaugural learning community program within the college.

First, you will complete courses that fulfill a significant amount of the core requirements needed for graduation in your first year. Many students often wait until their junior and senior years to take core requirements, ultimately forgoing much needed college preparation. Core requirements provide students with foundational knowledge that prepares them for upper division courses within their major, however when they are taken at the same time, students lack those important initial introductions to material. In this program you fulfill many core requirements early allowing you to concentrate on your major in your junior and senior years with the foundational knowledge from the core already in your back pocket.

This program also immediately allows you to study subject matter in an area of your interest in three of the five classes in each of your first two semesters. There is a common topic addressed in each of the three classes that allows you to build a strong knowledge base in a specific area. The four learning community blocks we will offer this fall are:

- **Communication and Civic Engagement:** *The focus of this learning community will be on community, more specifically becoming involved in your campus, local state and national community. Issues covered might include the 2008 elections, community service, and law. This learning community would be most appealing to students thinking about majoring in Communication, Journalism/Media Studies, or Social Work.*

Your schedule in this Learning Community looks like this for the fall:

COM 100-001 Monday & Wednesday 10-11:15
COM 101-013 Monday & Wednesday 11:30-12:45
CRJ 104-001 Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:15
Any ENG 101 section of your choosing
Any MATH 120 section of your choosing

- **Living in a Diverse World:** *The focus of this learning community will be on diversity, more specifically how we understand it, how we engage with it, how it affects us and how we affect it. Issues covered might include the family and societal relationships, community service, and multiculturalism. This learning community would be most appealing to students thinking about majoring in Communication, Social Work, or a minor in Family Studies.*

Your schedule in this Learning Community looks like this for the fall:

COM 100-003 Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:15
COM 101-007 Monday & Wednesday 2:30-3:45
MFT 225-001 Tuesday & Thursday 10:00-11:15
Any ENG 101 section of your choosing
Any MATH 120 section of your choosing

- **Crime and Punishment:** *The focus of this learning community will be on issues facing the criminal justice system in today's world. More specifically it will explore the legal process in Las Vegas, Nevada and the United States. Issues covered might include the death penalty, the purpose of correctional institutions, and law. This learning community would be most appealing to students thinking about majoring in Criminal Justice, Journalism/Media Studies, or Public Administration*

Your schedule in this Learning Community looks like this for the fall:

COM 100-002 Monday & Wednesday 11:30-12:45
COM 101-019 Tuesday & Thursday 11:30-12:45
CRJ 104-001 Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:15
Any ENG 101 section of your choosing
Any MATH 120 section of your choosing

- **Media in a Global Society:** *The focus of this learning community will be on issues surrounding the media in today's world. Specifically it will look at who owns the media, how the media cover issues, and coverage of politics. This learning community would be most appealing to students thinking about majoring in Journalism/Media Studies, Communication.*

Your schedule in this Learning Community looks like this for the fall:

JOUR 100-001/D-001 Monday 8:30-9:45 & Tuesday 10:00-11:15

COM 101-001 Monday & Wednesday 10:00-11:15

CRJ 104-001 Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:15

Any ENG 101 section of your choosing

Any MATH 120 section of your choosing

Studies of similar programs across the country indicate that as a result of the common course theme, students receive higher marks and retain more information than those who take classes in a variety of subjects with no common theme. Essentially, by participating in a learning community, you increase your chances of earning a higher GPA in your first year, setting the stage for success in subsequent years.

A third practical benefit to joining the learning community program within the GCUA involves registration and scheduling. The courses within these learning communities are pre-blocked just for you, so you do not need to worry about rearranging your schedule based on classes that you want to get into but cannot because they are full. When you sign up for a learning community all but two of your classes are already selected for you. All you need to do is pick an English and math class that fit into your already prepared schedule.

In addition to the academic advantages a learning community provides you, there are social benefits as well. Each learning community contains 27 students, all of whom are freshmen and all of whom take those same three classes together. This provides a quick way to make friends and form study groups. Some of the best friends you will make will be some of the first people you meet at UNLV, and the learning community provides a great networking opportunity for you to form those friendships.

So, as you can see, the new GCUA Learning Community program is a perfect way to begin your college experience on the right foot. Students who participate get both an academic and social leg up on their classmates, and if the experiences at other colleges and universities are any indication, participation early leads to a better overall performance throughout your college career.

As a specially selected incoming freshman you have the opportunity to help yourself make the most out of UNLV. If you are interested in joining one of them—and we sincerely hope you are—please contact the GCUA Advising Center at (702)-895-1009 or Dr. Joe Valenzano at (702)-895-5135 for more information.

Congratulations again on your admission, and we will see you in the fall!

Sincerely,

Joseph M. Valenzano III, Ph.D.
Asst. Professor-in-Residence/Basic Course Director