

Water resource development researchers in demand

by *randy proksch*

staff writer

Nate Cooper is looking for a few good hydrogeologists. The new vice-president for development at UNLV's Desert Research Institute said there are so many local, research opportunities in water resource development, that "right now, if there were five hydrogeologists standing outside our door, we'd have them inside and working in 10 minutes."

Cooper expects that door, inside DRI's temporary headquarters near Eastern and Sunset, to open to more UNLV students as the Las Vegas valley grows and diversifies.

"We hope to greatly expand both the teaching and interaction in research. We hope to have more students both graduate and undergraduate working with us," said Cooper.

At present, four DRI scientists are assisting about half the geology department's 28 graduate students in their research. Grad student Ron Hershey, for instance, is helping evaluate the feasibility of using the deep, carbonate aquifer for the valley's future water needs. And Nancy Matuska is participating in DRI's more than 20 years of monitoring movement of radioactivity in the test site's ground water systems.

While most of the 45 scientists also teach nine courses on a 2-year cycle. Those upper division classes are attended by over 30 UNLV students and others from the community.

The water resource center also conducts the community radiation monitoring program. Since 1980, sixteen sites in southern Nevada, Utah and Calif. have continuously monitored radioactive particles in the atmosphere. One of those monitoring stations is located near the entrance of the parking lot behind the EPA building on campus.

The only abnormality in the seven and a half years of monitoring by UNLV's

Dr. Hiram Hunt and Marianne Tortolici has been fallout from the Chernobyl meltdown in Russia.

"And by no means," said Cooper, "were those levels (of radiation) dangerous: just detectable. No problem whatsoever."

The efforts of UNLV's researches comprise about 20 percent of DRI's output. The remaining 200 researchers work through UNR's DRI in a wider array of projects. The northern campus is even the headquarters for monitoring the air quality of the Nevada Power plant near Moapa and the SoCal Edison facility near Laughlin.

In the 18 years since

Cooper moved down from Montana after "one winter too many," and was hired as the second employee of DRI, he has watched the DRI fluctuate in size and areas of research. But Cooper sees UNLV's share of the University of Nevada's research increasing as the valley's population puts more pressure on available air and water resources.

Cooper is in charge of developing the new DRI complex expected to house that expanding research in southern Nevada. Within the next fifteen years, the 400,000 square feet of laboratories and administration offices may house research in anthropology, meteorology, demography, global earth

science, satellite information technology, and aerospace engineering. First phase of the new complex is expected to be completed within two years. (See accompanying article for problems with finding the location and funding for the building).

"The new building, besides making it easier for students to get over (to DRI), will have new labs and facilities on which students can be trained. We can offer subjects for these and dissertations that might not otherwise be available," said Cooper.

If enough funding is located for educating researchers on campus, Cooper should be hiring more hydrogeologists.

Disagreements and funding delay institute

by *randy proksch*

staff writer

The location and sources of funding for a new Desert Research Institute complex in Southern Nevada are still uncertain. Officials from DRI headquarters and the geoscience department disagree as to the best location. But all agree much larger facilities are and will be needed.

UNLV's branch of the University of Nevada's DRI, temporarily located near Eastern and Sunset in the Park 2000 Business Park, has grown from a two-man operation in 1970 to 45 scientists and staff today. Most of them are concerned entirely with water resource research. Four of the geologists and chemists there are teaching nine classes at the DRI to over 30 UNLV students, and assisting half of the geology department's 28 graduate students in their research.

"There's every reason to believe DRI in southern Nevada will grow tremendously because of the population growth Las Vegas is experiencing along with industrial diver-

sification," Dr. Jim Taranik, DRI President, said.

Effecting ambitious plans for research in aerospace engineering, hydrogeology, plant physiology, global earth system science, and air and water quality monitoring would require up to twice as much usable space as in all of the Thomas and Mack. In 1980, the Board of Regents designated the 8.5 acres north of the Nathan Adelson Hospice and south of the Continental Hotel for the DRI complex.

Nate Cooper, vice-president for development at DRI, indicated that the designated land would probably be used for the complex's new buildings. Cooper said his first concern is finding \$5 million to complete the first phase of construction, a 40,000 square foot research facility (slightly smaller than the chemistry building).

Sources of funding for the complex are uncertain. Jack Hess, in charge of the graduate studies offered at DRI, said the priority of building a DRI complex on campus has

"gone from being number one on the capitol improvements list (the priority list for state construction funds) to now where we're considering various schemes."

These schemes include seeking federal support by lobbying the Nevada congressional delegation, asking for grants from major corporations that would benefit from DRI's research, and lobbying to become the site for worldwide research programs such as the global earth science project to monitor the increasing levels of methane and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

"We are optimistic that we will have the funding," Cooper said. "And we have realistic hopes the first phase will be completed within two years."

While Cooper was fairly certain the complex would be built on the land designated by the Regents, others weren't so sure.

UNLV geoscientist Dave Weide said, "They should build in the middle of campus and combine the geoscience dept. and all the DRI in one, nice. See Location, pg 4

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