

BUILDING BRIDGES

By Kristin Steinkraus and Cary Jordan

In the inaugural year of PLTW (Project Lead The Way) Principles of Engineering at Pioneer, students are putting the principles learned in class to practical use.

Early in the year, Mr. Zona spoke to Pioneer science teacher Mrs. Steinkraus about his vision and improvements for the central campus courtyard. He challenged her engineering classes to design and build a bridge feature to span a drain in the middle of the courtyard.

This challenge aligned perfectly with the materials and structures unit in Principles of Engineering, where students learn how to calculate forces and material strengths and apply them to practical uses. After learning basic measurement and calculations in the class, students brainstormed different design ideas and built models of their ideas out of popsicle sticks to help communicate and present their designs.

After presenting, then selecting a final design idea, the students completed power tools safety training and then began construction of the bridge. The students have demonstrated how to work as a team and develop a design collaboratively and then begin the final phase of the construction process.

Due to the potential complexity of the project,



PROVIDED

Pioneer Academy students learn how to build bridges through their Principles of Engineering class.

some students were hesitant at first to take on the challenge. However, the students embraced the project challenge and have been excited with the process and look forward to identifying how they can make future design improvements. The project has motivated the students and many are seeing a real-world connection to the ideas they learn in the classroom.

One student, Isaac, told

Mrs. Steinkraus the only reason he wants to come to school is to be able to work on the project. The students in the engineering class are looking forward to see how it will turn out and are excited to leave a lasting impact on their school.

Written by Mrs. Steinkraus, Pioneer Academy science teacher, and Mr. Jordan, Pioneer Academy counselor.



SCHOLAR

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“My first semester included just a couple of classes and I knew that this was the institution for me,” she said. “WNC is military friendly, which allowed me to use my education benefits while incorporating classes that worked with my demanding schedule, and the advisement office laid out a clear pathway to the nursing program. When I reached out to friends within the nursing career most mentioned WNC being an amazing program that properly prepares you for the field and gives the greatest amount of clinical experience throughout Northern Nevada to experience many of the hospitals. Clinicals are the best part of the WNC nursing program because the instructors are so knowledgeable and have applicable experience that elevates the experience. Clinicals take the classroom instruction and make it applicable and digestible, which is what I love with my learning style.”

It’s not a stretch to presume that

Garcia has also performed well in her classes and clinicals. But she has contributed much more to the nursing program than a superb academic record.

“She has performed very well academically and practically, and has demonstrated a strong commitment to herself, her classmates, and to the nursing program,” Ciminski said. “Her resiliency really shines when we consider that she is not only performing well and setting the example in the nursing program, but she is also serving as a treasurer for the Second Year Nursing Club, is an active member of the National Student Nurse Association, and consistently fulfills her active duty requirements for the Army National Guard, while maintaining a can-do, keep-your-chin-up attitude.”

When Garcia graduates in May she knows many people will share in her outstanding accomplishment and she’ll have many to thank.

“The nursing program has just a plethora of experience and

knowledge and are so approachable that really make the WNC nursing program the best in the West,” she said. “WNC Nursing and Allied Health really has some of the greatest staff that make students successful.”

The Nevada System of Higher Education provides each regents’ scholar award winner with a \$5,000 scholarship. Garcia said this generous scholarship gift will help her pursue her bachelor’s degree at Nevada State College.

“This incredible honor and financial award will make this next step accessible without creating a financial burden on my family,” she said. “My husband has been an incredible supporter to help with the financial obligation that nursing school requires, but this award will make this that much easier for our family.”

Formerly known as the Regents’ Scholar Award, the award was renamed for Regent Sam Lieberman who passed away in 2020, in commemoration of his service and dedication to public higher education in Nevada.

TEACHER

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is because of the support from my colleagues and fellow collaborators that I am able to do what I do. I am very grateful for that support and for this award.”

Some of the psychology courses she leads are Introduction to Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Child Development, Psychology of Adolescence and Social Psychology. Although Bevens became a full-time faculty member in 2017, she has been teaching at WNC since 2007.

“Teaching is exciting to me,” Bevens said. “Students arrive with questions and we work on finding answers. I love assisting them in their acquisition of knowledge. My students don’t only learn about psychology, but they also learn more about themselves.”

Bevens serves as the adviser for the Psychology and Nerd Herd (a club for homeschool students who attend WNC). Bevens also is the coordinator for homeschool students and has helped

dramatically increase enrollment for those students.

In 2019 she brought former NHL goalie Clint Malarchuk to campus to talk to the community about mental health issues. As the Healthy Campus Committee chair in 2016, she was instrumental in the implementation of the no-tobacco policy on WNC’s campuses.

Forbes Magazine featured Bevens in 2019 for her work on the consumption of food dyes. To name just a few of her community endeavors, Bevens volunteers at the Nevada State Railroad Museum and for Sassabration, a community diversity celebration.

Prior to becoming a professor at WNC, she was a very successful adjunct faculty member at the college. And, yes, she did that very well, too. For the 2016-17 school year she was voted Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year.

Bevens earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology (Cognitive and Brain Sciences) at the University of Nevada, Reno.