

Learning Las Vegas

STUDENTS IN BOB HANNUM'S BUSINESS statistics course at the U. of Denver know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away and know when to run.

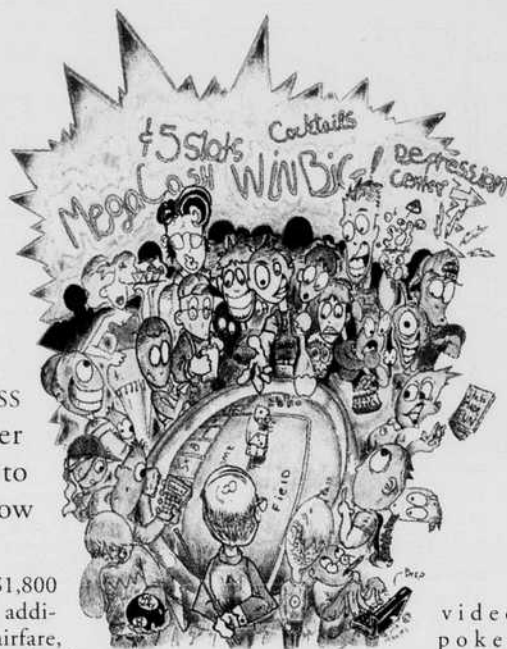
Hannum, an associate professor of statistics, teaches a four-credit course called "Risky Business: Gambling & Gaming" between quarters. It involves a five-day trip to Las Vegas, where students learn the ins and outs of the casino industry. Students write a paper and take a final at the end of the week.

"It's definitely a unique way to go about teaching statistics, but it just made sense to me," Hannum says. "Statistics are what the gaming industry is all about."

The excitement of the bright lights and big city doesn't come

cheap. Shelling out \$1,800 for tuition and the additional expenses of airfare, lodging and meals can break you. But the trip is well worth it, says senior Jennifer Williams. "I learned as much during my five-day stay in Vegas as I would have during an entire quarter."

Williams didn't win big — and neither has Hannum since he started the course three years ago. But one student did cash out, Hannum says. "Once, during a 15-minute break between lectures, a student slipped a quarter into a



and left the casino \$1,000 richer."

Ariana Uhlenhopp, a junior, says learning about the surveillance cameras and tracking of cheaters was enlightening. "Not only was it easier for me to learn visually, but I got to see some of the behind-the-scenes work that most people don't know about."

By Melissa Stutzman, Penn State U./Illustration by Jason Tomme, North Idaho College

FUNC the Rankings

IN A FLASHBACK TO THE CAMPUS ACTIVISM OF THE 1960s, students at colleges across the nation are trumpeting a new cause: the boycott of *U.S. News and World Report's* annual guide to "America's Best Colleges."

The Forget *U.S. News* Coalition (FUNC), a group of students from about 60 schools, says the magazine's rankings of institutions — according to criteria such as faculty resources and selectivity — portray information that is unfair and sometimes inaccurate.

The movement started at Stanford U., Calif., in the spring of 1996, when some students expressed concern that administrators were more interested in getting a good ranking than in improving the college.

FUNC has since encouraged other institutions to consider withholding data from *U.S. News* until changes are made, while other schools have passed resolutions condemning the rankings. Among them are the U. of California, Berkeley; Smith College, Mass.; Rice U., Texas; Massachusetts Institute of

Technology and Wesleyan U., Conn.

University presidents are following FUNC's lead. In a letter to *U.S. News* editor James Fallows, Stanford president Gerhard Casper wrote: "I am extremely skeptical that the quality of a university — any more than the quality of a magazine — can be measured statistically. However, even if it can, the producers of the *U.S. News* rankings remain far from discovering the method."

Senior Jeff Tsai, student body president at the U. of Texas, Austin, says the rankings are a disservice to readers because it's difficult to compare entities as diverse as colleges. And FUNC's efforts are not just "sour grapes" from schools that got low rankings, he says.

Mel Elfin, the *U.S. News* guide's executive editor, says he has heard criticism of the rankings for years, but he'll consider FUNC's ideas for future editions.

Still, Stanford senior Nick Thompson, FUNC's coordinator and the student body vice president, says there's no way to rank a college. "It's like ranking a religion."

By Jonathan Hunley, College of William and Mary/Photo by Logan Wallace, College of William and Mary



Talk About Pop Music

Upon close inspection, the world of music is filled with a mangled web of sex, lies and disposable panties. Here's

a sampling of wild rock tales, many of which happened at a campus near you.

• **Chuck Berry** — His famous duck-walk wasn't marketing genius. It was the result of a dry cleaner shrinking his suit prior to a show.

The Great Escaper

THE U. OF CHICAGO AUDIENCE HELD ITS breath as Mark Schwartz was locked in the water-filled 55-gallon barrel. The container had been built by the university to be absolutely escape-proof.

Twenty seconds passed, and audience members began expelling their breath. Forty seconds. One minute. The stage hands were nervous — they knew the barrel wasn't rigged.

One minute, 30 seconds. Still no sign. Two minutes.... When

Schwartz finally emerged after nearly two and a half minutes, he was heaving and gasping for breath. He wasn't faking it. This was, after all, the escape that killed Houdini.

Schwartz is a Northwestern U. grad student and self-taught escape artist. His U. of Chicago stunt is just one of many escapes he has performed at different schools.

When the security guard locked him in the barrel, wasn't he at least a little freaked out? "A lot freaked out, actually," he says. "But Houdini once said, 'If I am afraid, then all

is lost.' You learn to concentrate and avoid your fears. I think that's one of the appeals for me."

Schwartz discovered escape artistry in grade school, when he read a book on Harry Houdini. "I wasn't tall enough to be great in sports," Schwartz says. "Escape artistry was a way I could use what physical power I had."

Despite a lack of resources, Schwartz managed to learn a few escapes — like getting out of handcuffs and straitjackets — from old magazines. But most of the escapes he has performed are his own creations.

Today Schwartz is focused on getting his master's in archaeology, although he still plans to continue busting out of metal boxes, handcuffs and straitjackets. And he does have one secret escape route if his academic career falls through.

"If the university cuts off my research funding, I might have to sell my secrets to criminals," he says.

By Meredith McKee, Northwestern U. / Photo courtesy of Mark Pernerewski

Hang in there.

The Buzz

• It may be easier for this year's college grads to find jobs, according to a recent Michigan State U. study. The national survey showed a 6.2 percent increase in jobs and a 4 percent increase in starting salaries, resulting from a strong economy. The study estimates that chemical engineers will have the highest starting salaries, \$42,758 a year, and journalists will have the lowest, \$22,102 a year.

• The College Board is increasing the scores of 45,000 students who took the SAT in October because a student found a flaw in the math segment of the test. About 13 percent of the test takers were affected, and they'll see an increase in scores from 10 to 30 points. The board says this is the first defective question in 14 years.

• Under President Clinton's proposed 1998 budget, several historically black colleges would share \$10.4 million in federal funds to help renovate historic campus buildings. Schools that may benefit include Fisk U., Tenn., Talladega College, Ala., Tougaloo College, Miss., and Knoxville College, Tenn.

• **Aerosmith** — Played free shows at Boston U. in exchange for practice space during their formative years.

• **Stephen Stills** — The Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills & Nash member was a finalist for The Monkees, but lost the part to Peter Tork due to thinning hair and crooked teeth.