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## The History of USAC: Innovation and Relationship Building

Carmelo Urza

### *The Precursors*

Before the arrival of the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC), the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) had a long history of study abroad involvement. From the 1960s-1980s, there were several internal initiatives to create programs in Mexico, London, Italy, Korea and Turkey. None survived in the long term. Boise State University experienced a similar fate with its Oñati program.

Between 1968-1982, William Douglass, the Coordinator of the fledgling Basque Studies Program (BSP), and his colleague, Jon Bilbao, held several six-week summer programs in the Basque region of Spain. Pat Bieter, professor at Boise State University (BSU) and I attended the one in 1972. In 1974-75, Pat created/directed and I taught on an academic year long program in the Basque town of Oñati. After three other ever-smaller programs, the initiative was terminated.

In the early 1980s, Professors Douglass and Bieter joined efforts in the hopes of establishing an ongoing academic yearlong program. Each was able to secure a \$7,500

contribution from their respective institutions and private contributions brought the total amount of seed money to \$28,000. In the summer of 1982, Pat and Bill offered me the position to head up their joint initiative.



*Inaugural study aboard program in 1974-75*

Douglass had also received a commitment of collaboration from Gregorio Monreal, the rector of the newly established University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU). The new Consortium program was slated to be located at the Vitoria-Gasteiz, Araba campus, where liberal arts classes were to be offered to UNR and BSU students. It's worth noting that this was only six years after the death of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, and that it was a turbulent time in the Basque Country.

In August, I visited the Vitoria-Gasteiz campus. It did not yet have an administrative office and Enrique Knorr, the Vice President, worked from his home. The "campus" was in an old seminary. It soon became clear that there were no spare classrooms or housing. I contacted Gregorio Monreal and begged to be allowed to move the hypothetical American program to its campus in the seaside city of Donosti/San Sebastián. He acquiesced and, a year later, went so far as to move his own office to a small administrative building downtown so that the program could use it. He also assigned us classrooms in the law school.

*To be or not to be.*

Upon my return to Reno after my scouting trip, the attorneys from UNR and BSU asked to meet with me. They suggested that a non-profit corporation should be established. I panicked at the thought of codifying a model which might not serve us well going forward. Furthermore, it seemed that being a totally independent legal entity would distance the Consortium from the universities and thus, from the very constituency I hoped to attract. Finally, since the entity had no real assets, how would this independent corporation be able to pay for office space, process contracts, print materials and advertise?

Although I didn't know it then, that meeting was to set the tone for the next 32 years. The university attorneys were doing their jobs by trying to create legal space between the Consortium and the universities in order to protect their clients from lawsuits. On the other hand, I believed it was important to represent the program as part of the known and respected entities of UNR and BSU for credibility's sake and access to university resources. It seemed important that the outside observer could see we were located and supported administratively at two U.S. universities and one in the Basque Country. The ambiguity created was not ideal but was far preferable to being an independent corporation that nobody had heard about.

Exasperated, the attorneys eventually concluded the meeting likely thinking: "He has no idea what he is doing." They would have been right. But I knew I didn't know and that I did not have the background to get locked into an independent legal structure. Ambiguity was not my goal; I would have preferred to be an intrinsic part of the U.S. universities. Since that was not possible, I opted to be an outlier that acted as *if I was* a part of them.

I wasn't the only one opting for ambiguity. UNR agreed to manage the funds through the Basque Studies Program *as if* it were a standard university program. It was made clear to me that I had but \$28,000 to spend. No other funds would be forthcoming. That included my salary of \$20,000 which was distributed to me on a UNR letter of appointment (LOA). LOAs, I should note, are only valid if there is money to support them. Since we adhered to UNR's management practices, UNR also provided us with legal and financial oversight, relieving USAC from assuming those very important functions. Either UNR's Vice President of Finance, its President or the Chancellor of the entire University of Nevada system (NSHE) would sign legal agreements with other universities on behalf of USAC as we expanded. We did, however, regularly consult attorneys abroad. Each host country had its own laws and policies, and we were careful to comply with them.

I was given a tiny office in the library and allowed to promote this pie-in-the-sky program in the BSP newsletters of Fall 1982 and Spring 1983—aimed primarily at the Basque populations in Idaho, Nevada, and California. The newsletter was critical to our early promotional efforts. I also drove around the American West attending Basque festivals, posterizing universities with promotional materials and speaking to as many classes as possible.

When I took the helm of the newly formed entity in September of 1982, I had eight months to design a program. This included: determining fees, budget, insurance, calendar, and courses, not to mention finding classrooms and housing, hiring faculty and staff, securing university credits, and planning field trips. I needed to entice 30-40 students to spend a year in a location then known for its violent and oftentimes deadly struggles of independence from Spain. All before email and cell phones. I called the entity the "University Studies in the Basque Country Consortium," with the tortured acronym: USBCC. It was 1989 before we adopted USAC as our name. Both Douglass and Bieter provided advice about their experiences organizing and promoting failed programs. All Consortium

expenses for year two were to be paid by the fees provided by the 22 students recruited for that year.

Sandra Ott, a recent Oxford Ph.D. was hired as Resident Director (RD) of the program in San Sebastian, also on a UNR LOA. Sandra was very competent and committed. We learned a great deal that first year. Nonetheless, and despite our best efforts, we were unable to cover all expenditure. During the first four years, we ran up a deficit of several thousand dollars. Art Roberto, the budget head of UNR, kindly suggested that I might want to increase the fees, which I did for several years. Each spring, I would do a belly crawl across campus to beg Controller Ginny Kersey for year-end monies to cover the deficit. After the fourth year, we were able to meet all our expenses and earn a slight surplus. Ginny promptly used the surplus to pay back the university the funds I had borrowed the previous years. Henceforth, USAC would always pay its own way. Enrollments languished until I rolled the dice by lowering fees significantly. Lesson learned.

### *A more stable foundation*

It did not take long to realize that study abroad was an unstable industry. I knew we had to expand USAC to survive in the long term. Our second program was created in 1985 in Pau, France. Pau is located on the edge of the French Basque Country thus offering both a French and Basque study dimension. Indeed, many Basque emigrants in the U.S. are French speakers.

Italy came next. In 1986, I met UNR Italian professor Franco Manca and Bill Douglass in Florence, one of the most popular study abroad sites in the world. Both were in Italy working on their own projects. Florence was overrun by U.S. students and tourists, and perhaps 40 U.S. university programs were already located there, all teaching art, history and architecture. I was unable to even secure a meeting with university administrators. The world did not need a 41<sup>st</sup> program doing the same thing.

So, we traveled north to Turin/Torino. As the first capital of Italy, it had magnificent palaces and piazzas, as well as great museums, including one of the best Egyptian ones in the world. It was also headquarters of Fiat, Lancia, Alfa-Romeo, Ferrari and Olivetti. Thousands of southern Italians flocked there to work. We met Franco Ferraresi, the provost of the nearly 600-year-old University of Torino. Best of all, there were no other American programs there. Highly intelligent and affable, he was interested in our project and secured a meeting with the rector of the university-- which then had 50,000 students. Ultimately, I established a program at the Scuola di Amministrazione, a unique Business College founded by the university and the Agnelli Foundation (Fiat, etc.).

These three programs (Basque, French, and Spanish Studies in the Basque provinces and Business in Italy) were the foundation of the USAC's unique identity. Amongst a growing study abroad industry, we were the organization that embedded its programs in foreign universities away from Paris and Rome. We cultivated the image of being different.

The next program was in Santiago, Chile (1992), followed by Australia (1992) Brighton, U.K. (1993) and in (1995) Germany, Thailand and Costa Rica. By the time I retired in 2017, USAC was operating hundreds of program sessions in 49 locations in 28 countries. In most countries, we created NGO corporations with corresponding bank accounts through which we contracted employees, processed finances and conducted business.

To not overwhelm a site with huge numbers of foreigners (mostly Americans) we rarely exceeded 60 students per program. When establishing the program fees for a cycle, we took several factors into consideration--such as the previous year's fees (and resulting number of students), competitors' fees, the economy, exchange rates, and contractual changes with host universities. The goal was to price the program so that we recruited the maximum number of students for spaces available. Recruiting too many was a waste of effort and would frustrate students whose dream was dashed. Too few students minimized the value of economies of scale. As specific programs were oversubscribed, we would create another program in that country. Eventually, Spain had five programs, Italy four, Costa Rica three, and China and France two each....

As we created more programs, we expanded the membership base of the Consortium. The original Members of UNR and BSU were quickly joined by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and the University of Iowa (UI). It was no accident that I held degrees from three of the four first members, lending credibility to the notion that business, like many things in life, is personal. They believed in our USAC vision, joining when we could only offer promises rather than results. To gain equal footing, new members paid the same amount as the founding universities, \$7,500 each.

At UNR, the Center for Basque Studies was our anchor. Boise State has also been a big part of USAC to the present day. In the early years our home on the Bronco campus was the School of Continuing Education. USAC wouldn't exist except for the commitment of Pat Bieter and Bill Jensen, the Dean of Continuing Education in the 80's and 90's. Linda Urquidi, Jensen's first level assistant, was a huge asset as were Josie Bilbao and Corrine Henke. We have also been privileged by the work of many exceptional BSU Faculty, some of whom became dear friends and staunch supporters.

At UNLV I was welcomed warmly by Provost John Unrue and Dean Tom Wright. I didn't know it at the time, but I would have a lifelong association and friendship with Tom. He taught history in half a dozen of our programs and was an all-star with students, staff and host university colleagues. Besides teaching, he did research and published a book (now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> printing) with one of our local professors in Chile. His wife, Congresswoman Dina Titus--then a political science professor at UNLV and state senator, also taught for USAC. She later drafted a proclamation recognizing USAC's contributions to the state in both of Nevada's Legislative branches.

Every university that became a member added credibility to USAC. USAC also provided another dimension to each participating university, primarily by enhancing the depth and

variety offered by its educational experiences. Secondly, we provided a serious international experience for the faculty and staff of those universities, a strategy that would pay out over decades.

USAC's contributions were recognized and capitalized on by the member universities. For example, in 2014 UNR printed a small brochure that was distributed to potential students. It was entitled: "5 reasons to be Nevada Bound." Reason #1 was: "Attend a National Tier 1 university." Reason #2 was: "Experience Reno-Tahoe mountains," Reason #3 was, you guessed it: "Study Abroad: 42 Cities, 25 Countries." Students were encouraged to visit the UNR campus where, among the beautiful grounds and buildings, they could visit the basement of the Old Gym adorned in flags from various countries and home to the USAC home office. I believe every member became more attractive to students when it adopted the ancient four-armed Basque symbol (*lauburu*) of USAC.

In the 80's, Steven Loughrin-Sacco was the chair of the foreign languages at BSU. He called one day; he had moved to the U. of Toledo to become their Director of International Programs. He realized it didn't have anything like USAC. Would we be interested in Toledo? Would we? Heck yes. A couple of years later Steve had moved to San Diego and Debra Pierce replaced him at Toledo. A few years after that, Debra called. She had recently become the new Director of International Program's at Loyola University in Chicago. She asked, would I be willing to have lunch with the provost in Chicago to discuss a potential Loyola membership? Would I? Heck yes! A few weeks later, the three of us were having lunch at a swanky downtown Chicago eatery. After my "pitch", the provost turned to me and said something to the effect of: "I see you have a lot of very attractive programs. Loyola has one: "Loyola in Rome" since 1956. There are many on campus committed to that program, if I were to sign off on USAC and have your Italy programs compete with our Rome one, by noon I would be exiled from Chicago!". And so, we made a deal, Loyola would control USAC admissions for its students, and USAC's Italy programs would not be eligible to Loyola students.

By the year 2000, the Consortium had taken on a life of its own. There was a synergy about the organization: Carlos Salas created programs in Costa Rica, Cuba and Uruguay; as did Alvaro Carredano in Chile, Felix Menchacatorre in Bilbao, Luis Fernandez in Valencia, Susan Thompson in the Czech Republic, and Bob Neuenschwander in China.... The number of friends and associates that were a part of the success of the consortium cannot be underestimated.

We were born as an unknown organization in the western U.S. specializing in eccentric Basque Studies. By the time we set our sights on the Eastern U.S, we were a large and known entity. In short order, we were able to recruit key universities, the University of Maine, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Hunter in NY City, Goucher, University of South Carolina, Clemson and finally the University of Florida. It was an eclectic collection of institutions with little in common except for their desire to improve their students' access to affordable, high-quality, study abroad.

Early on, we realized that most International Programs Offices at our member universities were very thinly staffed--oftentimes a faculty member relieved of teaching a class to act as the head of the International Program Office. USAC's arrival on campus would inevitably create a lot of interest. Students and faculty would flock to the office to secure catalogs, ask questions and enroll. It was wonderful for USAC, but oftentimes it overwhelmed the poor staffer. As a result, and with the approval of the USAC Board, we created an Administrative Fee to compensate each Member based on the number of students being sent to Consortium programs. With these funds, they could subsidize their staffer's time, and perhaps even hire a part- or full-timer. It was a win-win formula.

Most of the member universities were very active in the Consortium, and USAC became the primary study abroad program for their students. It was the member's International Program Office that represented USAC/their programs on their own campus and worked with their faculty to design USAC in-house courses.

In the early years, I would occasionally meet with a few people from UNR and BSU to update them. As we grew, we recognized the need to formalize the universities' knowledge of USAC activities and issues. We created a Board of Directors, in contrast to the typical educational "Advisory Boards". The individuals serving on the Board were representatives of their universities, and, in this way, we formalized the member universities' ownership of USAC. We would take major issues, such as the creation of new programs and the admission of new universities, to the Board for a vote. The Members were bound by a "charter" that all, including UNR and BSU, signed.

The location of annual Board meetings alternated between a member university campus and a program site abroad. Representatives from member universities were able to spend four or five days at the program city and host university, getting to know local faculty and administrators, visiting local sites of interest, touring residence halls and home-stay facilities, sitting in on classes and so on. Resident Directors from many of the Consortium's programs would also attend and give presentations about their offerings.

As USAC grew, so did the governing board. Eventually, we capped member universities at 33. We were in high demand, but most members who had been with us for decades had no interest in leaving. So, we created an Associate University (AU) status. These schools could participate in the annual meeting but did not have a governance role. And so, it continued. In the 2004 catalog, there were 20 Associate Members. It didn't stop there, and eventually we created a third tier of participants with institutions which routinely sent us students.

USAC had become a huge organization, spanning the world and executing contracts with 49 foreign host universities in 28 countries. By the end of my career, we were spending well over a million dollars on advertising to recruit nearly 4,500 students each year. The staff of the USAC Marketing Department (housed in Reno) took great pride in their work, as they should have. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that marketing was performed every day by every one of our 300 plus employees worldwide. As proof, we had an alumni recommendation rate exceeding 95%, strong and consistent growth, and universities



waiting in line to become members of the Consortium. In one early analysis, I estimated that word of mouth accounted for 40% of our students.

Most people tend to think of study abroad programs in the traditional “student exchange” model in which a university sends five students to London and accepts five students from London. The university structures and resources at both ends are utilized as if the exchange student had been home-grown. Each school expects the other to house and take care of the wellbeing of the partner university’s students.

USAC’s “in house” model, which we used for most of our programs, was different. We sought facilities at a foreign university--such as several small classrooms, one or two small offices, access to the university’s sports facilities, student activities, cafeterias and so on (more difficult than it sounds). We hired and compensated the faculty, either local or from the U.S., who taught courses according to the descriptions utilized at U.S. universities. We shared course syllabi with our member universities and suggested a department and number. There was sometimes an exchange of emails or phone calls to clarify course content, with the purpose of finding common ground. Initially, it was a struggle to find the appropriate course designations, but, as time went on, we got more efficient at the process. In that fashion we were, in effect, delivering courses from UNR, University of Maryland, or University of Loyola. It was possible that 15 students could be sitting in the same basic business class but be enrolled at 15 different U.S. Universities.

As a result, many of the U.S. universities allowed their students to remain enrolled at their home university while studying abroad. Students could then be assured that most, if not all, courses they took abroad could be applied toward their graduation requirements. It also gave them access to home university financial aid and scholarships. It gave students and parents the assurance that the study abroad option that their school offered had been vetted by it. With our assistance, it was the universities themselves that recruited their own students to participate in their own consortium/USAC programs. USAC had become the rarest of management models: it was a consortium that worked! It was a smart move on the members’ part, since it would have cost them many millions to create the cornucopia offered by the Consortium.

We were under no obligation to continue to hire faculty who were underperforming, whether originating from the U.S. or abroad. Foreign professors usually were selected from our host universities and taught an extra class for USAC. When foreign universities had exclusive contracts with their professors, we would request an exemption which would be articulated in our contract with the host university. Systematically, we received feedback from our students that our courses were challenging and highly rated.

We also arranged students’ housing, whether in local student residence halls, homestays, apartments with locals or with other USAC students. Housing locations were very desirable, and competition for them was brutal and expensive. We usually had a dedicated housing person at each site. Imagine finding 30 apartments each term, as well as fielding student roommate and landlord complaints.

We were also responsible for student well-being. Resident directors, staff and faculty were constantly in touch with students, monitoring their health and welfare while not interfering. Everything the health centers deal with at U.S. universities, USAC sees abroad: depression, eating disorders, alcoholism, suicides, pregnancies, sexual assaults, accidents, cancers, etc. Terrorism, in its many forms, became routine, and we spent a lot of time assuring parents that their child was statistically safer abroad than in most U.S. cities. Epidemics (Avian flu, Sars, Swine flu, Dengue, Zika...) were abundant long before Covid. On occasion, a student would have to return home. In every serious incident, the home university would be informed, and a four-way conversation would ensue involving the U.S. member university, the parents, the USAC Central Office and the Program Resident Director.

Some risks also provided opportunities. We charged our students in U.S. dollars, but most of our expenses were paid in the currency of the host country. Fluctuations in the exchange rates could cost us 30 percent of our financial projections in a given year. An unexpected bonus was that these programs also provided us with another business. We would play the exchange market (almost always with success) by holding currencies that were surging while minimizing our position in those that were faltering. A substantial amount of money was at stake, so even a small percentage gain made a difference.

I can't overstate the quality and effectiveness of the faculty and staff abroad and in Reno, many of whom were part of the organization for decades. It was an organization built on trust, especially the member universities' trust that USAC would provide what it said it would, and that we were always going to be there, especially when things went awry. It was, in fact, during moments of crisis that USAC earned its reputation.

One of our key beliefs was that universities needed to have first-hand knowledge of the programs themselves to become strong supporters. One of our first strategies (borrowed from the now defunct NICS consortium) was to create a Visiting Professor Program in which the USAC Board would choose one U.S. professor from a member university to teach a term in an in-house international program. Member representatives would advertise the opportunity on their campus, collect and submit their applications to USAC who would distribute them to the full membership. At the annual meeting, member representatives would briefly describe, usually in glowing terms, his/her candidate. Resident Directors would then share their impressions about how an applicant's proposed course would fit in with their program's curriculum. The Board would then select a new Visiting Professor to be included in the next catalog. Once abroad, Visiting Professors had the opportunity to give presentations to the host university on their areas of specialization, meet faculty from a sister department, and, in many cases, partner up with their new foreign colleagues to conduct joint research projects while applying for grants. Furthermore, upon returning to the U.S., the professor, newly enriched, brought new perspective and information to share with his/her students. In this fashion hundreds of U.S. professors from members spent a term teaching abroad. Indeed, 149 UNR professors had taken advantage of this opportunity by 2018.

The FIDA (Faculty Individual Development Awards) allowed faculty from member universities to participate in summer programs as students. They became students in nearly every way: understanding the intensity of USAC courses while improving their own knowledge and skills. Many visiting professors were surprised to learn they would spend many of their evenings preparing for the next day's lessons.

Additionally, several times a year USAC invited 12-15 professors and administrators from the members to participate in a ten-day site visit of in-house USAC programs. Faculty and staff visited the campus abroad, ate at student cafeterias, sat in classes, talked to students, especially those from their own school, became acquainted with program staff, and familiarized themselves with the area.

Oftentimes, we would compensate foreign universities for the resources we used by providing travel grants that allowed their faculty the opportunity to spend a term in the U.S. Because of the effort it took to assist a foreign professor, most came to Reno, usually in the summer. On many occasions, we arranged for foreign faculty from host universities to teach in the departments of the U.S. USAC member university, thus doubling the human benefits. Several of us in the Central Office would take the time to introduce them to the faculty, organize presentations, and show them around the area. Faculty exchanges were a lot of work, but were also investments with potential long-term value, especially when our foreign visitors became influential back home.

It was not uncommon that academic departments at member universities would ask us to recruit foreign faculty for difficult to fill positions. Depending on the discipline, we were reasonably successful.

### *Scholarships*

Each year we would create a scholarship pool from year end monies, oftentimes exceeding a million dollars in total funds. We wanted to assist students now. Scholarships helped needy students afford program and living expenses.

### *Partnership model*

The "in-house" model didn't fit well everywhere, and we soon realized that some locations would work better with an alternative arrangement. In 1991, I hosted a barbeque for Roslyn Frank, a professor at the University of Iowa and her friend Jon, a math professor at Deakin University. Deakin was one of Australia's best, located in the seaside city of Melbourne. By the end of lunch, Jon and I had framed a program model that was different from the "in-house" one we had used until then. We designed an exchange between Deakin and USAC. We would send students to Deakin, and Deakin would send their students to any of the available USAC programs. The exchange would not be limited to the usual quid pro quo arrangements. Rather, the side sending more students would pay a fee to the other entity for every student over what the other sent, paying about two-thirds the normal

fee. In that fashion, we would avoid the typical exchange frustration of recruiting 20 students but having to turn down half of them because our partner did not have a corresponding number of students.

This model, with variations, allowed us to expand with less investment and thus with less risk, into a myriad of English-speaking foreign universities: in the UK: Brighton, Bristol, London, Reading; in New Zealand: Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington; Scotland: St. Andrews, Stirling; in South Africa, Stellenbosch and so on. We labeled these programs “Partnership Programs”. However, with less risk came fewer rewards. “In house” programs potentially provided a far more efficient economy of scale.

### *Weaning time*

As USAC grew, our needs changed as well, oftentimes pushing UNR policies to the brink or leaving USAC exasperated because of restrictive state policies. For example, USAC and state entities had radically different responses to the Great Recession of 2008. State/university budgets were cut significantly, forcing difficult cuts in personnel and programs. Since study abroad programs are oftentimes considered a nice, but not essential, element in a university system, most international programs offices were radically cut across the country. We saw what was happening and viewed it as an opportunity, albeit a risky one. We had significant budgetary discretion and decided to bet the farm in the hopes that we could fill the void and gain market share. The result was an unprecedented period of growth for the Consortium. Everyone was working harder than ever. UNR policy, however, severely limited or prohibited new hiring or raises.

Financial management abroad was always an issue for UNR. When we opened a program in Chengdu in 1988, China was in a wild, wild, West mode. There were few written laws applicable to international educational entities. The government was suspicious of religious, and, by extension, educational groups. We could not create an NGO or have a USAC bank account there. We had no choice but to have the Resident Director establish a personal account in her own name. Clearly, there were risks involved in doing that, but it was our only option.

A new program was opened in 1999 in Puntarenas, Costa Rica on a peninsula six miles long and without a university. We rented facilities, but the program grew quickly and we needed to find a permanent solution. We acquired two adjoining properties and converted them into a program center. Despite their best efforts, it was not possible to purchase them through UNR or NSHE, forcing USAC into expensive and time consuming work-arounds. Puntarenas was the only program not embedded in a host university abroad.

Similar Consortium needs caused a lot of frustrations for all involved. It was becoming evident that UNR was uneasy about harboring a 35-million-dollars-a-year, multinational entity it could no longer oversee directly. It was necessary to find permanent solutions. After months of exploring options with the university system, it became obvious that we needed to create our own legal entity in the U.S. UNR was magnanimous,

recommending Gus Rossi, one of their often-consulted attorneys to create a separate USAC NGO and draft the by-laws. It then took a lot of work to create an off-campus banking system, become officially recognized by the state and federal as a non-profit entity while modifying all our foreign corporations. Thirty-two years after my meeting with the BSU and UNR attorneys, the creation of an NGO had come full circle. We had indeed travelled a long way. In the early years, I felt that each morning we would have to grab the rope attached to the front of the locomotive and slowly pull it uphill. By the end of my tenure, I felt we were strapped to the front of a locomotive speeding down the mountain, wheee!

A few years after becoming an independent corporation, we purchased a house UNR owned at 1317 north Virginia Street. We demolished it, and, in August of 2017, we inaugurated a beautiful four-million-dollar, 12,000 sq. ft. modern glass and steel building. We paid cash for the construction. We also bought the adjoining four plex to the north to accommodate future growth. Organizing the open-house inauguration was one of my last official duties. At the time of my retirement, we had almost \$13 million in a rainy-day reserve account. UNR President Marc Johnson and I agreed that USAC should retain its physical footprint on campus to continue to make participation in study abroad a seamless process for UNR students. The irony is that it was not until we created a USAC NGO corporation that we truly became what we had always wanted to be: an official entity of UNR and other member universities. Together we were able to create a stable and extraordinarily successful study abroad organization.



*USAC main office at the University of Nevada, Reno*

### *Acknowledgements*

I can't begin to thank all the individuals and universities that accompanied me on this journey. Together we provided 68,000 students, and counting, the opportunity to live, breathe, socialize, and interact with their fellow human beings around the world, gaining enlightenment, knowledge and sensitivity. Approximately 10,000 of those students studied in the Basque Country. I welcome the opportunity to thank all the institutions involved in the creation and continuance of USAC, especially the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Nevada System of Higher Education as well as Boise State University, the University of Idaho and the Idaho State Board of Education for their generous support. We couldn't have done it without you!