



NEVADA LEGISLATURE JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(Section 6 of [Assembly Bill 443](#), Chapter 392, *Statutes of Nevada 2021*, at page 2505)

MINUTES

February 16, 2022

The second meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education for the 2021–2022 Interim was held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, at 9:30 a.m. Pursuant to [Nevada Revised Statutes \(NRS\) 218A.820](#), there was no physical location for this meeting.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and audio or video recording of the meeting are available on the [Joint Interim Standing Committee's webpage](#). The audio or video recording may also be found at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Video/>. Copies of the audio or video record can be obtained through the Publications Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) (publications@lcb.state.nv.us or 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Chair
Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair
Senator Carrie Buck
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller
Assemblywoman Clara (Claire) Thomas

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jen Sturm, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division
Alex Drozdoff, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division
Christina Harper, Acting Manager of Research Policy Assistants, Research Division
Asher A. Killian, Chief Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Adam Drost, Principal Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division

*Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.
[Indicate a summary of comments.]*

AGENDA ITEM I—OPENING REMARKS

[Chair Denis called the meeting to order. He welcomed members, presenters, and the public to the second meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education.]

Chair Denis:

Ms. Drozdoff, would you please call the roll?

(Roll call reflected in Committee Members Present.)

Chair Denis:

Welcome everyone. We have good presentations today. It is good to have everyone here. We might be able to do in-person at our next meeting.

[Chair Denis reviewed virtual meeting and testimony guidelines.]

We will take a 30-minute lunch break, somewhere between 12 and 1 p.m. We are going to go to our second item on the agenda, which is public comment.

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Denis:

Today's virtual meeting format is important to keep everyone safe.

[Chair Denis reviewed the four ways to provide public comment, all of which are listed on the agenda, and that public comment is limited to three minutes with an additional opportunity to provide public comment at the end of the meeting.]

Chair Denis:

Broadcast and Production Services (BPS), could you add the first caller with public comment?

BPS:

Thank you, Chair Denis. To provide public comment, please press star nine now on your telephone to take your place in the queue.

Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association (NSEA):

Good morning, NSEA, the voice of Nevada educators for 120 years. It is "Time for 20" to address the crisis in Nevada's public schools. With an unprecedented shortage of educators to teach our kids and make our schools run, "Time for 20" means a 20 percent increase in educator pay and at least \$20 an hour for the workers who make our schools run. With some of the largest class sizes in the country, "Time for 20" means reaching an average class size of 20 students in core academic subjects. Let us consider the severity of the situation for Nevada educators today. The Economic Policy Institute reports public school teachers are paid 19.2 percent less than similar workers in other occupations. According to the National Education Association (NEA) ranking of the states, the national average public

schoolteacher makes \$7,500 more than the average Nevada schoolteacher. Nevada ranked near the bottom of states and per-pupil funding while having some of the largest class sizes. According to the NEA's rankings of the states, Nevada teacher's pay has decreased by 6 percent over the last decade, while the educator shortages nationwide, is especially bad in Nevada. This week, the Clark County School District (CCSD) posted 1,808 vacant positions, while Washoe County posted nearly 500 vacant positions. Meanwhile, a substitute teacher shortage has left countless classrooms without any teacher at all forcing remaining staff, and today even our lieutenant governor, to cover additional classes. Thousands of education support professionals across the state earned significantly below a living wage with starting salaries as low as \$10 an hour. A chronic bus driver shortage has hit both Clark and Washoe Counties causing serious delays, stranding students for hours.

The latest inflation data from January shows prices climbing at the fastest pace in 40 years of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), now at 7½ percent. Home and rent prices have skyrocketed across Nevada, with average rents up over 20 percent, this year alone. While an educator shortage has impacted the whole country, Nevada has been hit especially hard. There are serious efforts across the country right now to raise educator pay. In New Mexico, Senate Bill 1 was just unanimously passed by the New Mexico State Legislature and is awaiting the governor's signature. It will increase educator pay by an average of 20 percent in New Mexico. It is now "Time for 20" in Nevada to address our education crisis by investing in our educators. Let us stop kidding ourselves talking about expectations for Massachusetts-style education results while spending less money than Mississippi per pupil. Thank you very much.

Chair Denis:

Thank you, Chris. Let us go to the next caller.

Hawah Ahmad, Clark County Education Association (CCEA):

Good morning, Chair Denis, and Committee members. I represent CCEA. The Clark County Education Association represents the over 18,000 licensed educators and bargaining with CCSD. We are the largest independent teachers' association in the state and the country. Today, this Committee will hear presentations from our Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions on what programs they have and are in the works of creating to expand Nevada's future workforce. We must ask you to consider whether these programs will support new and expanding industries that will lead Nevada toward a resilient and diversified economy. Central to strengthening Nevada's workforce ecosystem is the expansion of our innovation and incubation systems. Nevada's higher education system will be key to this work. As CCEA continues with our Nevada workforce development pipeline assets study, we must emphasize that alignment between the K through 20 education delivery system and the job market is pivotal in making sure we can achieve our goals of an equitable workforce and an economically diverse Nevada. The gaps identified within the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) report improving K through 12 education for Hispanic students in Las Vegas and beyond will be familiar to those Committee members who served on education committees during the legislative session. Nevada changed history with the implementation of the pupil-centered funding plan, but we must do more. Without a concerted effort to bridge the gap that exists in our K-12 public education system, Nevada will continue to have inequities that begin in grades K through 12 and extend into our workforce. The CCEA appreciates the work and dedication of this Committee, and we stand ready to assist in whatever way we can to ensure that Nevada's future workforce, our students, are prepared to bring our state forward. Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Let us go to the next caller.

BPS:

Caller with the last three digits 362. Please proceed.

Kim Lombardo, Nevada State Partnership Director, NWEA :

Good morning, Chair Denis and members of the Interim Education Committee. I am the NWEA (formerly known as Northwest Evaluation Association) State Partnership Director in Nevada. It is a pleasure to be here with you, and I appreciate the opportunity to comment and introduce NWEA as a committed partner to the state, districts, and educators of Nevada. The NWEA is a research-based, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating reliable solutions that provide insights to help educators tailor instruction. For over 40 years, NWEA has developed professional learning offerings and pre-K–12 assessment tools to help advance all students along their optimal learning paths. Our tools are trusted by educators in more than 9,500 schools, districts, and education agencies in 145 countries. In Nevada, NWEA partners with every district and public charter school through the Read by Grade Three program. Beyond that, NWEA has partnered with Nevada districts at the kindergarten through high school levels. Some of those partnerships are in excess of more than 20 years. We value our relationships with our district partners, and we are honored to be part of such important work. Most recently, NWEA has been sought out as a trusted advisor as we provide research and policy support for equity and innovation around accountability, state assessments, and Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) recovery efforts. We will be closely following the work of the Committee. We are here and happy to be part of the conversation, should the opportunity arise. Thank you for your time and for all you do for our Nevada educators and students.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Let us go to the next caller.

BPS:

Caller with the last three digits, 325, please press star 6 to unmute. Please proceed. Thank you.

Jessica Sharon, President, Nevada Association of School Psychologists:

Hello, Senator Denis, and members of the Committee. I would like to speak to you today about issues directly related to Agenda Items V, VI, and VII—student mental health and higher education workforce development. Nevada is currently short approximately 740 school psychologists. What does this mean for students? According to recent data, approximately 14 percent, or one in seven, youths in Nevada have experienced mental illness. Of these students accessing these supports, 70 to 80 percent access supports solely in schools. This means that 78 percent of Nevada students do not have access to direct and consultative services that school psychologists provide. For example, school psychologists help analyze resilience and risk factors of students, deliver mental health and behavioral health services, and provide preventative and intervention and postintervention crisis services through integrated systems of support. These mental health supports are just a fraction of our skill set and supports we provide to schools as a school psychologist. Currently, Nevada only has one school psychologist training program in the entire state;

and of its graduates, only about four practitioners enter the school districts annually. Our current model is not sustainable and will not help us end these shortages. We will continue to fail our students if we continue on this trajectory. Additional training programs are needed. We ask the Committee to fund additional graduate training programs in school psychology as a solution to our student mental health and workforce issues. We suggest short-term funding also be recommended by the Subcommittee to Advise on the Expenditure of Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding to jumpstart these workforce efforts. Thank you so much for your time and your consideration.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Let us go to the next caller.

Dora Martinez, Disability Peer Action Coalition:

Good morning, Chair, and the rest of the Interim Committee. First, I want to thank Assemblywoman Brittney Miller for the financial aid bill that was passed last year. We were able to do financial aid with my son, who is in the National Guard, and his friends who are in foster care; we were able to assist with that. I would like to agree with previous callers; psychology is needed in our school. I have a friend whose daughter was on a waiting list for therapy for three months to get some mental help and that is not okay. We have to help our kids so they can be better leaders in the future. They are our children and our future. I am agreeing with the first caller regarding the shortage of teachers, substitutes, and bus drivers. As a blind mom, I have kids who go to high school. I do not drive legally or have a car, so when the bus next week, we are told that there will be no school bus provided for our children. What that means is the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) here in the north is not reliable. I would have to take them on a taxi or Lyft because she is fourteen, and I do not want them to ride on the Lyft or Uber by themselves. It really puts a strain on our work schedule. We would ask to please, at least pay these teachers and bus drivers a living wage because our rent has gone up 36 to some places 100 percent this month, this year. The cost of living is going up while our wages still remain the same. When there is a snow day, what happens here in the north, is there will be an alternative bus stop. What that means as a blind mom again, with the service dog, when the snow is too high, I do not take my service dog; he has boots, but I do not take him. I take my white cane and when I navigate the streets, and some of the streets do not have sidewalks, I end up on the road, and so it is quite scary. We would ask you, give bus drivers a living wage with the teachers. Thank you so much. Have a great day.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Let us go to the next caller

BPS:

Chair Denis, there are no additional participants wishing to provide public comment at this time.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. We will have opportunity for public comment at the end.

AGENDA ITEM III—APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2022

Chair Denis:

Let us go to Agenda Item III, approval of the minutes for the meeting on January 20, 2022. Any questions or any corrections for the minutes?

VICE CHAIR BILBRAY-AXELROD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2022.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

AGENDA ITEM IV—APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE NEVADA STATE TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ADVISORY TASK FORCE ([NRS 391.492](#))

Chair Denis:

We will now go to [Agenda Item IV](#), appointment of members to the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force ([Agenda Item IV](#)).

We are going to appoint members who will serve on the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force. In 2019, [AB 276](#), which was sponsored by our fellow Committee member, Assemblywoman Miller, created this task force to evaluate and address the challenges of attracting and retaining teachers throughout Nevada. Later this interim, this Task Force will report back to this Committee on its recommendations. Today we are required to make appointments. We have the names of all of those that applied for appointment on the agenda.

I want to talk about the process that we went through. The vice chair and I evaluated all the applications, and, in some cases, we only had one from, especially the rural areas. As we looked at those, we also considered that there are some who were asking to be reappointed, and we determined that it would be good to have some folks who had previously served, so there would be some experience there. Between that and the ones that we only had one for, that left a few areas that we needed to look at. We did research on what the makeup of the committee was to see if it actually reflected our community and the student community. We determined that we were lacking, as we made appointments, in the area of male teachers, Hispanic, African American, veterans, and middle school; not as many middle school teachers applied. We looked and used that as our priority to try to figure out, and the appointments that we have made give us a better breadth of matching our community. Although there was not a ton of male teachers—and we know that we need to do a better job at recruiting male teachers—we have some good appointments here. First of all—before I ask for a motion from the vice chair since she has the folks that we are recommending to be appointed—are there any questions on the process? Yes, Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

I appreciate the attention given to those who have already been on the Task Force to continue their experience; hopefully they are part of this recommendation. I also appreciate the challenge and making sure that we have full representation throughout our state. My question is, when we talk about—and I never want to say anything that sounds against our rural or smaller communities—but we know there are different realities between Washoe and Clark and maybe some of our smaller communities. When it comes to the diversity, at least for Washoe and Clark where we know there would be more options, can you explain—I do not know if it is appropriate now or once we get to those recommendations—what the racial makeup is of the ones that are going to be recommended for the appointments? Because especially Clark County schools being just so beautifully and amazingly diverse, we want to make sure we have those reflections there. Could you clarify when you say veteran, what are you referring to? The legal requirement is that everyone has taught consistently for at least five years here in Nevada's public schools. Were you talking about a veteran teacher or were you talking about a military veteran teacher? We also have a lot of veterans from the armed forces who are teachers as well.

Chair Denis:

The clarification on the veteran is an actual veteran of the armed forces. We have the mixture of all the different appointments; there are some that have served for many years and some as little as five. If they were less than five, we did not consider those. As far as the makeup, I know for Clark County, we have a reappointment, which would be Magdaline Wells, and the other two who we are recommending are Antonio Gabarre, who is Hispanic, and Aaron Watson, who is African American, two males. For Washoe County, we have Maria Cristy Fernandez, who is a reappointment, and Natalia Cui-Callahan and Cherie Reid. We were limited in Washoe as far as any male representation that we had to consider. One was a middle school teacher in Washoe, and the other one I cannot remember. My vice chair can remind me if you can remember.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I do not have that chart pulled up. I apologize. Alex might have that; she is the one who put it together. It was quite lengthy, and we went through a pretty big process to make sure that we had as much diversity as possible. Alex, do you have the other information about the other person from Washoe?

Chair Denis:

Yes, we had a chart that we had to put together. It is a big spreadsheet with all the different columns, so we could see what the makeup was.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Chair, you mentioned the chart from Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) that is on NELIS, which was very difficult to read. That is why I am asking so many questions, because no matter how much I blew it up, I could not read it.

Chair Denis:

Unfortunately, there are just so many. That was a big challenge trying to see all those. Alex, do you have anything that you could share in that respect?

Ms. Drozdoff:

For the two Washoe applicants who were selected, the first is Maria Cristy Fernandez; she is an elementary school teacher, and she identified as Hispanic or Latina. The other applicant, Natalia Cui-Callahan, did not specify her grade level, but her history indicates that she has taught a variety of grade levels from elementary to high school. She has been teaching for 18 years, and she identified as an Asian female.

Chair Denis:

I should mention that was the other one—Hispanic, African American, and Asian were the three that we were looking at. What I will say about all these appointments is the list is amazing of all of the different folks who applied. I wish we had more appointments because there were some amazing people who applied who could really help the committee, but obviously we were limited in what we could do. Hopefully, some of those who applied will still be involved as the committee meets, and they can give their input.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you, Chair.

Chair Denis:

Any other questions?

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I wanted to make one comment. Chair Denis mentioned that we went out of our way to reappoint people because we already had the ball rolling. I wanted to point out to the folks who maybe did not make it this time, you can only be reappointed one time so you can serve two terms. So do not think well, that is just going to be it for that; this is a new committee, and it is the second time we are doing this committee. After that time, please come back and apply because we are going to really need this tool in our toolbox to recruit and think outside of the toolbox to get those teachers. Thank you all to who applied.

Chair Denis:

Any other questions? I am not seeing any hands. If I do not see your hand, feel free to unmute and let me know. I will ask the vice chair to make a motion.

VICE CHAIR BILBRAY-AXELROD MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE NEVADA STATE TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ADVISORY TASK FORCE. THE MEMBERS ARE: NICOLE WITKOWSKI FROM CARSON CITY; LANCE LATTIN FROM CHURCHILL COUNTY; ANTONIO GABARRE, AARON WATSON, AND MAGDALINE WELLS FROM CLARK COUNTY; KRISTEN PECK FROM DOUGLAS COUNTY; TAMMIE SMITHBURG FROM ELKO COUNTY; LINDA KILE FROM ESMEERALDA COUNTY; MERIDON FORTUNE FROM EUREKA COUNTY; TAMARA MCCORD FROM HUMBOLDT COUNTY; SANDRA AYERS FROM LANDER COUNTY; SHERRY SPENCER FROM LINCOLN COUNTY; LINDA FLAHERTY FROM LYON COUNTY; TRAVIS RYNESS FROM MINERAL COUNTY; JUSTIN PETRILLO FROM NYE COUNTY; THOMAS BROOKS FROM PERSHING COUNTY; VIENGGHONE PEABODY FROM STOREY COUNTY; NATALIA CUI-CALLAHAN AND MARIA CRISTY FERNANDEZ FROM WASHOE COUNTY; AND CHERIE REID FROM WHITE PINE COUNTY.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP SECONDED THE MOTION.

Chair Denis:

Any discussion on the motion? Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Chair Denis, could I ask one more clarifying question? If we could have a number of the racial breakouts for the entire recommendation list; how many were recommended for Black, Asian, and Latino representation.

Chair Denis:

Sure. I am going to ask staff if they would do that.

Ms. Drozdoff:

Would we be able to get back to you shortly on that information?

Assemblywoman Miller:

Sure. I know this is of community interest. It is something that the public is interested in and to get on the record.

Chair Denis:

We will go ahead and do the vote. Then we will come back and put that on the record. Any further discussion? Thank you.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

AGENDA ITEM V—PRESENTATION CONCERNING THE ACADEMIC AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FACING STUDENTS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Chair Denis:

We are going to go to Agenda Item V, a presentation concerning the academic and mental health challenges facing students in the Black community. If we could take just a one-minute break to make sure that we are all set up. Thank you.

Presenters for today are Yvette Williams, who is the Chair of the Clark County Black Caucus, and Andrew Post, the Chief Innovation Officer and Head of Behavioral Health, Hazel Health Services. Welcome. We are excited to hear your report.

Yvette Williams, Chair, Clark County Black Caucus

Good morning, everyone, including our virtual community. Thank you so much, Chair Denis and Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, for allowing us the opportunity to come before you again and to all the distinguished Committee members for your work and your commitment to education justice in Nevada. I did submit to you, and you should have before you, the presentation that we made in August of 2020, your last Interim Education Committee ([Agenda Item V A](#)). The reason we did this is because we only have so much time, and you have so much to hear today, that we did not want to take the time to hash over information and presentations that you have had in the past. At your leisure, please feel free to go

through this presentation for more detail. I am going to walk us through very quickly. I want to make sure you get updated data. We will be submitting that to you as a one-page cheat sheet so that you can use it along with your presentation. You will have that today. We would like to hold off on giving you our recommendations as we normally do until we can better define, and we are waiting for other presentations to be made for you before we formalize those final recommendations.

Let us start with education justice. There was great progress on racial justice in our last legislative session. I want to thank all of you for your support on that. As we move down the presentation to equity and accessing literacy, we do still have concerns around the loss of our SB 178 dollars and how that is impacting our African American students, in particular, whose proficiency gaps are the highest gap by race. It is still something that we are concerned about and are looking to this Committee to make that an area of focus in this next legislative session on how we are going to address that to be in compliance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as federally mandated.

Then we go into the opportunity and access gap as it relates to high school diplomas. I wanted to give you current stats on that by race. For 2021, and high school diplomas by race, our African American students or our Black students achieved a 71 percent graduation rate; our American Indian students at 77 percent; White at 85 percent; Asian at 94 percent; Pacific Islander/Alaskan at 84 percent; and by ethnicity, Hispanic at 79 percent. There is a 23-point literacy gap, by race, for Black students and our Asian students. That is a 23-point gap that we need to address going forward. As far as the number of advanced diplomas by race and by Hispanic ethnicity for 2021, it was 246 advanced diplomas for our Black students; our American Indian students had 0 last year; White was 888; Asian was 296 students; Pacific Islander/Alaskan was 59; and by ethnicity; Hispanic was 888. The number of career and college readiness (CCR) diplomas, which is a big concern of ours, and the access gap that we have for our Black students for 2021, although we did see some improvement for Black students, we saw 384; American Indian was 18; White was 2,087; Asian was 913; Pacific Islander was 87; by ethnicity we saw Hispanic at 2,086. I would like to note that in 2019, in CCSD, it was 228 diplomas and, in the state, 279 for Black students. We did see an improvement there, although there was no improvement in 2020, because of COVID we believe. Black students are still struggling with accessing the CCR diploma.

The opportunity gap; we discussed how the career and technical (CTE) programs continue to be a concern for us as well with accessing those programs in those schools where we have predominant or larger populations of Black students. The average percentage of student groups participating in CTE programs over the last three years—we did an average—out of all students participating in CTE programs in 2021, Hispanic students represented 48 percent; White students at 24 percent; Black students at 12 percent; Asian students at 8 percent; Pacific Islanders at 2 percent; and American Indian at .03 percent, so we are not even at 1 percent there. An example in 2021, by subgroup, so that you have context as far as the number of students being served, it is 26,404 Hispanic students; 12,792 White students; 6,811 Black students; 4,164 Asian students; 919 Pacific Islander students; and 186 American Indian/Alaskan students.

We move on to variances. I am moving fast and I know that I am, so I apologize for that, but I want to make sure we get to mental health because that is a big concern for us right now and I know it is for you too. When we talk about zoning variances, we are happy that CCSD actually centralized their choice schools. I have been working very closely with CCSD on the lack of access for our choice schools here in CCSD. They have agreed to centralize that to provide more equity and more support for diversity and inclusion. We do not have any numbers on that yet because it is brand new for this upcoming school year. We are

excited and feel very confident that we will start to see our Black students being able to access. I do not have the numbers in, nor the time to share those with you, but if you want more information about that, I am happy to provide that for you. As far as proficiency gaps, losing the SB 178 funding, which gave us an additional \$1,200 for students who are least proficient, and the new funding formula, we are very concerned because we are not seeing the no harm promise applying to this group of students. We are really stressing that the Committee look at that and what they are going to do about that.

We are going to come back to you with our recommendations. As I segue into mental health, I would like to say that on behalf of the Black Caucus, our members, and our community, I want to emphasize the importance of mental health support. I think these numbers will be telling and listening to one of the public comments around the stats that were provided, you are going to see disparity by the numbers we are going to offer you today.

We had in October our annual African American Student Summit, and some of you were there. Thank you for coming; we appreciate you. I am going to go over the polling. We actually did a polling of our students there at the Summit because we wanted to assess what they are feeling; how they are doing; and how we can better support them. The responses and the data points are very disturbing, but I want to share because we want to have an honest conversation with you. We are not going to try to pretty this up or put a bow on it. These were the questions. I am going to go through the numbers quick for you; these are not all the polling stats, but these are the ones that are more relevant for you to hear. And then I am going to turn it over to Andrew Post to give his piece of the presentation to share what CCSD is doing to address that.

The first question was, "I have a positive self-image of how I view myself." To give you context, this was done on a big screen on a stage; students had their phones and electronically answered their questions. It was done very confidentially and in private; we were trying to get them to feel comfortable in the environment to be able to share their truth. For the first question, "I have a positive self-image of how I view myself," 29 percent were neutral, 17 percent agreed that they feel positive about themselves, 21 percent felt strongly. We started off pretty good.

"Where do you primarily get information about how to take care of your mental health?" We were very disturbed because less than 3 percent of the students felt that they could get that information from school. In fact, we saw that 31 percent felt they are getting their information for mental health from social media, which was a red light for us, because that is where predators live, and 19 percent said they go to other students. So, over 50 percent of our students actually seek help from social media and other students. That is pretty concerning, and less than 3 percent feel they can get that support from school.

"I have safe spaces to share my feelings and emotions." Over 50 percent disagreed or were neutral.

"I think about my future and what my life will look like often." I want to emphasize that word "often." We had 31 percent agreed, 12 percent were neutral, and 56 percent strongly agreed. This is 87 percent who agree and strongly agree that they think about their future often and what their life is going to be often; 12 percent were neutral, that brings it to 99 percent.

"I feel that my race plays a role and how I see myself in the future." Almost 90 percent either agreed or strongly agreed or were neutral, and 78 percent agreed and strongly agree that race would have a role in that.

"I feel that young people who look like me are represented positively in the news and social media." Fifty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and if we add in the neutral, it comes up to 87 percent.

"I know how to access mental health services in my school and community." We saw 29 percent neutral, 24 percent disagree, 11 percent strongly disagree, and 27 percent agreed. One of the things that I am not going to get into a discussion about, because one of the things that we could talk about after we have our next presenter present, is we are in the process of working with Hazel Health on a peer-to-peer ambassador program where students on campus will actually be available to help students know where to go on campus and how to access that care. We are excited about that.

And then COVID, I know you all want to hear this one. With the COVID pandemic, this was very shocking for us. "The COVID pandemic has negatively impacted my mental health." We had 66 percent agree and strongly agree, and 17 percent were neutral. That is 84 percent who feel that COVID has had a negative impact on their mental health.

"I feel that I am treated more negatively by society than other young people of different races." This is very disturbing too; we had 66 percent agree and strongly agree and 26 percent were neutral. That is 92 percent of our Black students.

I will leave you with this last stat before I turn this over. "I know someone who has experienced mental health issues." Ninety-five percent of our Black students either strongly agreed or agreed with that statement—95 percent—which goes to say that the stat we heard a little earlier in public comment from one of our counselors. That number is much higher when it comes to our African American students.

I would like to now turn this presentation over to Andrew Post, who is no stranger to you, because Andrew Post has been attending with me many legislative sessions around funding for students to get this kind of help. We have been trying to get this for every student in Nevada for six years now. I am happy to report that CCSD has stepped up using their American Rescue Plan (ARP) money to provide access to mental health for all students. We are honored and privileged to have been able to work with them and Hazel Health to get this in CCSD. And it is our hope that the rest of the state will follow so that we can truly say that in Nevada, every student has access to mental health. This also will be physical health as well through telehealth protocol. I will let Andrew talk about what happens when additional supports are needed once telehealth has concluded their services. And with that, Andrew, would you please join us? We will take questions at the end. Thank you so much.

Andrew Post, Chief Innovation Officer and Head of Behavioral Health, Hazel Health Services:

Thank you, Chair Denis, and Committee members. It is a pleasure to be back and to talk to you today ([Agenda Item V B](#)). Ms. Williams did a great job, unfortunately, laying out what the real concerns are, and the public comments further exacerbated or showed where the problems are. Unfortunately, what we are seeing nationwide, what we are seeing in Nevada is three- to seven-month wait lists in more populated areas and as much as a one-year wait list for mental health services in the community-based settings. Unfortunately, particularly for schools, this is just not sustainable. While we talk a lot about what the concerns are,

what I will present to you in a very abridged version is what the solutions can be. I want to be clear, there is no silver bullet to this. Just because Hazel Health has figured out a great way to intervene and partner for school districts and families, it is not the only solution, it is not even the only viable solution, obviously. It relies on a lot of partnerships and a lot of community-based collaboration, but it is important to understand there are solutions that are readily available that can build staffing capacity to be able to bring these wait times down substantially.

The data that I am going to give you is an aggregate of the school districts that we work in nationally as to not call out Clark County's data right now. And I would be remiss if I did not mention how great a partner CCSD has been; they have been truly amazing and methodically and thoughtfully rolling out these services to students. What we are seeing right now, which is sad, but also very reassuring that we can support, is one-half of 1 percent to 1 percent of students referred to our mental health services within the first month of implementation. If you extrapolate that among the numbers in districts particularly large urban districts, the pent-up demand for mental health is more apparent than ever. For Hazel Health specifically, which Ms. Williams alluded to, is a teletherapy-telehealth platform. We are making contact with families within 24 hours, even though we tell school district partners it will be 24 to 48 hours. That assessment is being scheduled on average less than ten days, usually roughly now between seven and eight days from referral. We have an 85 percent opt-in rate; even in an environment where mental health is still stigmatized in many communities, we are seeing widespread consents and supports for students achieving these services.

Hazel Health refers to our mental health services as our heart protocol that includes care coordination of really making sure that we are intertwined with community-based providers. We are not a substitute for in-person ongoing wellness care, but we are able to supplement and be able to coordinate what that care looks like and help families to navigate a complicated health care system to make sure that they have the care they need for their children. This was built with sustainability in mind. So, whether the school district funds it with one-time federal stimulus money or whether the state Legislature decides to fund this statewide, the idea is that at some point, the ability to bill direct services to Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or commercial insurance is a sustainability model that can allow this to persist and not solely rely on public dollars in perpetuity. This service has to be able to serve regardless of insurance status, immigration, and language. One of the slides shows how diverse our clinicians are and why that matters particularly in the school districts that we partner with. Preventative and acute mental health care, when a child is in crisis, but hopefully more often when they are not, and when there are early warning indicators of their need and ability to be there early.

I will show you the high-level components of how Hazel Health approaches mental health, which is to address a behavioral health assessment or mental health screener. This is not universal screening. This is a licensed clinician in front of students through the teletherapy modality, student assistance program, or short-term therapy sessions. When the child is going to need, or the student is going to need ongoing care, we make sure that we are working with community-based partners to coordinate what that care looks like and stay with that family in a case management, family resource management capacity for another six months to ensure that no other social determinants of health or barriers are stopping that child from getting their services. Then supporting crisis consultation, while we hope that it does not escalate to this, there is an obvious need in schools, as you have alluded to in the staffing shortages, of making sure that licensed clinicians can respond for risk assessments or de-escalation as needed.

I will cover why it is so important to us at Hazel and to our school district partners that our clinicians represent the student population. Seventy percent of our clinicians identify as people of color; they have six plus years of experience. A vast majority of them, 40 percent, speak another language other than English fluently. That is incredibly important to make sure the 85 percent plus opt-in rate continues to stay there or go higher, because it is a reality that the more, we are able to reach the student, reach the family in a way that is most relatable, most comfortable for them, the better we will be at breaking down this difficult time in their lives to make sure they feel supported. We are experiencing a wonderful phase two rollout with Clark County. We do have great presence in Lyon County with our physical health, which I will save for another time, but we are excited about what that means from a telehealth urgent care perspective and looking to do behavioral health with them as well, and hopefully, at some point, throughout the State of Nevada. Thank you all so much for your time today. Ms. Williams?

Ms. Williams:

I wanted to wrap it up before we take questions. Hazel Health has been able to build capacity, and they do have the ability to continue to build capacity. I want to say that this is very affordable. The Clark County School District is paying \$2.5 million to provide services to every student; that is about \$15 per student, per year. If our state Legislature cannot budget this after these ARP dollars, that is sad, and I cannot imagine that would be the case. We wanted to make sure that we talked about what is going on with mental health, make sure that you understand what the cost may be. Coming up with this next legislative session in 2023, you will be addressing a budget that when you reconvene, the ARP money will be gone. We wanted to make sure as a caucus—this is part of our role, an important role in the community—to send up yellow lights and red lights that this is something we need to be planning for the future, so that we can continue to provide our students with the very best care, so they can achieve academically and become career and college ready and the future of Nevada. For the entire State of Nevada, the cost as of today, would run approximately \$6 million to provide every student in the state with access to mental health. I cannot tell you how big that is for families who are in the donut hole, who make too much for Medicaid and not enough to buy insurance. All of this is no out-of-pocket expense to families, and I will close with that.

Thank you so much, Mr. Post, for joining us today. We appreciate you and all your work and the fantastic rollout. I cannot wait for the numbers to come out so that we can share with our Legislature, because they will be meeting for several months, and I am going to be excited to share that with them. Thank you again and thank you, Committee members, for your attention, and we can take any questions that you have.

Chair Denis:

Do we have anyone with questions? Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod and then Assemblywoman Hansen.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

How are students accessing this? How are they aware of this? How are parents aware that it exists?

Mr. Post:

That is a great question, and thank you, Vice Chair. The answer is the vast majority of referrals for mental health services are coming from the school. The CCSD schools are

identifying refers mostly from school counselors and social workers, and they are referring students who then receive a follow-up from our family resource managers. However, we are seeing parents refer their own children, and student self-referral is available for those of age of consent. We actually support the district rollouts with marketing materials and awareness materials that we are there, what we do, and when it is appropriate to engage Hazel Health for these services.

Ms. Williams:

I would like to add with the student ambassador program that Hazel Health has agreed to do, at our request. We will have a peer-to-peer on campuses as well, where they will be identified by a badge or something that says, "Ask me if you need access to mental health." That way, the student can help them get to where they need to go, such as the office, or whatever information they may need. They are not going to be, of course, providing any service, but to be there to help them access, since students tend to want that support from another student as opposed to an adult. I wanted to say that this program at CCSD has been rolled out for only three weeks, and we are seeing phenomenal numbers already. This is going to be one of the greatest things we have done this year.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Post, for being here. Certainly, we are all distressed about the mental health crisis that we see across the country especially affecting our youth. In Nevada, we have SafeVoice through NDE, which—at least my understanding is after having served in the Legislature since 2019—has provided great supports and has been a way for students to be protected either for themselves or to protect their schools or other students. I noticed on their portal online they have a lot of community partners in mental health that work through SafeVoice. I am wondering if we have some of these resources that are being used and they are not sufficient? Certainly, this telehealth is very intriguing, and if it serves a need, that would be wonderful. I am curious if we are not utilizing some things we already have in place.

Ms. Williams:

I can answer that as best I can as an advocate in my limited knowledge. I am familiar and worked with NDE in securing a federal grant to help build that program out a little more robustly. Because of the lack of professionals that we have in the state, students are having to wait, as Mr. Post mentioned, months to access the services that they need. This helps to fill that gap. Additionally, they work well hand in hand, and they should because calls that come in through there is information that goes out into the community to help support students. The hope is, because now we have Hazel Health also to provide telehealth, that will become another resource to provide our students with the best service that we can provide them to make sure they get the help that they need when they need it. You know, as well as I do, if any of you have raised kids, they may have a crisis today; they have dealt with it or decided they are not going to deal with it, and then carry that baggage on with them. It resurfaces a month later, or two months later, or at school, or in all these crises or fights, and all these other things that we are seeing right now. It is becoming very violent. We need to do everything that we can, and Hazel Health helps to fill that much needed gap that we have and is able to provide the actual service. It is one thing to say, we have got this, we have got that to all feel good. But is it effective? Are we being effective? Are we

changing kids' lives? Are we serving them well? That is what we want to do. I hope I helped, and I am sure our state Superintendent Ebert is happy to provide more information on that.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you. Yes, that helped. I am curious if we have a telehealth component within SafeVoice through those community partners. It would be interesting to see if they do provide that. If I cannot get the answer now, perhaps offline, I could get that answer. Thank you.

Chair Denis:

I am sure that NDE is listening in and you can get that response. I do not know if we have them on right now, but at some point we can get that or they can just get it to you.

Ms. Williams:

Senator Denis, if you do not mind. I wanted to also say that it is an issue of capacity too. So, even though we have providers here, it becomes an issue of capacity. I do not think any states really have the capacity to provide those kinds of services. If they are already busy with in-person being able to provide physical service, I do not know how they are going to have the time to be able to provide telehealth 24 hours a day, or 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., whatever time that you are going to do this. Kids can access this, students can access the service, whether they are at home and have a crisis, whether they are walking from school and have a crisis, or at school. It is available to them, wherever they are.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Post, for this presentation and the information that you have shared with us today. I truly appreciated that you are concerned for our students here in Nevada as far as their mental health is concerned. I jotted down a couple of things because I am really concerned. Are we putting the pressure on CCSD to provide our students the mental health needs that they so need? Are we putting that pressure and are we eliminating the concern that parents need to know? It does not seem like it to me through this presentation, if I have gotten the linkage with how parents are being informed. It is the students, it is the school, and there is a vital component there, meaning families, the parents, or guardians of that child because we know that they are minors. I would like to know how we are looping the parents, the families, the guardians into this process because this mental health might be expanded to the families, I do not know. I would love to see eventually the data, and how we can effectively meet the needs of mental health because mental health for children expands to the families.

Ms. Williams:

Absolutely. Mr. Post, can you address that?

Mr. Post:

Yes, it is a wonderful question. The family, absent age of consent laws, which you have in Nevada as well, but the family, the caregiver, or parent does consent to services. When the

referral is made, the family resource manager's first outreach, so long as this is not a minor consent case, will reach out to the family, or the parent, or caregiver to consent to services before services are provided. To the former question on placing this on school districts, my background prior to this was also in large school districts, as Ms. Williams alluded to, albeit in Florida. School counselors have always been the conduit for referring students who do need more clinical services to ascertain those as appropriate. This is an extension of that work. But ultimately, the parent-caregiver, always, unless an extenuating circumstance that would be lawful and understood, goes through the parent or caregiver for consent to services. I should say, Assemblywoman Thomas, it is not just individual sessions, there are family sessions available, which is part of the at home piece. We do have a number of students who, as part of their treatment plan, are receiving family services in the evening time through the same modality, but at their homes and with their families, or with the child at school and the parent who can take a break for 10 or 15 minutes and be able to use a secure link to join the video conference from wherever they are while the student is at school.

Ms. Williams:

That is important to our community where we have folks, who especially are working in hospitality, and cannot take off. They are able to schedule the appointment on their lunch break or if they do not have transportation. One of our public comments today was someone who cannot drive a car and has problems with transportation, so they would be able to join in that way as well.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you and follow-up, Chair, please. This program is in its infancy of three weeks. When do you expect to have full data? Will it be six months from now, a year from now, that we can actually see numbers and results?

Mr. Post:

In Clark County, it has been three weeks, right about four weeks now; nationally, it has gone on longer. We can certainly provide aggregate data across, we can either silo large urban school districts or all school districts on our mental health platform. The questions specific to CCSD, is that we will work with them to provide a midyear report. I know it is midyear already, but relative to the implementation timeline and an end of school year report, and then on a semester cadence after that for both access and clinical outcome metrics. Once shared with CCSD, we would obviously love the opportunity to share that more broadly.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other questions from Committee members? I am not seeing any. Thank you very much, both of you, for that presentation and for answering the questions.

Chair Denis:

Thank you and that presentation was wonderful.

We do have the answer to the question asked in the previous Item IV about the breakdown of the appointments. I want to have staff go over that before we go on to our next item.

Ms. Drozdoff:

In reference to the questions asked about the Task Force membership, we have a breakdown of the information provided in their applications. There were 20 members selected for the Task Force; of these members: 2 identified as Caucasian, Hispanic-Latino; 1 identified as Hispanic-Latino but did not specify beyond that point; 13 identified as Caucasian; 2 identified as African American; and 2 identified as Asian. In terms of a breakdown of gender identity, 6 applicants identified as men and 14 identified as women. We had one applicant select veteran or military dependent status. In terms of a grade level breakdown, 8 of the applicants fell into the elementary or pre-K category; 1 was a middle school teacher; 6 were high school teachers; 2 taught grades 7 through 12 in the rural districts; and 3 of the applicants either did not fit into any of these categories or did not specify their grade levels. If we can answer any other questions, please let us know.

Chair Denis:

Thank you, any questions? I am not hearing any.

AGENDA ITEM VI—PRESENTATION ON CURRENT AND PLANNED PROGRAMS OF AND CHALLENGES FACING NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Chair Denis:

I want to take a three-minute break to give our staff time to ensure that all the presentations are ready to go. I will mention that I am going to take President Sandoval first, as there is a timing conflict, and then we will follow as they are listed in the agenda. We will be on a three-minute break. I will ask staff if they can just double check with everybody on their presentations.

We are on Agenda Item VI, presentation on current and planned programs of and challenges facing Nevada System of Higher Education institutions. We have various presenters from each one of our institutions. We are going to start first with President Brian Sandoval from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR).

University of Nevada, Reno

Brian Sandoval, J.D., President, UNR

Chair Denis, Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, members of the Committee. First and foremost, I want to thank you for the opportunity to present to the Committee today with regard to UNR ([Agenda Item VI A](#)). I want to thank you all for your support of higher education. With your support, we have been able to achieve some national recognitions that I think speak well of the investment from you all in the Legislature. We have achieved top tier status. We recently were given the designation again of being a Carnegie R1—"Very High Research" institution. I would like to congratulate my colleague and friend, President Keith Whitfield, from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), as UNLV achieved the status as well. We are also an emerging Hispanic-serving institution. We are approximately 24 percent Latinx enrollment at our university, and our most recent freshman class is 48 percent. That is something that we are proud of. We are designated as a military-friendly university. All of

these would not have been able to be obtained without the support of the Legislature. Thank you for that.

Next is our Early College Academy, which we are starting to get involved in many of the high schools throughout Nevada. In northern Nevada, the Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology; the Davidson Academy; North Valleys High School; McQueen High School; Spanish Springs High School; Hug and Reno High Schools, where we have in the fall an approximate enrollment of 70 students. In Clark County, we have academies in Cheyenne and Centennial High Schools. I had the opportunity to visit Cheyenne High School and I am excited about working with the students there. You will see that in the fall there was an enrollment of 468 students. In the spring, I am really pleased and proud to state that we have over 700 students enrolled in the dual enrollment programs of those two high schools. This has been a very intentional effort for us to work with the CCSD to provide educational pathways to higher education for students. Nevada has a lot of work to do in regards to college attainment, and we really want to do our part to provide those opportunities to students in high school. It is important to acknowledge the chancellor's office for moving this needle on concurrent enrollment and helping open the doors for our high school students. Obviously, our sister institutions are doing a great job in that regard as well. We are going to continue working with the school districts. We are going to be expanding in Washoe County and having conversations with the rural school districts to provide those high school students with the opportunity to achieve college credits while they are in high school.

Next, I will move to our fall enrollment. You will see that we had a fall enrollment in 2021 of approximately 21,000 students. It was down a bit from where it was a couple of years ago, due to many factors. This spring, the enrollment has dropped to a little over 19,000. I think part of that, if you are wondering why, has to do with graduation in December. There is traditionally a drop in enrollment, but also because of COVID. We are working very hard to aggressively recruit students and go to where they are. I want to thank and compliment our student services and our recruiters throughout the State of Nevada because they are personally visiting all the high schools and making sure what the opportunities are for students throughout the state. I had the opportunity to visit Centennial High School recently and visit with the students, faculty, and principal there. They are excited about the programming that is going on. We are also working very hard with regard to online enrollment. We are currently recruiting a new vice provost of online education. We believe, and I believe my colleagues at the other institutions, that it is important to go where the students are and online education is going to be a big part of that.

This represents graduates from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 through August, you will see that number of 4,855, and this plays into part of what your agenda talks about in terms of providing a strong workforce for Nevada. We have graduates as, as I am sure you can appreciate, in multiple areas. One of the conversations earlier in this Committee meeting is with regard to educators, and we are really working hard in our College of Education and Human Development to graduate as many teachers as possible. My understanding is that we had approximately 150 teachers that graduated last fall. We are working extremely hard to graduate more counselors, nurses, social workers, all to address those needs that are so dire throughout the State of Nevada. The public health workers, researchers, doctors, amongst many other individuals that are graduating from our university. Our graduation rates, you will see—there are four-year and six-year graduation rates—continue to increase. We want to ensure the investments you make in our university are generating graduates that can move on to the workforce. There is a steady increase from 2017 to today, and we will continue to work to improve those numbers and continue to improve and attract as many Nevada students as possible.

We will move to the number of graduates by ethnicity; to support our diverse student population, we are actively taking a number of steps. One aggressive move we made was we added 24 academic advisors to provide support for student success. In August for the first time ever, we had all of our first-year students participate in what we call our Nevada Fit Program, whereby all of our freshmen students come to campus a week early and take a special course to really familiarize them themselves with the campus, the types of classes they are going to take, and what it is like to be a college student. That has worked out extremely well. Also, we have initiated what we call the Digital Wolfpack Initiative, in collaboration with Apple. We provided each one of our freshmen students with an iPad Air; we learned during the pandemic, when we were engaging in distance education, that a lot of our students did not have devices or did not have access to adequate Wi-Fi. Each of our students were provided with an iPad Air, which has tremendously improved their access and the quality of their education that they have received here. To try to complement what the discussion has been with regard to this Committee, we have provided the services that our students need, particularly mental health counseling given throughout the pandemic, and we are pleased with that. We have expanded our online clinics and availability for COVID testing as well as vaccination clinics. We purchased 20,000 N-95 masks to protect our students, faculty, and staff. As you can see on this chart with regard to our Indigenous populations and the bill that was passed to provide the fee waiver for those students, we intend to improve the amount of Indigenous students who are enrolled in our university as well as graduate those students.

I will move on to workforce development. It is important to note there are a lot of challenges associated with meeting the needs of workforce development in Nevada. We are going to continue to graduate as many students as possible. We are developing our strategic plan as we speak, and we are working very hard to make sure that our strategic plan complements what you are doing in terms of workforce enrollment, growing workforce development, and growing our enrollment in specific areas where there are needs throughout the State of Nevada. We are working very hard to recruit throughout the entire state and every county to fill the needs of the state, obviously with the educators for our schools.

Many of you may or may not be aware that Sierra Nevada University approached UNR and proposed to transfer or donate that campus to UNR. We are engaged currently with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities as well as the United States Department of Education in that acquisition process. It is going extremely well. We are hopeful that transition will take place by the beginning of the next academic year. This acquisition has been reviewed and approved by our Board of Regents. We are excited about the opportunities that it can provide to students throughout the State of Nevada. We anticipate approximately 350 students to transition to UNR, and it will complement our efforts in terms of maintaining our status as an R-1 Carnegie Very High Research Institution. It will ensure the Lake Tahoe campus remains an educational resource and centerpiece for the State of Nevada with regard to research, particularly with regard to sustainability and providing students throughout the state who may not have had access to the campus to be able to attend this campus and pay in-state tuition; we are pleased about that.

Mr. Chair and Madam Vice Chair, I wanted to be very brief to be respectful of your time and provide adequate time for those who will be following me. Thank you for the opportunity and honor to make a presentation today.

Chair Denis:

Thank you, President Sandoval. Any questions? Yes, Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you so much and thank you for the presentation. I wanted to ask about the acquisition of Sierra Nevada University. I know there is one here in Henderson; it is at Green Valley Parkway and Sunset. I was curious about your intents; are we going to see UNR stuff down there? That is right in the heart of Clark County. I do have another question as well.

President Sandoval:

Thank you. Yes, there is that campus, and it is an office in Henderson. We recently visited, but it plays an important role in providing teacher training and a master's online program for teachers and they work very closely with CCSD. The feedback that I have received is that they have really had a great experience with that. In the short term, we are engaged in what is called a teach out program to ensure that all students who are enrolled, both in the undergraduate and the graduate programs, can finish those degree programs that we have. We obviously are going to consult with NSHE, the chancellor, CCSD, and with you all to ensure those teacher training programs and master's programs will be available to the teachers in the education system. There is no plan to spread UNR's campus throughout southern Nevada. We just want to be available to provide the services and resources that educators need.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, and if I may ask one more question. You did not really talk about dual enrollment. I had intended on asking several of you questions about dual enrollment since that is something that we worked on. I know the intent of the legislation is to offer students dual enrollment; they are getting college level courses and being taught by professors who have masters or even doctorates. I have talked to President Whitfield and that is what is happening. Are you seeing that level? Are our students who are enrolling in those dual enrollment through UNR, are the professors at that level? And what sort of footprint are we seeing? You mentioned two schools that you have partnerships with but are you also pushing that dual enrollment to other Clark County schools? I know you and UNLV stay within their geographic realm. They are not going up and I do not mean to use the word poaching, but they are not actively recruiting from northern Nevada. I wanted to see how you were doing that.

President Sandoval:

What is important is to provide history here first. We were approached by Superintendent Jara of CCSD, who was interested in providing more opportunities for students with regard to dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment. There is an important distinction there. Dual enrollment is, as you described, where a university or higher education instructor, whether it be at a master's level or a doctorate level, would come into the high school and physically teach. Whereas a concurrent enrollment provides for an assessment of an instructor at the high school, and if they have the proper credentials to be able to teach a college level course. After being approached by Superintendent Jara, he suggested two pilot programs, and those are the ones that I described in my presentation with regard to Cheyenne and Centennial. Neither of those schools had a presence with regard to any other institution. Again, it was his hope we provide as many opportunities for

high school students to attain college credit as possible. We did begin that Early College Academy at both of those high schools and within a few weeks we had over 400 students enrolled. With regard to those two high schools, the enrollment has increased. These are entry-level English classes, entry-level math classes, entry-level political science classes. They have been so successful and the principals of each of those high schools were so pleased with the results that we were approached again to offer and expand the programming or the concurrent enrollment to additional high schools in Clark County. The reality is, and something that I have said publicly multiple times, the majority of those students will enroll at UNLV, College of Southern Nevada (CSN), and Nevada State College. It provides additional opportunities for these students to gain college credit. It saves their families money. It gets them a head start with regard to higher education, and it is beneficial to all of the institutions in the state.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you. I appreciate that, and I do have a few more questions, but I will take them offline. Thank you very much for the presentation.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you, President Sandoval, for your presentation on UNR. I do appreciate the information that you have shared with us. You gave us the number of graduates at the university, but I wanted to know the number eligible to graduate as well as the dropout rate by ethnicity. I wanted to know if you have the data and whether or not this is reflected back on their high school career. Is that the reason they dropped out, or is it because of economic reasons for the dropout rate? If you have that data, I would appreciate it.

President Sandoval:

I would be happy to gather that information for you. Obviously, recruitment, retention, and graduation are foremost in our minds, and we do an assessment if we lose students as to the reason for that. As I mentioned before, we have been working extremely hard to get those students back from the drop in enrollment between even the fall of last year and the spring of this year. With your permission offline, we would love to gather that information and provide the details that you need.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you, sir. I will be asking the same question of all our institutions, so if I have to wait for that data, I would appreciate everyone who is listening to get that. Thank you again, I appreciate it.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Other questions? Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you, President Sandoval, good to see you. I want to go back to Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod's question about the southern office of the Sierra Nevada building. I know

that you said the northern Nevada building was going to be an office; is that what I understood? Am I correct?

President Sandoval:

No. Essentially there are three campuses; there is a main campus up at Incline Village in Lake Tahoe, and it is approximately 20 acres. It has dormitories. It has a research facility, it has classrooms, a library, the typical amenities that you would see on a college campus. There is an office in Henderson, that Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod described, and there is also an office in Reno. The purpose for those offices in Reno and Henderson are to provide graduate education, master's level education for teachers. There are more students enrolled in those programs than there are undergraduates at the university. It provides a great resource for educators throughout the state, including Clark County, to obtain those master's level instruction to improve their educational experience.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you very much. With that being said, the master's program, if I remember correctly, was online. Are the offices small? Do they just do clerical work? For both the Reno and the Las Vegas office, if these programs are online, what is happening in that office?

President Sandoval:

I am in full disclosure. I have not visited the Reno office, but I did visit the office in Henderson; it is very small, maybe a couple thousand square feet, if that. It is mostly offices, but there is one small conference-type room where students have the ability to physically come in and meet with staff there in Henderson. It is not a large building by any stretch of the imagination. It is literally cubbies and two conference rooms.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I was wondering financially, if it is an online program, do we need two offices? Could it all be done out of one in Reno? I can continue that conversation later. Thank you very much.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Good to see you, President Sandoval. I am framing my questions as a graduate of Sierra Nevada College. I decided to become a teacher after living in Nevada for a few years, and I recognized the need for more teachers here in Nevada. As a graduate, who had already graduated from two universities, I was very selective in my choice of where to go. Obviously, UNLV was there, but I actually chose Sierra Nevada because it was small, and I did not want to, as someone who had already gone to two large universities, go through the bureaucracy of a large university. I did not want to deal with the parking struggle of a large university. Sierra Nevada also provided the ability to work on my teaching certificate and master's in teaching simultaneously. I found that my experience with Sierra Nevada was the smoothest, loveliest experience I could have. I did have in-person classes. I did not choose the virtual route. I chose the 100 percent in-classroom experience. Things that I experienced at Sierra Nevada, that I could never experience at a larger college or university, is they would actually walk into class and hand us a slip of paper in the middle of class and say, "Real quick, take ten minutes and fill out your classes you want to register

for next term.” They would wait ten minutes and we would hand it back. There was one office that we would go to pay for tuition, to deal with financial aid, to audit our classes, to sign up for student teaching, all of that, just one office. When you are a nontraditional student, we know saving that extra hour looking for a parking spot, as we do in the evenings at most universities, also made life a lot easier. My question is—now that Sierra Nevada is absorbed by a large university and knowing the program at Sierra Nevada here in Las Vegas, or technically Henderson, was just for postgraduate students, these are already college graduates and often nontraditional age students, so many people have families, many people have other jobs, and other types of things that make going back to school full-time challenging—has there been discussion or is there a discussion, a plan, or a desire to keep that small, intimate experience that I had available for the students who would now be going through the program?

President Sandoval:

I appreciate the question. I am pleased about the experience that you have had, and that is part of what we have talked about in terms of this acquisition, to preserve this intimate experience and a flexible one for students that come from a lot of different backgrounds and have a lot of different challenges. Our intent is, as we move forward, to do exactly what you described—to go where the students are and to be extremely flexible in terms of providing them with an instruction and a curriculum that meets their needs.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Other questions? I do not see anyone raising their hand. President Sandoval, thank you very much for your presentation and for answering questions. We are excited to see all the good things that are going on in all our institutions.

We will now go to our presentation from CSN. We have Dr. Federico Zaragoza, President, here with us today. Welcome Dr. Federico Zaragoza.

College of Southern Nevada

Federico Zaragoza, Ph.D., President, CSN:

Good morning, Chair Denis, Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, distinguished Committee members, colleagues and guests. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the important work that we do at CSN, as well as the challenges that we are confronting ([Agenda Item VI B](#)). The College of Southern Nevada is a large urban community college, and the emphasis is on community. We have three campuses and seven learning centers located within a 15-minute drive of any location in the region. Our student body and programs are as diverse as the community we serve. Every year we enroll approximately 55,000 students; 7,400 noncredit students; and approximately 48,000 unduplicated, unique degree-seeking students. We are a majority minority institution; 72 percent of our students are non-White. We are also a Hispanic-serving institution with 36 percent of our student body now being Hispanic; 56 percent of our students are female; the average age of our students is now 25 years of age; and 70 percent of our students attend part-time. The College of Southern Nevada, like our sister NSHE community college institutions, deliver a comprehensive higher education curriculum. That means we offer both academic university transfer programs, so students can earn an associate degree that transfer to universities through a two-plus-two

articulation model. It should be noted that 70 percent of our full-time students are not college ready when they first come to CSN.

The College of Southern Nevada has a very strong workforce development mission. It is in our DNA. At CSN, this translates to 280 certificate degree programs designed to transition students into the local workforce. Our program has no wrong doors, and we meet students where they are. Our reach is deep and wide and will touch every part of southern Nevada. As an example, a recent Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) Economic Impact Study reported that 1 out of every 81 workers in southern Nevada is a CSN alumni. In terms of student success, CSN is now outperforming the most prestigious community colleges in the country in the important category of total number of completers or graduates. We outperformed all of our peer colleges, including Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland and Montgomery College in North Carolina. We are within reach of surpassing our peer aspiration college, Austin Community College, who registered 5,133 graduates in 2020. To put things in perspective, last year, in 2021, we awarded 5,137 degrees and certificates—the second highest number of degrees awarded in our history—and this was achieved at the peak of the pandemic. The results are not going unnoticed. I am pleased to report that CSN was selected by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities as the 2021 Beacon Award winner for excellence in student achievement and student success in the category of large institutions, those with student enrollments of 6,000 or more students. We are indeed on our way to transforming CSN into one of the nation's elite higher education performing community colleges in the country.

We are developing academic workforce and diversity solutions right here at CSN. We are committed to continuing our student success momentum by fully converting to corequisite English and math instruction; increasing advisor to student ratios from 350 to 1; and continuing to provide high wrapup and wraparound services, including mental health services to our students. These are all national proven best practices which we must continue to implement at scale. However, CSN is not immune to the challenges and serious threats confronting higher education and particularly community colleges. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, headcount enrollment for community college is down 14.1 percent nationally compared to pre-COVID levels. COVID has clearly had an adverse impact on our involvement. Our credit headcount plateaued at 34,100 in Fall 2019, which was pre-COVID. As of yesterday, our Spring 2021 enrollment is down approximately 11 percent, and we are down almost 60 percent over a two-year period. To be clear, the number one threat to CSN is declining enrollment because our funding is generated by caseload reimbursement, student tuition, and fees. It is early in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023–2025 budget development process, declining enrollment, without a type of hold harmless clause, could translate to annual revenue losses of approximately \$44 million for CSN. Needless to say, these are troubling trends. However, I am optimistic that we will overcome these troubling trends.

I will provide a high-level overview of our initiatives designed to increase enrollment and the importance of continued state support. First, in the past five years, we have more than tripled dual enrollment numbers, going from 1,806 students in 2016 to 4,545 last fall. During this five-year period, 16,840 CCSD students earned college credit, becoming not just college ready, but they emerged as college-proven students, and the vast majority were able to seamlessly transition to CSN or to one of our sister institutions. Our dual enrollment efforts are intentional. They are designed to create early college pathways that allow high school students to graduate with associate degrees. Every year about 100 students will walk the stage earning their associate degree before they walk their high school graduation stage. Career and technology (CT) academies allow high school students to graduate with career occupation certifications, and Jumpstart Core 15 programs allow high school students

to graduate with one semester of university transfer work under their belts. Thanks to an anonymous donor, we have begun our [AB 319](#) pilot that allows CSN and CCSD to create new CT pathways for almost 1,000 dual enrollment students, mostly from underserved CCSD districts. Students in these programs will graduate from high school with degrees or certificates in high-demand fields. Assembly Bill 319 will address the educational impact and return on investment of career and technical education (CTE) dual enrollment programs. It will also answer the question of what happens when the donor support stops.

On the workforce front, we have been working to resize, reengineer, and realign workforce programs to address high-demand occupations in Nevada. This means that our enrollments and our graduates are aligned to the region's existing and emerging sectors. To that end, we have aligned our programs of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA) Workforce Blueprint 2.0 and to the state's U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics labor market information to address documented job growth and skill gaps that result in lack of qualified applicants and targeted occupations in southern Nevada. This slide shows that the CSN's pipeline is robust. We have 2,200 students in health and emergency response programs; 750 students in tourism, gaming, and conventions; 510 students in computer information technologies; and a robust 6,800 students in skilled trades, apprentice, manufacturing, and logistics programs. These students are now in the pipeline to fill critical jobs needed to diversify the southern Nevada regional economy.

To address emerging occupations, I am pleased to report the City of Henderson and CSN have partnered to establish a Center of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing. The Center for Excellence will be a world-class advanced manufacturing training facility of approximately 17,000 square feet to be modeled after the Haas training centers in other states. The facility will anchor CSN in education training programs and computerized numerical control (CNC), robotics, machining, fabrication, and mechatronics. This is a concrete example of how CSN serves as the region's workforce development engine to supply the needed skilled workers for thousands of new jobs that will be created by Haas Corporation and other advanced manufacturing companies. We are already seeing enrollment growth at the Betty Engelstad Health and Sciences facility in our Henderson campus. Because of your support, this facility now provides an additional 1,200 biology seats and up to 500 seats for nursing and health professional majors. The bottom line is, as COVID allows, we are well-positioned to add more students into our nursing and allied health profession programs, many of which are on waiting lists.

In addition, CSN, in collaboration with area industry and labor organizations, continues to grow and diversify the apprenticeship and skilled trades area. Our plan is to continue to offer accelerated short-term and micro certification skills certificates as well as stackable pathways into the middle skill areas. Our goal will be to double the number of enrollments in middle skills, information technology (IT), and cybersecurity programs over the next five years.

I hope you can see that at CSN, the scale of our workforce and higher education efforts are systemic and they are at scale. Not hundreds, but thousands of other Nevada residents connect to higher education or jobs in critical growth sectors via CSN. But critical to our ability to continue to address southern Nevada's workforce and education needs is our ability to expand our Sahara West Workforce Skills Training Center, which is at capacity. We need to procure financial support to expand our services into the Northwest corridor. These two projects will be our classification of instructional programs (CIP) priorities for FY 2023–2025 budget cycle. To continue our work force, higher education, and student success momentum, CSN will be requesting approximately \$74.8 million annually during the upcoming legislative session. We of course look forward to discussing our overall budget

request in the months to come. Mr. Chair, that constitutes my report. However, I will be pleased to respond to questions, if any.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Questions? Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much and thank you for the presentation. You went over your dual enrollment numbers, and I appreciate that. I am going to go back to the question that I asked President Sandoval as well. When you are doing the dual enrollment, the intent of the legislation was to have professors who have master's or Ph.D. Are you participating in what UNR is calling concurrent enrollment? I have never heard that term. I am going to have to get more information about that. Is that something that you are doing as well?

President Zaragoza:

We do concurrent enrollment as well, but all our instructors are faculty. Even if they are CCSD faculty, they have to meet the master's plus 18-minimum requirement, so we do not provide different certification standards for concurrent enrollment instructors.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for that. My second question, the Sahara West, is that an expansion? I know that building is quite old. It is in a great location, though, as far as public transportation. Is the plan, it was a \$6 million budget, to start from scratch or are you going to expand that building? Thank you.

President Zaragoza:

Actually, it is a combination of both. We are expanding the footprint. But more importantly, we are retrofitting multipurpose labs so we could do more of the skilled training. Manufacturing, for example, is a high-demand occupation. There is a lot of interest in certification programs that we could deliver in that facility that we cannot do under the current constraints. We also have a demand for us to expand our literacy programs in that area. We have approximately 200,000 individuals in southern Nevada without a high school diploma, and many of them go for noncredit instruction at that facility as well. We are incorporating a model now, it is our ability to benefit, much like we do with high school dual enrollment; we are now allowing GED students to also take college credit. We need to expand that facility and to retrofit those classrooms. The \$6 million basically gets us to maximize that facility. We do need a longer-term solution to grow and to address the needs that we see in this area of skills development and mental skills.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

Chair Denis:

Other questions? Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

First let me say thank you for the presentation, President Zaragoza. I have the same question that I had before. I would like to know the number of graduates versus the number of eligible to graduate and what the dropout rate was by ethnicity. I would like to see the data on that. The reason why is COVID showed big holes, and those holes were student debt. It is essential that we know what those numbers look like in case we need to have programs in high school that will alleviate them going into debt with their lack of being ready for a community college or university. This is the reason I am asking these questions. I would appreciate that if you do not have the data, if you can get the data for us.

President Zaragoza:

We will provide and follow up with that data.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. I suspect that all the institutions are probably going to have to put together information. I think whatever they do, it would be good to give it to the Committee so we can all look at that. I think that would be important. Thank you very much. Who else has any questions? Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you, Dr. Zaragoza, for being here. Actually, as a former student at UNR, I am more than glad to give you kudos for what you are doing there at CSN. I have been a fan since I have watched from 2019. I apologize for being late to the game in knowing the impact that this has had on the state, but I have continually been impressed, and certainly so, with your presentation today. Whether it is a CSN student, UNLV, UNR, Sierra Nevada College at UNR, I am glad to see all these choices. We know in education one size does not fit all. When it comes to higher education, I am glad to see these different programs. I am a huge fan of dual enrollment. This concurrent enrollment is new to me and understanding it. If you do not mind, I am going to clarify what I understand from President Sandoval's presentation. Correct me if I am wrong with concurrent, you are using existing teachers in the high school who are certified or have the degree to be able to teach college-level credit courses there at the high school versus dual enrollment where you go to the community college campus or something like that? Do I have that correct?

President Zaragoza:

That is correct. Or the students can also come to the colleges for the dual enrollment part of it. The difference, again, being that the instructors of record are from the community college system versus being adjunct instructors from the CSN network, but again, meeting the same certification requirements irrespective of whether they are concurrent or dual enrollment instructors.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you for that. So, our kids in high school have an opportunity through Advanced Placement (AP)—which I know is difficult and the courses are quite challenging—or they can do dual enrollment, or they can do concurrent. If I am not mistaken, we have three pathways that students in high school can get college credit before they are even there.

President Zaragoza:

Those are three of the pathways. They can also, if they are in the CTE area, get industry certifications in addition to college credits.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you. I am a huge fan of that too. I am sitting here in our plumbing office and those trades are important, and for a lot of students, that is their pathway—those trades and certification programs. Your presentation showed off so well how CSN is doing that. Thank you so much. One last thing—Millennium Scholarship recipients can utilize their scholarship at any of these universities or community colleges, even certification programs, is that correct?

President Zaragoza:

That is correct.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you so much for being here and for your work.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? I am not seeing any. Dr. Zaragoza, thank you for all the work that you do. You impact a lot of folks as you have already mentioned here in southern Nevada and throughout the state. Thank you for all the work that is going on there.

We will now go to the Desert Research Institute (DRI) and Dr. Kumud Acharya, who is the President.

Desert Research Institute

Kumud Acharya, Ph.D., President, DRI

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to share with you the impactful science and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education opportunities that are underway at DRI ([Agenda Item VI C](#)). The DRI is one of eight institutions within NSHE. Our scientists conduct research throughout Nevada, the West, and around the world. Unlike the other institutions, we do not grant degrees. The majority of our scientists are full-time researchers. A few of them do teach part-time at NSHE institutions, but most are dedicated to full-time research that takes them throughout Nevada and to research sites around the world. We have two main campuses in Las Vegas and Reno. We have been around more than 60 years conducting research and environmental science. We have more than 450 scientists, engineers, students, and support staff; over 100 Ph.D.s in more than 40 disciplines. Last year, we brought in \$43 million in sponsored research grants and contracts. That is, roughly, the annual average. That is funding from the sponsored research that our scientists are doing to solve important scientific questions. Desert Research Institute scientists earned their own salaries through grants and contracts. The DRI receives less than 20 percent of its funding from the state, which covers our administration and facilities. For every dollar the state invests in DRI, our scientists earned \$4.82 in outside grant and contract revenue that is spent here in the state. Our work generally powers the following areas: atmospheric sciences, earth and ecosystem sciences, hydrologic sciences, genomic medicine, and STEM education.

I will share a few of the projects that our scientists are working on. The first one is OpenET; a web-based platform that DRI, along with its partners at NASA and the Environmental Defense Fund, developed to fill the biggest data gap in water management. It provides a tool that allows ag growers along with federal, state, and local water managers to all have access to the same information about water use and evapotranspiration. Nevada Senator Catherine Cortez Masto and U.S. Representative Susie Lee introduced companion bills in the Senate and the House to create a new program and federal agency to support OpenET. These bills are pending in Congress right now.

The other one is wildfire science. Wildfires are a growing concern in the West and DRI scientists are working to better understand what conditions lead to wildfires; how wildfire smoke changes and drifts into communities; and the impact that wildfires have on our health, including finding an elevated risk of COVID-19 positivity on days with excessive wildfire smoke. They are also looking at the ways that wildfire changes the soil structure, making risk for mudslides higher following a wildfire event.

The DRI's Western Regional Climate Center (WRCC), in Reno, Nevada, delivers high-quality climate data services at national, regional, and state levels. Inaugurated in 1986, the WRCC is one of six regional climate centers in the United States. We work with partners in the National Climatic Data Center, the National Weather Service, the American Association of State Climatologists, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research Institutes. One example of the Center's work: DRI and WRCC climatologist, David Simeral, is one of the nation's authors of the U.S. Drought Monitor, which provides information on drought conditions nationwide, and this map is updated regularly. Desert Research Institute hydrologists have partnered with the Nature Conservancy at its 90-acre 7J Ranch near Beatty. This area is home to the headwaters of the Amargosa River. Our scientists installed a meteorological station and are working on developing a watershed model to remind us how conservation efforts will affect water resources.

Microplastics—The microplastics research team at DRI is working to understand this contaminant and develop novel solutions to microplastics in the fresh water. By better characterizing the types and locations of microplastic pollution, scientists are working to prevent them from getting into the environment, understanding the impact they may have on freshwater ecosystems, and eventually removing microplastics from West water streams.

Agricultural innovation and adaptive analysis—This is DRI's EcoCELLS facility at our Reno campus. Scientists are working to solve problems that plague garlic crops, a fungus called white rot. They have developed an antifungal to combat the problem, and this has also led to a new spinout from DRI: a company that actually is collecting a lot of investment from outside agencies right now.

Solar energy—Our DRI Reno campus is home to a vast solar area that provides power to our facility. Our scientists are also looking at ways to optimize solar power grids and investigating how solar panels impact the ability for rainfall to be absorbed in our desert soils.

Our scientists are working with agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management to monitor and inventory plant species on federal lands.

Dr. Andrei Khlystov, on the picture here with our division of atmospheric sciences, is one of the scientists uncovering the dangers of e-cigarettes. The team found that when the flavorings in e-cigarettes are heated to very high temperatures, the vapor that is released

includes harmful chemicals that include aldehydes. We all know that aldehydes are carcinogenic. This is a National Institute of Health-funded resource at DRI.

The Center for Genomic Medicine is a partnership that DRI has with Renown Hospital. Desert Research Institute's center for genomic medicine is investigating the connection between our genes, the environment, and our health. This team has one of the largest population health studies in the country. Over 50,000 people have enrolled in the program. Participants learn about their genetic predisposition to certain diseases and can use that information to inform their health care decisions. The team also found an increased risk of COVID-19 on days when wildfire smoke was at its worst in the Reno area.

Moving on to our Science Alive Program. The DRI's Science Alive Program envisions a STEM-literate workforce for the future. Our mission is to support Nevada's K-12 education ecosystem with tools and resources needed to bring STEM content to life. What we do here is we create and distribute educational content, provide professional development and training, and support the community through outreach and engagement.

Inspiring future scientists—Educational programs at DRI seek to foster scientific engineering talent from kindergarten to postgraduate levels. We meet needs for economic diversification and science-based educational opportunities inside and outside of Nevada. We are preparing Nevada's future leaders with the skills they need to succeed in their careers. Our Science Alive team creates engaging hands-on STEM kits, known as green boxes, for K-12 classrooms, after-school programs, teacher training programs, and other educational settings. Educators have free access to the materials to support STEM learning. We have online resources, videos, career connections, and media as well. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics topics include robotics, engineering, environmental science, renewable energy, climate change, emerging DRI science research, NASA, and space science, et cetera.

We offer in-person and virtual training for teachers, future educators, and youth-serving professionals, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, libraries, Girl Scouts, Communities In Schools, et cetera. We offer unique field experiences and opportunities to facilitate connection to the topics. We highlight the world-class science happening at DRI. Our K-12 team works across the state to offer engaging events to promote DRI and STEM literacy. Recent projects include the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) Conference, Science and Tech Fest, the "May the Science be with You" open house event, and more. These activities focused on DRI resource faculty and offer class visits, presentations or virtual calls, field trips, DRI campus tours, and more.

Robotics—To date, we have seen over 660 Nevada educators attend our variety of robotics workshops. Each year we host a weeklong robotics academy to train teachers across the state on how to build and code robots. Some teachers from clubs, STEM team robotics in the STEAM/STEM labs, and others use robotics to teach math and science standards. This summer, we had 97 teachers and 175 attendees at four different robotics trainings, virtual and in-person, both in Reno and in Henderson. This one teacher training week will reach 1,600 students in this school year. Among the trainees, 46 percent identified as non-White; 69 percent work at Title 1 schools; 20 percent came from rural Nevada; and 75 percent identified as women. We see a dramatic change in confidence levels after the training.

Desert Research Institute Science Alive is one of the only STEM programs with a statewide footprint impacting communities throughout Nevada. We have reached over 170,000 students since our inception; reached approximately 70 percent of those state

schools with a big focus on Title 1 schools; trained 600 to 800 teachers per year; and partnered with 50-plus community organizations.

Desert Research Institute also offers programs to support Nevada's colleges and registrants. This is a new program DRI initiated last year, the Research Immersion Internship Program. This is to connect with students from two-year community colleges and Nevada State College to give them an opportunity to get exposure in science. These are nontraditional students; they do not get to experience that science. We decided that by launching this program, we would be able to reach out to those who are underserved in our communities and bring them to our campus and give them an opportunity to feel what science looks like. Hopefully, they will then get into the sciences. The first year, we had 14 students who came to DRI and visited a number of labs for 16 weeks. We are relaunching that program again this year. This is internally funded by DRI.

Desert Research Institute also has a graduate student program. We support graduate student research assistants from UNLV, UNR, and Nevada State College. They are an integral part of our science. They come and work with our scientists and get trained. Our goal is to retain them here in Nevada, so they can contribute to our workforce. It is important for them to work with our scientists. Our scientists bring a lot of grants and having graduate students allows them to do the fieldwork easier. We are part of the graduate student program at both of these universities. That is how we contribute to our students. That is all I have for DRI's brief introduction. If there are any questions, I am more than happy to take them.

Chair Denis:

Thank you for your presentation. Any questions? Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I do not really have a question; I just want to thank DRI for all they do. Being that they are such a different institution, but under the same umbrella within NSHE, it is important for us to recognize the value to our community and our state. Thank you very much, Dr. Acharya.

President Acharya:

Thank you. We appreciate that.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. It is such a different institution, yet the great things that you do there are not always known. We appreciate the opportunity to be able to hear from you. Any other questions? I am not seeing any. Thank you very much.

We will go now to our next institution, Great Basin College (GBC). We have Joyce Helens, who is the President.

Great Basin College

Joyce Helens, President, GBC:

Thank you so much for this opportunity to present and talk a little bit about our college that I am very proud of ([Agenda Item VI D](#)). Sonja Sibert, Vice President at Great Basin, will be helping me. I do not want to assume that we have the same definitions. For the purpose of

this presentation, I wanted to mention that rural would be 500 density population, 500 or less per square mile; frontier is 6 people per square mile; and of course, for us, beyond means the world. We have students from Ghana, the Netherlands, Canada, and Brooklyn, New York.

This beautiful picture was taken by Brian Zeisler, a faculty in our teacher education. For me, it illustrates providing a “well-lighted pathway.” This is a phrase I use quite a bit. We are trying to light the way for everyone in rural and frontier Nevada to be able to reach their goals for a better life, and of course a better quality of life through higher education. We are also supplying, for over 50 years now, the well-skilled workforce necessary for the economic development in the rurals, but also for the bottom line of the State of Nevada. We have a lot of partnerships, we listen, and we provide what is necessary for a flexible and dynamic workforce. I believe that our mission is to help create and support healthy communities. For Great Basin College, that is really a three-legged stool. The first is economic development health—and I mean economic health, which obviously if you have a degree, you can get a good job, better quality of life—physical health, and mental health because we believe that you absolutely need these three.

This is really important to me; all that light green is our vast geography that we serve at Great Basin College, over 86,000 square miles. I do not know of any other institution in the United States that covers this kind of geography, and all of those dots represent where we are. We have larger areas. I am coming from Elko today; Winnemucca, Ely, and Pahrump are actually campus centers, but all those other little dots are primarily in high school districts.

A little bit about our students—We have an older group. It is, on average, a little over 25 years old, 66 percent female, 70 percent or over part-time, and we have 44 percent students of color. The largest population of our students of color is Latinx. I believe that by the end of the year, we will be at 25 percent, which means we will become an HSI, or Hispanic-serving institution. We are always interested in what are our gaps and how we can fill those. We were really delighted to know that our primary minority students are graduating at the same or higher rate than White students. We believe our success in this area is because we have smaller classes and we have cohorts. We move groups of people together and they get to that finish line. We know we have gaps. Right now, we are focusing on the Native American population working in Duck Valley and primarily with dual enrollment, which I will talk more about in a minute.

Graduation rate—it is 44.1 percent, and I would like to have it 99 percent, knowing that we cannot be perfect. I do not know anybody who has reached that yet, but we do know in NSHE, UNR is at 60 percent and UNLV at 44.3 percent, so we are right behind them. The rest of our colleagues in the nation for a college, such as Great Basin College, would be in the 20 percent range.

This is one of my favorite topics, which is our high school students. So even though we have a population that is a little bit older, that 25 and older represents, and I am making a little bit of a generalization here, but it is accurate to say they are the working adults. They have started having families, they have jobs, and when they put the kids to bed at night, then they start studying. That is online and those are our baccalaureate programs. We have a great cadre of high school students who are coming to us. We are really developing that more strongly because we are working with our school districts in the rural areas that we serve. One thing we want to do is make a better difference and greater impact. We know with dual enrollment, students accumulate credits, but we wanted to encapsulate them so they meant something that could be plugged into another rung on the ladder of higher

education. We created a general education certificate that started last year. We wanted to have the dual enrollment students collect their 30 credits of general education they were getting, and by the time they graduate, they have a certificate, which is much easier to plug in to go on and continue a degree path. Starting in Fall 2022—a great idea that came out of our Teacher Education Department—we will add a teacher education pathway to a certificate for dual enrollment. That way, students would graduate having completed the first year of an education track, because as we all know in our state, we need teachers, but in the rural areas, we really need these teachers. It is a crisis. We are very proud of starting that. Also, last fall we created a new baccalaureate for early childhood specifically for childcare professionals to meet state requirements. We take the dual enrollment to CTE for technical programs. I will talk a little bit more about that in a minute, where we are at our high school heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) program and construction.

We are the online leaders in NSHE, and people do not know that because we are small. This happened out of necessity because of the Great Recession, where, as a small institution, we have reserves, but they are easily depleted. We went online back then. We found out we were very good at it, and we have put a lot of resources into teacher training so that we have continued to grow in that area.

It is important to note that 8 percent of our students are out of state. It is important to me because we are here to serve Nevadans, but that 8 percent is our students in Ghana, in the Netherlands, and the hockey team from Canada. We have a student government cohort from all over the world and Nevada, which helps students in the rural areas who may not have the opportunity to be interacting with students from other experiences, other places, where they are sharing because all our meetings, of course, are online, and that has become very meaningful.

We focus on the high-demand occupations that are at crisis needs in the rural areas. It is three areas: health science and human services, CTE, and teacher education.

We start with the certified nursing assistant (CNA) in the high schools, as well as other locations. In the State of Nevada, you have to be 16 to get a CNA license. You can go to work; it is about \$32,000 entry-level. But this CNA plugs into many other health occupations, and all of our campus sites—Ely, Winnemucca, Elko, Battle Mountain, Pahrump—have these programs. We are also working with Caliente for a CNA program. Nursing is in such desperate need here. We know that there is \$20 million in state funding to support apprentice nurses to be able to work while going to nursing school. All our program sites where we have the nursing—Ely, Pahrump, Elko, and Winnemucca—utilize apprentice nurses. This of course helps fill the gap during the shortage. During this pandemic, it has been amazing because we have also had our nursing students very much involved in mitigating the pandemic. At one point, we wondered would we lose students because it was just too hard. We do contact tracing for rural counties. Our nursing students are doing that kind of work. When I met with them one Saturday to thank them for all that additional work, one nursing student said, “When you do contact tracing, sometimes people are very mean to you, and they curse at you.” I said, “Oh my goodness,” and she told me a couple of examples. I said, “Has that changed your mind about wanting to be a nurse?” She said—and I remember it so vividly because I was so proud of her—“Actually, it has made me want to be a nurse more because I realized it does not matter if you know the science and facts. If you cannot talk to people and understand where they are coming from, nothing else matters.” She was able to build her communication skills by doing this additional work of contact tracing. I thought, that is the kind of nurse we all want.

We have an incredible 100 percent pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for nurses. We also have the bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) program; we have streamlined that from three semesters instead of five, trying to fast track these BSN nurses who are so desperately needed right now.

We are the only sonography program in the northern part of the state and we have a certificate program. We had such tremendous need expressed, that one year later, we developed the baccalaureate degree. The majority of our students who get this degree, many that already come, have been radiologist technicians or paramedics, and we have students placed throughout Nevada. We have a partnership with Renown. We take students from Reno; they complete our programs through distance education and then with live labs and clinical placements at Renown. We are proud of being able to serve in that way.

Here is another collaboration. As you can tell by now, we collaborate quite a bit, but we do not want to recreate the wheel. We realize resources are limited. So, collaborations are very important. We have had a 3+1 social work program for at least 15 years now with UNR. The students will complete three years at Great Basin College and then one year at UNR. About two years ago, we put it online because we had so many students who said, "I can't get to a campus. I am working. I have a family. I cannot do that." And we thought, "Well, that is a natural to be online." We also found that it was difficult sometimes to finish that last year because they could not go to UNR. So, UNR immediately worked with us to put that online, as well. With human services, we started with two certificates and the associate degree in human services. We realized the need was so great, particularly for licensed counselors, so that is fully enrolled, and we have waiting lists. Both the social work and human services fields have had a lack of adequate providers nationwide and statewide, and it is critical in our rural areas.

These are typical CTE programs that we have been offering for almost 50 years. These are all in conjunction with business and industry with what the needs are in industry in our area. We also have noncredit industry training, things like truck driving or emerging fields, since mining is going into the development of autonomous mining vehicles. We do industry training.

The HVAC program—I am going to talk a little bit about that. It is dual enrollment, and we are using the facilities at the high school.

I wanted to quickly cover something that I do not think happens anywhere else in the country. It is an industry signing. Students come and they prepare their resumes, they get dressed, and they go into a one-day—usually it is at a convention center here in Elko—and we have our industry sponsors. They interview, they see their resumes, they talk to students, and at the end of the day, the industry gets together and says, "We are going to sign this student; we are going to sign that student." That comes with a fully awarded scholarship as well as a paid internship in their company. As I mentioned a cohort, this is a very good example. We take them, they move through, they graduate, they get great jobs, and it is called the MTC or maintenance training cooperative.

Here is the HVAC. So many of our business and industry partners said, "We really need this desperately. What can you do?" We found that in talking with our superintendent at Elko County School District, they had facilities that were not being used, people who were retired, and they did not continue the program. So, we moved in, and it is a very successful program. It is dual enrollment, and we hope that it will be increased in the evening hours so that we will be able to open it to the general public as well.

We also participate in BuildNV. This is noncredit, but it is 80 hours of entry-level construction training in Lovelock, McDermott, and Owyhee, et cetera. One place I am proud that we work on this is our instructor goes out to Carlin to the National Guard facility in the Battle Born Youth Academy, which is a program for at-risk high school students. It has been very successful there. We know that when you get these entry-level skills, which is a certificate from the National Center for Construction Education Training, that can plug into other CTE programs, not just GBC, but any of our colleges.

We are expanding in Winnemucca through the generosity of the Pennington Foundation and others. We were able to do this because of a collaboration with UNR. Being small and with resources stretched and budget cuts in the pandemic, we found our success really is contingent on how we can collaborate with business and industries and with other institutions. And so, we are collaborating with the back-office kinds of things, whether it is our P cards, information technology, police services, or phone services. We have collaborated with UNR's real estate services. We were able to save 33 percent, and get this building done at budget. That got us to be a finalist in the Cashman Good Government Award. We are very proud of this, and we appreciate the help from UNR. We will have a grand opening on June 10th. This is health sciences. We will have nursing and emergency medical technician (EMT), as well as electrical technology and other kinds of CTE programs.

I have an example of another collaboration with UNR through the Mackay School of Mines. Of course, you know, our primary industry here is mining. We have other suppliers to the mining industry, and we did not want to assume we knew what they wanted. Because mining is changing so much, we thought this is a perfect marriage for Mackay School research and development and Great Basin tactical trainers to come together to create a Mining Center of Excellence housed in Elko. We asked the mining industry, "What is it that you need? How can we facilitate it? And how can you support that?" That is what we are developing right now.

In conclusion, there are huge challenges with resources and capacity. Connectivity will always be an issue in the rural areas; when I hear 5G conversations, it is just a dream here. I know I have been widely quoted for saying, "We will take 1G as long as it stays up." I have been in situations here where we knew that locally 911 went down. We can have the best product, but if we do not have connectivity, it does not make any difference. I know when we had to close down early in the pandemic, we had students in their cars in our parking lot because this was the only place in all of our campus areas that they were able to connect. Rural hiring—not everybody wants to work rurally. I surely have loved it, and I have chosen that my whole adult life, but I know that not everybody does. If we lose an instructor, which we have, and we cannot hire right away, that means we cannot offer the program or we cannot offer as many sections of the program.

Deferred maintenance is always an issue because our facilities are getting older, and of course, funding—things like not keeping up with inflation on our formula for weighted student credit hours or deferred maintenance. But at the end of the day, what we spend our money on says what is important to us. And for me, it is investing in faculty because I know—statement of fact, particularly obvious in the rural areas—it is hard to hire people and keep people. Faculty salaries need to keep pace, and they have not nationally. Of course, we all know that, but for me, investing in my faculty is penultimate.

I do not have the information that I heard was asked of others. I do know our enrollment is approximately 4,000. We award approximately 500 degrees and about 200 skill certificates. We have looked into purchasing a management system to help us collect data, but we want to know why people drop out, too. What we have found is a lot of those students who do

not continue go right into industry, and in these areas, they can make a large salary. We are not trying to tell them you do not need to do that; we are trying to tell them that when you look long range for yourself, higher education is where it is. I am one of these people that does not believe when you say not everybody needs a college degree. Now, maybe not everyone needs a four-year degree, but for me, whether you want to be a welder or whether you want to be a doctor, it is still higher education. That is continuous improvement through lifelong learning, and that is what we want to imbue in our Nevada citizens in these rural communities. I will stop there and see if you have any questions. Thank you again for the opportunity.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much, President Helens. Do we have any questions? Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the presentation. I was excited to hear about the plan with the 30 credits, for the teacher pipeline, and especially early childhood, which is a passion of mine. Same question—When you do dual credits or concurrent enrollment, are you using folks who have a master's or Ph.D.?

President Helens:

Yes, we do it a little different. So much of what we do is online. It is GBC faculty teaching online or teaching in the high school, for instance, the HVAC program.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Great. Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? What percentage of your graduates stay in rural areas?

President Helens:

I can get that. I do not want to quote a number, but one of the reasons that we are looking to educate our local workforce, or local people, is so that they will stay in the workforce. We have a very high percentage of that. And of course, when you cover such vast geography like we do, people who already love living here want to stay here, and that is what we want. I can get the actual number for you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. I would think that yours would be high because of your purpose. You are trying to provide that training for folks to be able to stay in, and hopefully that is a high number because we need workers throughout all of Nevada. I know sometimes it is hard to get them out in the rural areas. Thank you.

President Helens:

If I may just add, the fit is very important. It takes a lot of money to hire faculty, but if people do not know what a rural lifestyle is like, they will not stay. That is why the mining

industry knows if you have people locally in this geography who appreciate and understand, they will stay here. That is good economic sense for everyone, and that is what we really strive to do.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Good afternoon. Thank you, President Helens, for being here. I live in Washoe County, Sparks, but my district covers five of those northern counties that you serve and many other counties that you serve in the state that I do not represent any more. Your presentation shows to all of us that what goes on in the rurals is a lot of times under the radar for some of us here in the more urban areas. I am so impressed with what you showed us today, what you are doing, what you are offering, what your graduation rates are, and navigating the difficulties that sometimes you have with resources in the rurals. My question is, because so much is online, how have you handled the broadband issue? I know as I have visited my areas, that is a consistent problem. I know it is more of a national issue, and I know that our state delegation is working on that in D.C. But I am wondering how that affects you in some of these communities.

President Helens:

It affects us tremendously. We have been very involved in greater conversations. We also realized the conversation that is really carried by industry often has greater weight. When our mining industry became concerned about it and brought it forward statewide and nationally, we were right there with them. We realized that if they get other providers coming into the area, that will be beneficial for us too. So, one response is to stay connected to that and to facilitate for students. Even if we have a little hot spot here, how do we help the students who are farther away? One response is at least raising the conversation so other people will know. My own son-in-law, who is a professor in another state, could not believe I could not get Internet at my house. He said, "Mom, you must be making a mistake," and I said, "No. I cannot." I work off my phone at home, and I know that most people, most students, if they do not have the other connectivity, they use their phone system. Our partnership with UNR has helped us upgrade because we did not have the funding to upgrade, but through that partnership, we were able to do so. But it is a constant, and it is always on the front burner—connectivity.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you again for all the good work that you are offering to the students and the faculty. I appreciate you letting us know what your concerns are. Thank you again.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you very much for your presentation.

Let us go next to Nevada State College (NSC). We have Dr. DeRionne Pollard here with us.

Nevada State College

DeRionne P. Pollard, Ph.D. President, NSC:

Good afternoon. It is a delight to be here for my first time before this Committee and offer a few perspectives ([Agenda Item VI E-1](#)) ([Agenda Item VI E-2](#)). Let me start off by just reminding you about who Nevada State College is. We are certainly a distinctive institution serving a distinctive set of students. We believe our core function is to expand the participation of the new majority of students into higher education, thereby, I believe, making it more accessible and increasing the income, mobility, and wealth for all Nevadans. We believe our secret sauce to do this, if you allow me to say that, happens because we have great teaching and transformative support services, in terms of our student experience. We empower employees to be our best asset, and then we build strategic alliances that allow us to magnify and amplify this mission that we have. We believe and relish the fact that we are the teaching college of Nevada. We look forward to being deeply connected to the growth and prosperity of the state.

We are gloriously diverse; intentionally accessible; unapologetically inclusive; deeply supportive; and rapidly growing. We served over 7,200 students in this past year and nearly half of our students are first generation; nearly half of our students are over the age of 24; and the majority of our students are female. I point that out to you as it has been a part of the theme for today's conversations. Last year, we produced 98 new teachers. We are on par this year to exceed that number at graduation.

We believe deeply because of our commitments in this space that we provide deep support for our students in terms of financial aid. This is a value add. We believe that we are essential to the economic future of Nevada. As a result of that, we believe we are able to quantify that and deliver our value in ROI. We know that right now, approximately 80 percent or more of our students from NSC stay in and reside in Nevada. This is important as you think about the trajectory of the growth of this state. We know our students also have a greater income as a result of their education here. We know that our economic activity as an institution, both in terms of our students and our employees, matters to the economic bottom line of the state. Our students almost have \$20,000 more per year in earned income as a result of their degree, compared if they only have a high school diploma. We take great pride in what we do in terms of generating economic activity for the state, but also in terms of what we do for economic mobility and the lives of our students.

We are rapidly growing even in the midst of COVID-19, which saw differences in the demography of our students. I would tell you that we were only 62 fewer students right now projected in terms of our enrollment for this fall. We continue to be, I think, the first avenue of higher education for many adults working and living in this region of the state. We continue to see indices that our work internally, to be better at what we do, is producing higher graduation rates for our first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students.

One of the things I think is important to point out here is that graduation rates are lagging indicators. We know that if we look at our leading indicators, we anticipate this number growing dramatically over the next several years. Those leading indicators that we are tracking to help us understand the retention rates of our first-time, full-time students are looking at participation in our support services, students who take advising seriously, students who participated in the [inaudible] program, students who take advantage of our career services, and our academic support services. When we do serious statistical analysis, we see those students not only stay, but they progress toward completion at a much more

rapid rate and are successful. I am hopeful in the years to come, as I come to present to this group, you will continue to see a significant rise in our graduation rates and maintenance on the quality of that degree. As a result of that, you can see that we are producing numbers of students. In two weeks, I am presenting to the Board of Regents on our metrics. I will be happy to share that with this group. We will send it under separate cover that does some work in disaggregating this data by race and by first generation income status. All these things are very important for us as we start to be able to talk about the value add that we bring to the higher education landscape as we approach our twentieth anniversary.

We believe for a fact that poverty, and not aptitude ability or aspiration, is the number one barrier to college completion in earning a baccalaureate degree. We know this based on the fact of looking at what we have done here. One of our success pillars at NSC is the value proposition that we provide financially to our students. We know that we must support them, and we do so intentionally; 68 percent of our students receive some form of financial aid. It is about \$25 million a year that we provide in financial assistance through aid and scholarships. One of the things that is important about this number for us, is that our loan participation rate is continuing to decrease, which I think is important. We are also seeing increases both in grants—student participating in state and federal grant programs—and students earning scholarships to continue their education here. These are good signs for us as we look at helping, again, nearly half of our students are first generation, so a huge part of our job is wayfinding for them in the academic landscape. Having them understand how you tap into those resources, and most importantly, how you make decisions for yourself that do not cripple you later when you have completed your degree from NSC.

The Chair and Vice Chair, in the directions that we received, asked us to speak briefly about our challenges, but also about a few things that are important to us. I wanted to emphasize this because I did not anticipate the public comment or even the previous presentations. If you look at our American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) requests that we have put in as an institution, you will see if we take out, because we have the GFO provider's guidance not to include general capital projects, our top three projects are water infrastructure. The second one is school psychologist pathways; our ability to create degree programs that lead to a means as we described earlier. The 740 vacancies that we are short right now in our region as it relates to school psychologists are intended to create a pathway for that. The campus commuter—We continue to see a rising numbers of students who are transferring from our phenomenal sister institution of CSN. Our goal is to make sure there is a direct route between our institutions and within the region because we do not want miles to be the barrier between the student pursuing higher education and earning the baccalaureate degree.

Let me make this personal, I have given you a lot of numbers and statistics, but I want to tell you about the students that we serve. We are starting a project here to help us understand and build a set of personas based on our data and analytics about who we serve at NSC and what we know about them. When I look at all students, if you look at that and remember that infographic I had at the top of the form where I talked about all my students at NSC, the majority of them. If I would give them a profile, I will name her Jennifer; that tends to be the number one name amongst our students. They are attending, often, to move into health sciences and declare that as their intent. They tend to be female, Hispanic; the average age is 24, and she came to us as a transfer student. A couple of weeks ago we had a panel of students telling us about their pathways to NSC. I had one student on that panel who fit this profile very typically who had come to us, and we were her 12th institution that she was matriculating into to lead to the baccalaureate degree. We see our number of transfer students continue to rise. We know that within all students,

they are more likely to want to study full-time; therefore, they enroll part-time here, and they are likely to work while studying. Therefore, they can enroll part-time, and we know that funding continues to be their number one barrier. We are an HSI, and an official designee as an AANAPISI, which is an Asian American or Native Pacific Islander serving institution. We serve Hispanic students as a large portion of our student population. Again, number one name is still Jennifer, and she is still a health human sciences major, but she is also now slightly younger. She is 22. She came to us as a first-time student. We continue to be the first choice in this population group. They are less likely to work while studying as they would choose to want to enroll full-time. If you think about this again, funding continues to be at the root of the challenges here.

What we know for a fact is that basic needs and security continue to be one of the barriers for our students. If poverty is the number one barrier to higher education—whether you are rural, urban, or suburban—we know that basic needs and security are important. We know that poverty and eligibility for financial aid are significant. A Pell Grant serves as a proxy for this. These are students who are in the lowest economic strata within our society, and because of that, they qualify for a Pell Grant. When the Pell Grant was designed, it was intended to pay for the full price of higher education; that is no longer the case. But what is important about that, then, is that our students will have to balance work and school more often than not while they are here. Sixty percent of our first-year students and 69 percent of our transfer students work and attend school. If you combine that with the 68 percent who receive some form of financial aid and 65 percent of those who are receiving Pell Grants, we can imagine then why, for first-generation college students, it is essential for us to put wraparound services that help them be successful. What is important about this? There was a recent study in 2018 by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education that says only 11 percent of students from the lowest income strata, or a quartile will earn a baccalaureate degree within six years. This set of challenges here are things that speak to this issue of poverty and how we begin to ameliorate that in terms of people choosing to go to college.

My last set of challenges and opportunities here that I will speak to—we need additional space. I have tried to make the case to you about how we are growing; we will continue to invest in that in order for us to deliver on our mission. We see that we have at this particular point 111 percent a true space need. That has been done by NSHE. We know that we have about a 47 percent growth in our student enrollment over the last four years, even with the contraction that we have seen with COVID-19. We know that right now we have funded primarily our buildings ourselves, with only 40 percent of them having come from the Legislature with our last new building, which took about 13 years to get funded. We know that we were created for a distinctive purpose at NSC. We are deeply committed to this mission of serving the new majority and being deliberate about our teaching emphasis. We do not want to be an R-1. We do not want to step into other spaces. We know our distinctive competency is about transformative teaching, intentional student support services, the value add of the environment that we put here and keeping financial assistance top of mind with the unique culture. I am happy to respond to questions and look forward to the opportunity to interact with you.

Chair Denis:

Are there any questions?

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have the same question that I asked before about the concurrent enrollment and dual enrollment.

President Pollard:

Thank you for that question. We are right now in approximately 13 partner high schools throughout southern Nevada. I am still learning the schools, as I have only been here now about six months, but I know one of the largest programs is at Rancho and East Career and Technical Academy (ECTA). Right now, going to the point that you made earlier, we require the same teaching requirements and professional credentialing that we require of all teachers, whether they are teaching for us at the high school or if they are teaching for us at NSC. Essential, I believe, to the academic integrity of our institutions, and if you hear otherwise, I will offer that it is a significant issue that many of us outside the State of Nevada are trying to address, but we are doing it right based on our accreditation standards.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you very much. I look forward to meeting you in person

Chair Denis:

Thank you. We are excited to be able to hear from you and about the exciting things you are doing out there. Any other questions? Not seeing any. Thank you very much.

Let us go then to our next presentation from Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC). We have Dr. Karin Hilgersom, President.

Truckee Meadows Community College

Karin Hilgersom, Ph.D., President, TMCC

Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here today. First of all, I would be remiss if I did not say that TMCC is celebrating its fiftieth birthday this year. We are very excited that we also were selected for Best of Reno, The Biggest Little City in the World, 2021 the Reno Gazette Journal (RGJ) winner for public schools, which was a fun way to celebrate our fiftieth birthday.

This is an overview of TMCC ([Agenda item VI F](#)). Note the decline in fall enrollment largely due to COVID-19, but we are already seeing signs that the trajectory will be changing. Things are becoming more normal; there are more students on campus, which has been wonderful to see. You can see that we have four campus locations here in the Reno area: the Health Science Center; Dandini Campus; Applied Technology Center out at Edison, which is near the airport; and our Meadowood Center, which is near the Meadowood Mall here in Reno. Of course, we do a lot online, and I will talk about that in a few minutes.

It is important to note here, because I do not think anyone else has had mentioned it today, that when we ask our students about their educational goal, 33 percent of them say they are not seeking a degree. They are coming here for specialized courses and training certificates, not necessarily a degree, and that is an enormous value we contribute. It is one of those gems that unfortunately sometimes goes unnoticed. It does have a good economic impact because those nondegree-seeking students are getting a promotion

because they took a course or two that their employer wanted them to take, or they are entering a field where they do not need that much education right away, and so hopefully they started on a pathway.

Our divisions include liberal arts; math and physical sciences; life sciences; allied health and public safety; business and social science; and technical science. I will say a bit about those in a moment.

This is a look at our student demographics. We are a HSI, which is fantastic. In the fall of 2021, 48 percent of TMCC students identified as a minority. We do have programs in place designed to uplift our underrepresented groups, including a federally funded TRIO program, which is a huge source of support for many of our Latino and Latina students, as well as other programs targeting and providing support to students in our underrepresented groups.

Degrees and certificates—Even during COVID-19, we were able to make sure that students were graduating with their degrees and certificates. We are always working on new short-term and certificates that respond to training needs, as well as other two-year degree programs. We are excited with the recent edition of our BSN. It is a registered nurse (RN) to BSN program designed for our graduates who are already out there working in the hospital setting as RNs. The new BSN program will allow them to get more education through our online nursing program with the faculty that helped them get their RN previously. We are always on the hunt for new programs. I will talk a bit about some of those new things in a moment.

Student support and access initiatives—First of all, I want to offer a hearty thank you for all the legislative support around the Millennium Scholarship, the Silver State Opportunity grant, and the newest, the Nevada Promise Scholarship, which is actually a huge success here. Without this support, I am convinced that we would lose about 20 percent of our student population. It is this kind of investment in Nevadans that we need more of. I am so grateful for the investment that Nevada already makes in our residents and our students. All of our thoughts around student success, support, and access relate to the TMCC mission statement: create a future you will love with accessible, innovative, educational opportunities at TMCC; together we can make it happen. That is our mission statement. We are also proud of our efforts around sustainability. We believe—and you will see these values all over our campus: healthy mind, healthy body, healthy economy, healthy world—that all of it needs to connect in a nice system for our students and residents.

Now, let us take a look at a few of our health career programs. The reason I have a separate slide on this is because when you talk about challenges—and when I think about funding, this is what keeps me up at night—we have these outstanding programs, but they are expensive to run. They are subsidized in large part by some of the larger courses that are unrelated to health careers. That speaks to problems with the funding formula and the funding model, the fact that weighted student credit hour factors do not do justice to these expensive health career programs. Yet up to this point, we have managed to provide high-quality excellent education, many of which have specialized and national accreditations in all of these programs. I also want to say to you that I do not know how long we can keep it up. I do not know how long TMCC can rob Peter to pay Paul in order to keep these programs as outstanding as they are today. You can take a look at the list. Some of them are growing very quickly, including our emergency medical technician firefighting; all those programs are growing very quickly. There is such a huge demand for nursing, but frankly, it is difficult to open capacity because of a lot of factors, and funding is one of them. We are trying. We are still on it. I will also say that something exciting is happening related to the

programs that our Latino and Latina students are choosing. Many of them are choosing to go into STEM fields. Some of those fields are related to health careers. I will return to that in a moment.

There are changes in our workforce program. We have four applied bachelor's degrees: emergency management and homeland security, cyber-physical manufacturing, logistics operations management; and CTE leadership. That one is brand new. We hope to offer it to teachers in K-12 who are interested in taking their technical degrees and getting an applied bachelor's degree that looks at how their technical degree fits with leadership at their school or in their educational agency? We have two bachelors of science, of which we are proud. Our dental hygiene is fabulous. We also have a program with adopt a vet. So, veterans can come to our college campus and through the Adopt a Vet partnership, they can receive good dental care with the help from our students, which is wonderful practice for the students too. Then there is RN to BSN and nursing. Overall, we have 41 associate of applied science degrees in almost every professional technical field that you can think of, including the transportation technologies, such as automotive and heavy equipment. We are proud of our advanced manufacturing work, machining, welding, and the list goes on and on. I do not have a whole hour; if I did, we could go into that.

We have 36 certificate of achievements and 49 skills certificates. There were 1,789 students enrolled in workforce programs in fall of 2021. We gave out 1,429 workforce awards in 2020-2021. None of this could happen without strong advisory boards that consist of industry representatives along with strong industry partnerships. I cannot emphasize that enough. We work with Tesla and Panasonic and recently received grant funds from Tesla to create a new tool and die program for Ace High School students. The program continues to be in the curriculum development phase. We are really excited about this important partnership, and that is how we have prosperity in the northern Nevada economy.

I will add that as we do this work, our faculty are always on the hunt for nontraditional delivery and approaches to industry demand. Many of our workforce programs have open entry, meaning you do not have to wait for the start of fall quarter to get in. You can get in at different points throughout the year, although summer is difficult because we do not receive state funding for summer school. That is a problem because sometimes we cannot offer something that an industry needs, because we do not know how to balance the books when there is no summer funding attached to those workforce programs.

We also do modularized courses for employer-customized programs. We have accelerated and block scheduled programs. We have a lot of online and hybrid formats. I will talk about that in a minute. Our newest courses are tech careers, fast track IT basics, and IT specialties. I need to give a shout out to EDAWN, because EDAWN, especially Nancy McCormick and Mike Kaczmarek, were extremely helpful in herding the cats in the computing industry; the IT startups. Some of the bigger companies are doing a lot of software development or application development, and it was their support and their help that allowed us to develop a fast track and flexible boot camp-style curriculum in coding and computing. So far that program is going very well.

And of course, there are apprenticeships. We have been active in the world of apprenticeships, and TMCC is an apprenticeship sponsor for some of the apprenticeships. We are happy to work with organized labor in the State of Nevada, who does a wonderful job with apprenticeships. We have been involved in a \$2.9 million grant with the American Apprenticeship Initiative. We have also been lucky to have \$140,000 in a grant enhancing community college apprenticeships. We are part of a sub awardee of a Scaling Apprenticeship grant of \$1.7 million and partner activities for NSHE's Nevada

Alliance for Youth Apprenticeship. I personally think apprenticeship is a fantastic model where students can earn and learn, and learn things that are relevant, contextualized, and important for their pathway as they move along their career.

Now let us talk a little bit about WebCollege. WebCollege has been around for over 20 years at TMCC. What we are finding is that although we have approximately 1,700 or 1,699 fully online students, and that is the full-time equivalent, what many students are doing is they are mixing so the head count of online students at TMCC is 3,554. The headcount enrolled in mixed modalities—meaning I am taking a couple of base classes face-to-face, in addition to online—is 2,901. The total enrollments are 12,837 in WebCollege. Annual enrollments—which is, if I am one student and I take three classes, that is three enrollments—are 46,471. What we see is this interest in having a schedule that includes both a schedule that is flexible but also a schedule that has face-to-face. We are finding through massive survey data that we did during the pandemic, that many of our students—in fact, the majority of our students, especially our younger students—like going to class. They like the interaction with their peers, their faculty, and the classified staff who are mentoring them in the hallways. We need to keep in mind that one of the wonderful things about working at a comprehensive community college like TMCC, is we can deliver instruction in a variety of ways and meet students where they are. We have 24 degrees offered fully online, which is a lot. That includes some of the most popular degrees, such as the associate of arts general transfer degree, associate of science degree, business, bookkeeper, emergency management, entrepreneurship, logistics management, psychology, and retail management. Those are just a few of the 24 degrees we offer fully online.

Now let us talk about dual enrollment because that is an important topic. It is an important topic for you as state legislators, as policymakers. States in this country have shaped policy, some of it through legislation, some of it through systems, such as NSHE, to ensure that dual enrollment programs are high-quality programs. We have worked very hard at TMCC to expand dual enrollment very quickly in partnership with WCSD. Our model has been two popular models. Model one—we deploy a faculty member to a high school. Those faculty members have identical qualifications to the faculty members on our campus. Why? Because faculty qualifications mean something in higher education. There is a reason the qualifications for a K–12 teacher are very different from the qualifications for a community college or a university professor. We stay true to that at TMCC. There is pressure to move to a concurrent model. My faculty have told me that if you are going to move that way, we want a minimum of 18 credits, preferably. We want a master's in the discipline, and unless it is an education course in the discipline, it does really not involve an education degree. This is a topic that, at least at TMCC, for my faculty and myself, we are concerned that in this state we want to try to have dual enrollment college feel like college.

The most popular model at TMCC takes two forms. In TMCC high school, 224 students' study and complete high school and college at TMCC's Dandini Campus. It is a fabulous program led by WCSD. We also have Ace High School at Edison where 131 students get to Edison and they do workforce programs. Again, a really fantastic program. The TMCC High School is fascinating because it has almost become a magnet school. One student, Kim Tran, graduated from TMCC a couple of weeks before she completed her high school diploma. She headed off to Stanford, which is where she is completing her education today. Another student, Alyssa Familias, completed TMCC High School; she also completed many college credits, including an emergency management technical degree, because she wants to be a physician. She is now at John Hopkins studying premed, which is amazing. So, to me, these are the great examples of dual enrollment.

But the most popular program is a student goes to high school, they drive to campus in the late afternoon and early evening, they have a guidance counselor signature, they take their classes at one of our four campus locations with all the other adult college students with the highly qualified doctoral prepared or masters prepared faculty when it is a transfer course or well-qualified workforce education faculty. That is the experience that emulates college because it is college, and it is happening with peers, with faculty, and with all the support services that a college campus location can provide. Unfortunately, in the State of Nevada, the problem with that model is funding. Families in that model have to figure out how to pay tuition like any other regular student. That is where I think you as policymakers could come in and find a way to help families fund the tuition of dual enrollment at a college campus from a policy perspective. The best place to do that, I believe, is at a two-year program. Why? Because research from the Community College Research Center, which is a national research entity that is very well respected, said this:

After matching individual students with 50-plus community college credits and similar background characteristics, the analysis found that students who transferred with an associate degree had a distinct advantage when they got to that university. They were 49 percent more likely to complete a bachelor's degree within four years and 22 percent more likely to earn one with within six years.

The data on this is really clear. I am giving you a tidbit. We know that if students cannot meet the admission standard at a university, they come to a community college, and they are not ready for the university. But guess what? The faculty here, the classified staff here, the administrative faculty here, the president at TMCC—I have spent my life finding ways to transform people in an accelerated time frame, so by the time they complete their associate of arts degree, not only are they going to be ready to succeed at UNR and UNLV, but the data typically shows that their junior year, they will perform better with their grades by 0.1 percent than the students that began at those universities having met the admissions bar that they did not meet,-and that is typically what happens in Nevada too. From a policy perspective, I am glad that you are asking these questions about dual enrollment, because we need to decide as a state whether we want high-quality dual enrollment with high-quality faculty members, and if so, how do we fund it. How do we fund it in a way that does not hurt K-12 because we should not be moving money from them to a college. That is not right either. That is going to affect and erode what they can do for Nevadans. And so, we have to put our thinking caps on, and I hope we can work together on that.

University transfer in the arts—I want to highlight a little bit for you. Transfer is still very popular at TMCC. One of the things that is really cool is that our Latino-Latinas are majoring in STEM fields, particularly in engineering, in greater numbers percentage wise than their White counterparts. What you are seeing is this new generation of children of immigrants. I am a child of an immigrant; I am a first immigrant; I am a first-generation college student. And so, for me, I take special delight in seeing this happen. The Nevada State College President talked about poverty but seeing students—who are either first-generation, families of immigrants, impoverished, or all three combined, which is what can happen for many of our students—choose fields that will not only make them very satisfied and happy, but that will pay really well, which the economy of northern Nevada needs, is exciting for me. That is why we are also concerned that in workforce training in northern Nevada, we are a major contributor to the access pipeline through transfer education and through workforce education, but we worry about the challenges of that. We worry that we cannot respond fast enough to industry partners because frankly, we do not have enough hands on deck because we do not have enough money to hire enough hands on deck to make this happen. And, these are just a few of our partners in the work that we do. We want to be nimble, but we often lack enough capacity to be nimble. I hope that as we work on budgets

for the next biennium that we consider what this really takes. We would like to have greater flexibility with how and when we move positions; some of that is controlled in ways that create bottlenecks and in ways that are cumbersome.

Finally, we need ongoing investment to support workforce innovation. We are partners on a Sandy Grant, which I do not have time to talk about that today, but it is an incredible grant. But when the grant goes away, we are going to have to figure out how to support the work of the Sandy Grant, which relates to virtual reality as an instructional tool. And again, very innovative, but how do we sustain it? That is where we need your help. I really appreciate when Dr. Helens talked about salaries. Our faculty needs salaries; we need to be very mindful that our classified staff need salary increases as well. In fact, I would say that inflation is hitting us all very hard, and if we really want to have one of the best public higher education systems in the country, which we need to do if we are going to keep our economy diversified and going, we really need to take a look at how we as Nevadans invest in our workforce. I will conclude and take time for questions.

Chair Denis:

Are there any questions? I do not see any. I appreciate all the work that you are doing. There are some exciting things on which you are working. Thank you very much for being with us today. Thank you.

President Hilgersom:

My pleasure.

Chair Denis:

We will go on to our next presentation, which is UNLV. Dr. Whitfield and Dr. Chris Heavey are here to do the presentation.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Keith E. Whitfield, Ph.D., President, UNLV:

Good afternoon. It is very good to be here with you today. I am excited to have a chance to speak about UNLV and about the accomplishments that we have been making lately ([Agenda Item VI G](#)). Rebels make it happen. There are a whole lot of things happening. We have over 30,000 students; 85 percent come from Nevada. One of the interesting pieces is that we, once again, as did UNR, ranked as a Carnegie Research 1 Institution. This is a ranking that only about 3 percent of institutions in the country receive. It is due to the incredible faculty and the activity they do. It is mostly around research. I am going to talk about why having research universities is very important. One of the other things that we are very proud of is that we are ranked—we are tied with three other schools, but I do not like to mention them—we are tied for number one in terms of diversity, the most diverse university in the country.

Let me talk a little bit about access, one of the guiding principles for our university that is at the heart of what we do, what we believe in, and for what we strive. Interestingly, we have one of the largest suites of federal TRIO and gear-up programs in the country. Our programs serve 20,000 students annually. Recently, with additional success in terms of grant getting, there are over \$42 million in grants that help precollege programs to be able to help students make the transition from high school into a four-year university. Being an access institution, one of the primary challenges for students, and this is not even just for

access institutions but for everybody, is the cost of higher education. Those costs continue to go up with costs like everything else rising. So, it is critically important that we be able to have a financial aid infrastructure that is able to meet and address those needs. Since I have arrived, we have had a specific focus on modernizing some of our programs and procedures. I can tell you that already we have been able to increase the amount of aid that is distributed, and we have requests for information or needing help with X, Y, or Z. We are well over \$110 million in financial aid that was given out for this 2021 academic year.

Let us talk a little bit about some of the numbers. As you will see, like other schools during the pandemic, we were successful at being able to engage students and bring them to the university. We did see a little bit of a downward trend where we were seeing an upward trend from 2018 and 2019, but we are working very hard for our fall numbers. I have done this kind of work before, and I am always cautious about the fall, but the fall is looking very good. We might be up as much as 3 or 4 percent, but this is early. This is February, and it could change between now and then. We should also take a look at our enrollment by ethnicity because as we said, we are one of the most diverse universities in the country. What you see is that we are a minority-majority institution now, particularly with our Hispanic population of students continuing to grow, and that is what it looks like on the ground as you come to UNLV.

I also want to talk a little bit about our student success programs. One of the things that we think is critically important is being able to support students. Not every student who comes to UNLV is perfectly ready for university life. We get students who come from our community colleges. Everyone at some point in time needs a little bit of help. We designed things like a bridge program to math readiness; this is for students coming out of high school to make sure they are prepared for the rigors of college level math. We have first-year seminars to boost retention. It is not enough to think about what the endgame is, which is graduation, but how can we keep those students engaged. I was listening to one of the earlier conversations, and it is a request that will be coming to me, about looking and seeing how many students may have dropped out. Another statistic that is harder to get to, but it is important, is students who stop-out. Stopping-out is more of a temporary situation that sometimes is due to family circumstances, or work changes, or life changes; students stop-out for maybe a year, even for just a semester. It depends on when you get that snapshot about whether they are truly a dropout or whether they are a stop-out. It is something that is a little finer-grained discussion, but it is an important note, nonetheless. We also have The Rebel Success Scholars Grant, as well as first-year seminars to boost retention. One of our big things is that once we get them into the university, we try everything we can to retain them so that they can successfully go from their first year to the second, to the third, to the fourth, and beyond and graduate.

Our graduation rates, as you can see in the last four or five years, have seen a steady increase, even during the pandemic. One thing to note, is that if you look at graduation rates, there is a bit of a delay. For example, our fall graduation rates that we saw, are a cohort that started in 2015. Our student success programs focus on the success that we want to try to have. It is a long-term procedure and set of support mechanisms that need to be able to help students stay in college and get to graduation, which then makes these counts that you see.

You can see our graduation rates by ethnicity. While we are not where we want to be, that gap over the years has been decreasing. Our goal is to have parity, to have graduation rates equal across all our different groups. That is an important goal that we have. To get there, we are doing a number of things; one of them is mining data to look at trends in what students are doing. There is a lot of data that we can use to make predictive models of

how students may be able to succeed and to find out and identify the things that may trip them up along the way. From some of that work, we have something called the S.O.S. Program that helps keep students on track. It is a common approach, which makes students aware that they are supposed to do something; they are supposed to follow through; they are supposed to put in their free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) for financial aid; they are supposed to make sure they see advisors; and they make sure they can stay on track.

One of the other things that we did internally to look and see what we were thinking about, how we were doing things, was to have a minority-serving institution (MSI), student success summit. I want to note that we are an MSI, an HSI, and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander school as well. We have all three of those designations, as one of my colleagues shared earlier. We had a summit so that we could talk about best practices. And even more than anything else, one of the things that makes students support or student success successful, is the people who do the support have to know each other. They do not want to hand off somebody; they want to know each other and know what they do. That was a wonderful opportunity for that.

We are making attempts to grow the graduate student pipeline. For Research 1 status, one of the important metrics is the number of graduates you have each year. We have been trying to create programs that encourage undergraduate students to pursue graduate work by either melding an undergraduate and grad program together or have engagement opportunities with graduate students so they can understand what graduate school is about.

One of our very latest attempts to make sure that we connect with students, one of the things that people have found to be successful is a sense of belongingness. I was interested when I first got here, almost two years ago, in talking to our students. I met every student, and we have over 30,000 students. Somebody very realistically told me that was just insane, you cannot talk to that many students. It is not realistic and very interestingly and happenstance, and I will talk a little bit about this later, one of our companies is driven by two of our alumni who create digital personalities, so we had them create a "digital president." The "digital president" can work 24/7 to answer questions to connect with students. One of the areas that we are working on is looking at mental health. I think my colleagues have brought this up. One of the concerns that I have, with a background in psychology, is that we are going to have mental health challenges. We do have some now, and we are going to continue to have some if not more. Part of that is around the stress, anxiety, isolation, and those sorts of issues. We are trying to use the "digital president" to help intervene, to make sure that we can connect students to the proper support they need, whether it be mental health or academic. That is going to be one of the mechanisms that we use for that. If you are curious about it, you can go online at UNLV.edu and look under the President's tab and he is there. We let him go everywhere, but do not ask him if he is smarter than the real President Whitfield.

I was interested to see that my colleagues were talking about workforce development. I want to remind everyone that workforce development happens not only at the two-year colleges, but it also happens at four-year colleges. We produce graduates that go out in the workforce and make a big difference. We have been trying to make sure we address emerging workforce needs like growth areas in engineering, cybersecurity, and data analytics in particular. We are also supporting the pro sports surge that we have in this region with a brand-new sports management program at UNLV. We have plans to request an expansion of support for the number of medical school students that we have. We hope to increase that by 50 percent in the next couple of years, but there is a cost that goes along with that, so we will be coming to the Legislature to ask for support for that. We want

to support pioneering fields of studies such as entertainment and engineering design. This is a one-of-a-kind program in the country that is interesting and has a lot of success.

In terms of dual enrollment at UNLV, currently, we have five schools serving a little over 400 students. We are expected to grow this fall to at least six schools: Silverado, Clark, Northwest CTA, Las Vegas Academy, and Explores Knowledge Academy. This is an area where we hope to create partnerships working closely with CCSD and Superintendent Jara to address the needs that we have and some of the opportunities that dual enrollment can provide for students in the Clark County area.

In terms of workforce, you may have heard us talk about building an academic health center. Let me give you just a quick summary of what that is. I think sometimes when we think about health care, we only think about the School of Medicine, but, the allied health sciences like occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing, public health, brain sciences, and other areas fall under the rubric of academic health. What we are doing is creating a structure that is going to capitalize on the synergies between those groups. The goal here is to improve the quality of care, and it takes a team approach to be able to do it. That has been very well recognized. I think at UNLV that we are going to be able to have a compilation of different groups, different academic disciplines that are going to work together to make an impact on the care that we provide here in southern Nevada.

One of the other exciting things we have is different programs like brain health, occupational therapy, and even a new dual MBA/MD. This allows for the training of doctors to understand the care that needs to be taken with the support in terms of administrative responsibilities. It is a great degree to be able to offer our students.

We are seeing a 50 percent increase in undergraduate nursing. Our nursing program is one of the better ranked ones in the country.

Our dental school, amazingly, is serving over 70,000 dental patients a year. This is at little or no cost to them. It is a great service that our School of Dental Medicine is providing to our community.

Once they have these exciting programs, we want to get them across the finish line and get them to graduate. Here is a presentation of our masters, doctoral, and professional degrees. As you see, they are increasing each year. Our goal is to continue to move those and continue to increase the number of folks who have degrees from UNLV in the coming years.

One of the things that we are proud of, in addition to all the other accolades that we have gotten, is social mobility. We rank in the top 10 percent; we are in the top 100, according to *U.S. News and World Report*, of schools that take students who are from their family income and opportunities and then get to some of the higher levels of economic prosperity. We have a lot of students who get a UNLV degree and do great things, in particular, being able to increase their economic situation. What I like, and this is an untold piece, is that not only do they help their own economic prosperity, but oftentimes, they are helping their whole entire family's prosperity. So, getting a degree at UNLV means a lot, and it is important.

I mentioned a research university earlier, and I think sometimes, we as academics, do not do a good enough job explaining why having a research university in your backyard or two incredible research universities in this state is a plus. It is a plus for many reasons—it will drive innovation, and it will drive opportunities for companies to come in and be attracted, particularly tech companies, as they want to know that they are going to have an

educated workforce. Having a university that is doing research, that is training people how to think and solve problems, is seen as a true value added.

For us locally, we have been doing things that have been significant during the pandemic. For example, one of our researchers is working at looking at COVID in wastewater to help public health monitoring. For the Omicron variant, through this process, he was able to identify that it was coming our way a week before the public health system knew that it was going to happen. It is powerful to have researchers like that.

We also have another researcher in Ashkan Salamat, who is looking at room temperature superconductivity research. If he is right, which I really hope he is, this will really change the industry of energy and how it is managed. My background is in psychology so I cannot give you all the details, but this procedure that he is working on makes the transfer of energy more efficient. You can transfer energy to more places and not have a loss; there is usually a loss when you transfer energy. That is one of the things the research he is doing will be able to provide, and it will be an opportunity that will be launched right here in Nevada. There are also research grants that bring in federal money to offer opportunities for jobs. Many companies follow research ideas that come up, new research, and innovation; having that happen right here in our own backyard is attractive for many reasons, particularly in terms of trying to increase the diversification of our economy.

We diversify our economy in many ways, and some of it is through incubating and innovating. We have a research park in the Harry Reid Research and Technology Park that houses the Black Fire Innovation Center. We also have a UNLV incubator located in the Howard Hughes Center. We are thinking about, through the leadership of Bo Bernard, who is doing an incredible job, trying to find ways to have students and faculty start off in the incubator with the ideation process, where they start thinking about what they want to do, put it together, talk to people, and think about whether this is something that is marketable. And once they are at the point of wanting to do it, we would take them to our Black Fire facility and have them use the different supports and different resources that are there. The Black Fire Innovation Center in our Research Park has been growing by leaps and bounds, even during the pandemic. We went from a handful of companies to, I think, the current number of 100 companies, that either have a place or have a project that is working through Black Fire.

We have a second building that is going to be going up. We are hopeful that we can purchase another building to help with wet lab space, which is incredibly needed. That is how different kinds of tests and analyses are done. They can be done locally rather than shipping off specimens and having analyses done out of state. That can be done more quickly and more efficiently if they can be done here locally.

A couple of other things that we are doing to be able to inspire our faculty and students is the Lee Prize, which is one on entrepreneurship. The last one that we just created, which is the President's Challenge, is designed to have an interdisciplinary interaction between students to solve a big problem. This is what students are going to have to do in the twenty-first century. Many say that we are trying to educate students, many of which for jobs that do not even exist right now. So, how can we educate them? We can educate them by providing problem-solving skills to help them think through things, help them communicate, and work with others. Those are all great skills, and things like the President's Challenge offer our students an opportunity to do that.

To close, I want to talk a little bit about our challenges and aspirations. We have been partnering with CCSD and Superintendent Jara on a lot of different things particularly

focused on trying to improve K–12 education. You may have heard of one of the programs that we have, which is called the Pathways Program. It provides support for teachers who may have been a substitute teacher, had an associate degree, but cannot get a teacher's certificate. We are finding a way through this program to increase the number of teachers by providing them an opportunity to complete that degree. We would also like to see the ability to offer more summer programs. I will tell you this is one of my personal interests and desires, because I think if we can continue to engage students over the summertime, in between our regular academic year in our K–12, we will keep them excited. We will not get that summer meltdown that often happens. It is another way to meet students where they are at, foster that excitement and an enthusiasm that they bring, and make sure they are considering at least pursuing higher levels of education.

We are focused on addressing student basic needs and challenges in housing, food, and transportation—food in particular. Just last weekend, we had a farmer's market. What I really liked about it is that we have a food pantry at our university, but we have been making connections with groups like Three Square to make it so that capacity is shared with our local community. That is where a lot of our students come from. We are doing things to be able to make our local community better as well.

We are also becoming more competitive for top-notch faculty in our recruitment and retention. That top tier status of Research 1 is important for that. But one of the things that was brought up by President Hilgersom is we must be able to stay competitive, and right now, we are challenged with getting top faculty because we are a little behind in faculty salaries. It is going to be important for there to be an investment to be able to raise our faculty salaries; they deserve it. It will be important in getting a new and exciting faculty but also keeping the great faculty that we have right now.

We are looking and thinking about ways that we can expand and create new programs because we want to offer both what is needed and what people are interested in. We go through that process on a pretty regular basis. As I mentioned, we have different programs that are innovative, like entertainment and engineering, but also cyber security and other ones that are a great need to the workforce. We need to help address that, which is what we are designed to do.

We also are keeping our focus on narrowing the achievement gap with the innovative programs, even the “digital president” will help with that a little bit. We are driving world-class research and partnerships, and I put emphasis on partnerships. We have seen that we can better utilize the investments the state makes in us by not only depending upon state funding, but also being able to have that state funding pivot and make connections with private groups and private firms that are interested in things that range from housing to engineering, to lots of different areas. That point is important.

All of this is to say that we are becoming a powerhouse public research university. I put the caveat that we are your urban public research university in this state. That means we sit in the middle of an extremely vibrant city, and the things that are important in the needs of that city are part of the things that we address as a great university. So, with that, I will stop and see if there are any questions.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Questions? Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you, Chair Denis. In the spirit of asking every college and university today the same question, I would like to ask the same question that Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod has been asking about the dual enrollment program.

President Whitfield:

The dual enrollment programs. We currently have five schools, and we are looking to expand that number. It is taking the work of coordinating; because there is movement into the dual enrollment space for those that are not. Everybody is getting excited about that as an opportunity to provide more opportunities. Like I said, we have five; we already have a sixth school that is listed, and we are talking about trying to find other opportunities. There is a cost, both an opportunity cost and real cost, that goes along with that. That is why it takes a little bit longer to train up, because you have to make the coordination of opportunities for your faculty and faculty they have on the spot, even if you have the students come to your university or you do them on site. For some, it is better to do it on site, so that you are doing it in the neighborhoods in which our students live. But sometimes, due to workforce, the professors we have, sometimes it is easier to do it on campus. It is something that we are committed to and we are improving. We are going to grow that number as well.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you so much, President Whitfield.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions?

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you, President, for hanging in there with us, as well. We have heard all the great specifics, and I am so glad to see those because it is important to highlight those. What seems to be the greatest challenge right now at the University?

President Whitfield:

I could say the obvious thing, which is funding for us, but it is more than that; it is targeted funding. We are putting out a new effort to try to make sure that we engage local philanthropy, because the state, of course, is only going to have so much capacity to do the things that we want to do. I do want to note, that our master plan has just been released. You can find it on our website. You will see an incredibly different area down Maryland Parkway that we are envisioning. But to be able to do that, we are going to have partnerships both with the state and with private philanthropy. I think coming out of the pandemic—I think even nationally they are talking about this is, and you have to be careful—people are still a little hesitant about doing a lot of philanthropy, but there is some being done. That is one of the focuses that we are doing. One other thing—I am sorry, but this is just my own personal view—is that I am concerned about the mental health of our students. I have been concerned about it as I have seen the numbers and the incidents that we are seeing out of CCSD. And remember, 70 percent or more of our students come from CCSD. It is an issue of the day. In this period—wherever we are in the pandemic because nobody wants to say it is normal yet, where we are at—those students have been in it for two years. Think about it—coming to the university next year, and from the end of your

sophomore year through your senior year, you have not had that kind of interaction. You have not had a chance to be on a big, vibrant campus like ours. I do worry that people can be overwhelmed. I do worry that people might not be making the kind of social connections that they need to do. I believe the social connection piece of it may be as big a learning opportunity and a learning skill that students need in the twenty-first century as anything else. We have something that is working against that, so trying to figure out programs, trying to figure out ways to make sure we interconnect our students with each other, with support services, is another one of our big challenges.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you so much. I agree with you 100 percent. It is a heavy lift for all grade levels with mental health, but you are right. Suddenly, they go from being a sophomore in high school to being an adult and being on their own, many of them. I appreciate that and I appreciate all you are doing. We are exceptionally glad that you are here in the University. Thank you very much.

President Whitfield:

I will put it in a little plug, and it is early, but we have folks working on wellness. Wellness is a really big umbrella. It is nice because people do not have the same kind of knee-jerk responses. We are talking about wellness, not only for our students, but we are also collaborating with CCSD to help them. Again, there is a bit of a workforce challenge to that, but we may be bringing something forward, hopefully, maybe for you all to consider that is around wellness and how we have maybe peer mentors or navigators. There are lots of different models for doing that. It is to address your point of how we can help our students. They are not going to just catch up, they are just going to be different. So, how can we help to make them different. We just picked on a junior and a senior, but what about the kid that is going from junior high to high school in the most normal of times. That is a difficult transition, and so we want to have that extra support there. We are hoping to be a part of that solution.

Senator Dondero Loop:

As an educator totally understand, and I have five grandchildren at very different stages in life. I am watching it happen in real time. So, thank you, and it is never too early to be thinking of those legislative ideas. We look forward to having a discussion and meeting with you soon. So, thank you.

President Whitfield:

Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Hardy.

Assemblywoman Hardy:

Thank you, President Whitfield. I am a proud UNLV alumni with two daughters, so I am a little partial. I do not really have a question, but I wanted to say to you that after sitting through this presentation today and hearing from all of the institutions, I think I have come away, and I am sure we will hear in the presentations that we have left, I have come away with a sense of yes, there are a lot of challenges, but how great our state is and our higher

education institutions are. How different it is from when I first went to college just a few years ago, and how adaptive all these institutions are—the presidents and the faculty, working with CCSO trying to focus on the needs of our students and how it is changing. There are mental health concerns; there are housing issues; there are food issues; and a focus on the careers that we need—nursing, teaching, dual enrollment. I mean, it is amazing to sit and listen to all this and how you just continually adapt and change, how everyone has had to change through the pandemic. I am proud of all of our institutions. And is it perfect? No. Are there going to continue to be challenges? Absolutely. It also shines a light on how it takes all of us—it takes lawmakers; it takes presidents; it takes the community; it takes community partners to help our students; and that is what this is all about. I am proud to work with all of you and to be on this Committee and continue to do the work, so that we do not ever lose sight of what it takes working together to help our kids. So, thank you all very much.

President Whitfield:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Hardy. Let me add on to what you just said, which is that it takes all of us and that we think of you all as partners. I am going to speak for my fellow presidents. I hope you all allow me a little bit of leeway here. We do work as a system. We are different institutions that meet the needs of some aspects of the population that are the same, but some that are different and unique. I have been able to be the beneficiary of listening to the things that are going on with GBC or CSN or whatever and seeing how they are adjusting and adapting, and some of that works. We can share best practices; the chancellor tries to lead us to work as a team. And just because you are a team, does not mean that everybody is the same; you still do your own individual things, but we have to be able to share that information because there is no playbook for what we are going through. What we are doing now has challenged higher education more than even the 2008 downturn. This has been something that is very challenging. I think, present company exception, you can be very proud of your presidents because they have really gone to the mat every single time to work and think about the benefits, the well-being, and the welfare of the citizens of this state. We have done everything in our powers to make sure that we provide a clear and understandable, and as easy it can be—because higher education is not easy, but as easy it can be—a pathway to that next successful level to get the skills they need to be able to help our state. That is a shout-out to my colleagues, but I second your points, Assemblywoman Hardy.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? I do not see any. Thank you very much, Dr. Whitfield, for your presentation. You do excellent work.

We will now go to our presentation from Western Nevada College (WNC). We have Kyle Dalpe, Provost and Vice President of Finance.

Western Nevada College

J. Kyle Dalpe, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President of Finance, WNC:

Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. I am serving as the officer in charge. We do not currently have a president, so I am sitting in that seat until our board has a formal meeting to decide the next steps on permanency in that role. I serve as the provost, which is over academics, and I am also over student services and student affairs. I want to thank you, Chair Denis, Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Committee members, and the legislative staff for making all of this happen ([Agenda Item VI H](#)).

I wanted to be the one to thank President Whitfield for his comments he just made—we are a team. We have solved many problems over the last two years as a team. To not reinvent the wheel, every time we have something new, COVID hits us, as we live in this world and wonder what is coming next. I appreciate my colleagues who have been on this call, as well as all of you; you have helped us keep everything going.

I want to note on the NSHE key strategic goals; you will see those come up periodically throughout the presentation. They show how we are linking. Western Nevada College serves six counties, not as much as my colleague GBC, but still a vast area. We have three campuses; several different community locations; a prison program; a naval air station in Fallon; an Army depot in Hawthorne; at least seven Indigenous communities; a Gigafactory stuck in there as well; 14-plus high schools; and to connect all the dots between them, we have a mobile lab that we recently started deploying to bring instruction to many of these remote areas.

Overall stats and various indicators—I will call out a few of them. For ethnicity demographics, we are 36 percent students of color; we are an HSI having achieved the 25 percent level for Latino. Answering one of the questions that came up earlier by Assemblywoman Thomas, our graduation rate is 33 percent for students of color; the overall graduation rate is 29 percent, so that group is a few percentage points ahead. I will note that all the graduation rates that have been shared today are the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System's (IPED) definition of graduation rates, which means completing the program of study in 150 percent of its normal time. For a certificate program, that would be a year and a half, for a two-year degree, that would be three years, so on and so forth. When we show 29 percent, you might be thinking that is not terribly high, but that is excluding anybody who goes beyond that window. As a community college, we tend to have students who go longer than that period of time to finish. We do have quite a few part-time students as well.

We are tracking enrollment day by day. Compared to last spring a year ago, we are practically flat. The numbers are plus or minus 1 percent on our head count full-time equivalent (FTE). We are a little bit ahead of our way to student credit hour because students are taking classes that are more in the workforce areas that drive our formula at a little bit of a higher level. Compared to the count here, if you were intimate with the funding formula, you know that if we go from even fiscal years, so FY 2022 matches FY 2020, that is our funding that you look at in the money committees and will look at during the 2023 Session. We are tracking downwards, just under the 10 percent level. That is not unexpected based on the roller coaster ride we have been on, but we are trying to do everything we can to provide access for students in a number of different ways.

A majority of our students are from Carson City, and you see the other ones on there; a lot of that is our online program, if it is not in our area. More students are taking classes online and may indicate that. For the mode of instruction, I will call a little bit of attention to that. We are doing 53 percent roughly, and again, this changes by semester, but that is your live classes on-site, and online remote is that little blue bubble, and then interactive audiovisual, which is the zoom classrooms. We started to get away from that a little bit more because students really do prefer to be on-site, or they prefer more of a hybrid approach—looking at classes that might be on-site one day and then maybe have a virtual day the next day, or week by week, or however that plays out to give a little bit of variety, but not be locked in one way or the other.

We are going to talk about three different programs as we go forward. There are a lot of questions that came up on dual enrollment. I remember you asked about that in particular

for this presentation. A dual enrollment program is one of our capacity programs that is funded under a separate appropriation. We have capacity programs for dual enrollment, underrepresented populations, and rural nursing. I am going to show you each of those because they tie into, overall, what we do at WNC. I am not going to go through all the details on some of the slides because they are a little bit more descriptive, but if you need it, it is there. We do have partnerships in our service area with these high schools, with different levels of students, depending on how you look at it. We have a JumpStart Program, which is something that we embed in the high schools. It is a certain number of credits that they do, but overall, we have just over 1,100 students who are doing dual enrollment.

The question came up on concurrent enrollment using high school instructors to teach in the high schools, and we articulate credit for that work. We vet the credentials, and we do, like most other schools, make some exceptions, on a limited basis. If somebody is in a program and they are completing a master's or if they have some background and can do a class that is 100-level or below, we can do that. And again, for the master's 18, we would hold that standard for transfer classes, but somebody who has automotive service excellence (ASE) certification for auto program does not, as there is no master's in auto, but they would have the credential that puts them into the appropriate classroom for those tech classes. It all depends on what discipline they are teaching. We have grown this program quite a bit since 2014. Here are numbers: 550 associate degrees. It is always nice to see students cross the stage, and I can hand them a college credential two weeks before I go back to their high school and give them their high school diploma and take part in that ceremony. It shows that we are getting them out, and then they can either step stone up to a university as part of a four-year program, or they can go straight into the workforce. That is accelerating, which now is becoming more important on the overall needs for employers because many employers are clamoring for those workers, and we want to get them trained in those spaces.

I will quickly mention rural nursing. It was mentioned earlier about rural populations being trained where they live and then staying there. We rotate nurses around to give them an experience in different trauma centers or in different cities. We want to give them a breadth of experience with their clinicals. But, if we can create rural programs—for example, in our Fallon campus, we have a rural nursing program that people can come from Hawthorne to take, and people can come from Yerington to take—then they will stay in those communities when they complete it because they are from those communities. We keep trying to ramp this up, and this is one program that has been funded under a number of different programs outside of the regular state appropriation. There is a state appropriation in the capacity bucket for this. We have also thrown some of our Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) money at it because CARES money allowed us to pay for remote instruction, which we do anyway in this program because we cannot duplicate our faculty roster everywhere. If we have somebody that has a specialty in med surge in the Carson campus, that person can spend an hour and a half driving to Fallon. But if it is an electric class, we could deploy that through remote instruction, which is what we have been doing all along. We have accelerated and made it better with the help of the CARES funding, which unfortunately came because there was a pandemic, but that is part of the adaptation that we have been doing. It says 16 enrolled; that is not a huge number, but it is for some of these small communities. One of the things we find with deploying curriculum into small communities, there is not a large population to help make classes; there may be two or three here and there, and then when you actually launch it, those two and three do not even show up, but that is what we keep trying to do. We currently have a rural welding program that we are putting in place in Hawthorne this semester for the first time. We have helped them invest in the lab out there so that we can provide that service, and we have

committed to letting it go, even if it is low enrollment, to get the ball rolling because there is a lot of need with that program.

Our underserved populations are a piece of our capacity funding that we have built up over the years from getting capacity when it started three legislative sessions ago. We have built up specific programs, including our Latino Leadership Academy here in Carson City that has grown; it has been expanded out to Fallon. We are providing access points to close the achievement gap all around. We are very proud of the work we do. We are keeping these programs going as a way to help meet the needs of all populations. When I come to the challenges, I will tell you we have lost staff in this area, so we are doing a little bit of rebuilding this semester, but it is going so well that it is not completely running on its own, but we will be able to get staff in there to help keep it going in the future.

The support and access initiatives were mentioned earlier. I want you to see how we have used the state financial aid programs. The system in each college, we tend to support these programs obviously because it is our students who get the funding and that helps provide access. They are not line items in NSHE's budget, but we support them. Chair Denis, I appreciate the work we did. I helped with the Nevada Promise Scholarship back in 2017. What happens when you give students financial aid, is their borrowing comes down. As we are able to provide more money in scholarships—which includes the Nevada Promise Scholarship, the Millennium, and the Silver State Opportunity Grant—student borrowing comes down, which is huge, because they can leave us and move on to another school or move into the workforce without the debt. Currently, our default rate at WNC is 13.7 percent, which I think is very low. We have tried to offset student costs with anything that we can do. We have used our CARES funding over the last couple of years to write off the debt that some students may owe to help them be able to restart, which is part of what that funding was appropriated for. We continue to do that as we move forward. Our federal CARES allocation has supported us through the pandemic. It all expires in May. Some of the things you hear is that the challenges are going to become how to keep everything going when we are not sure what the next thing is. I am knocking on my desk, it is solid wood, it came out of prison industries, but it is one of those things that we do not know what is coming next week, but we will be looking at ways to solve the problems, whatever they may be.

Student success initiatives—a lot of talk has been had about mental health support; that is big. I want to note that we have seen an increase in incidents on our campuses, a lot related to the high school programs. Some of the research I have done from my background has to do with generational studies. Before the pandemic, the research had been showing that just two hours of screen time per day on social media has an adverse effect on the teenage population—the younger population. Suicide rates go up, depression rates go up, all of it, with two hours of screen time, pre pandemic. The pandemic accelerated that, which is part of why we are seeing so many incidents of mental health trauma in our communities. That is something that is first and foremost. We are trying to figure out ways to do that. The System has a task force—we are part of that as are the other schools—to help our students and even the students who are coming in.

We also have the food pantry, which is for students who need basic life necessities. As was mentioned earlier, we have our diversity center that we are calling Wildcat Commons; we are building that up on campus right now. A veteran center. The one thing we have for engagement, for those of you that come to Carson City at one point, we will be happy to see you when you come back. We were hoping to host you during the 2021 Session, but we did not get a chance to do that. When you come up to campus, I think some of you have played one of the softball games on our baseball field. We have a nice baseball field, but no

team. We do not have athletics, but we are in the emergence of esports, which is taking over the campus. It does not involve the baseball field, but it does provide the engagement students are looking for, and it does not necessarily require them to be in the same space, although most of them go to our Students Center, but it is one of those things that can be interactive without them having to be here. It could continue even if we had to have people in remote areas, even whether or not we are responding to COVID, or whether we are separated by space. We have more clubs and a fitness center; a lot of things going on campus.

Workforce initiatives—one of the stats I follow is from the National Skills Coalition; it is online. If anybody would like the information, I am happy to provide it. Fifty-one percent of the jobs in our State of Nevada, which also mirrors the nation, require more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree. That does not mean we do not need bachelor, master, or doctoral degrees. What it means is the jobs right now in our economy require some level of training that we can provide at the community colleges; that is our niche; that is what we are doing. We get a lot of families, counselors, and students on campus who walk through our tech labs, and they will look at our auto lab, our diesel, or any HVAC spaces that we have, and they will say, "I want my student to go to college," and I have to say, "Well, this is college." It is a \$250,000 CNC machining piece of equipment, and I am not even allowed to touch it. But definitely students need some sort of training before an employer is going to let them work on a machine. So, it is college level, it is different; it is a two-year college. It is technical training; it is not what most people are looking at as four-year advanced degrees. I appreciate the conversation before I came on about the synergy that is going on in the System. The idea that we all play a different part is what we are talking about. We at the traditional community colleges, even though we do offer some bachelor's degrees, are still doing more of the technical training as others have spoken to in this meeting today.

We do have a prison program, which is funded by a separate appropriation. It helps inmates on their way to exit and have a place to go so they do not end up back there, but it also helps them by finding a job and helping out employers who need employees.

We have a significant apprenticeship program that we run to articulate credit for apprentices so they can have a degree as well as the training they receive. Our commercial driver's license program is one that we are trying to get up and running. It is noncredit right now, but we want to move it to the credit side. We found out we can do truck driver training, and if we do it at a scale where we can buy more equipment, then we can be a testing site. This will help students go from our program into the workforce without having to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and test because there is a backlog. No offense to the DMV, but if we can train our students here and test them, then that eliminates stress all around. It gets them out into the workforce, which again, is what we are trying to do.

We are looking at building a center, actually renovating an existing property in Fernley. It is one of our larger communities where we do not have a dedicated campus presence. We are working on a renovation of a building; it is a \$12 million project that we are looking at funding. We are looking to put it forward to the System for a state contribution next session for \$4 million. I have worked in fundraising a number of years; we are going to try to raise a lot of that money on our own just to keep things moving along. We do have quite a few private donors who are interested in investing, and there is quite a bit of federal grant money out there; we want to make sure we do not leave that on the table.

In closing, I know you are not a money committee, but some of you do cross over and policy leads to funding. I want to thank you for the restoration of the 12 percent, part of the

12 percent cut, especially that we put into positions, last session. I appreciate the talk that has been had about funding dual enrollment. The career and college readiness grant was eliminated in the 2020 Special Session; if that comes back, it helps the high school districts to provide that service to their students, and does not put the strain on the families. As far as major issues, we can always talk about the money. We do find money in other ways. Hopefully, we can be competitive for grants. One of the things we are finding at WNC is that it is a staffing issue, like most businesses are finding, not necessarily faculty. We have been able to bring in faculty; it is more on the admin side. I have eight custodial positions at the Carson campus, and I have two of them filled. So, the positions that we are trying to do just to keep operations going, it is not that we cannot list them because we do not have the funding, it is because we cannot get applicant pools to come in. I will answer any questions you may have for me. Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Questions? I am not seeing any hands.

Dr. Dalpe:

Thank you again for having me. I appreciate it.

Chair Denis:

Thank you for all the work that you are doing; actually, to all the institutions today that presented. That took a little longer than I originally anticipated, but it was well worth the opportunity to see what everybody is doing and what the challenges are as we move forward. That concludes our presentations of the NSHE institutions.

I would like to take a 20-minute break. As I mentioned last month, we have a lot to cover over the next few months, and I want to make sure that we lay the groundwork as we start talking about these important things.

AGENDA ITEM VII—PRESENTATION CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND STRENGTHENING INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

Chair Denis:

We are back from our lunch break, and we are going to start with Agenda Item VII, a presentation of the state of higher education, workforce development, and strengthening innovation ecosystems. What we are trying to do with our presentations this afternoon is bring up some things that will definitely be policy issues that come up as we move forward.

David F. Damore, Ph.D., Interim Executive Director, The Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West, and Professor, Chair of the Department of Political Science, UNLV:

I appreciate the opportunity, Chair Denis, Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, and rest of the Committee. For the record, I am not speaking on behalf of UNLV. I am speaking on behalf of the policy centers that I oversee. For those who are not familiar, here is a little background about Lincy and Brookings; they are donor-funded public policy centers at UNLV ([Agenda Item VII A-1](#)) ([Agenda Item VII A-2](#)). We have been around since Academic Year 2009–2010. The Lincy Institute focuses on economic development, education, governance, health, nonprofits, and social services. Brookings Mountain West is a unique partnership

with the Washington D.C.-based Brookings Institution. We look at bringing in ideas and expertise to enhance public policy discussions in the state and to make policy recommendations to build a robust, inclusive, and sustainable future. This includes visiting scholars that will come out from Brookings, pre-COVID of course, and research partnerships that are ongoing. We also have a minor in public policy for our students at UNLV. We have also played a large role in economic development policy in Nevada through the state government and then more recently with the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED).

So, if we go back to 2011, when Nevada redid its governance and its approach to economic development, this is the report put together with authorship by Brookings Mountain West, Brookings, as well as SRI International here. This led to the new structure and the regionalization of economic development policy here and the identification of the core target industries that the state still uses. It also made recommendations for state investment and economic development—things like the abatement strategy, knowledge fund, catalyst fund, and battle born growth—and it uncovered lots of deficits Nevada had at the time in innovation and workforce assets. Prior to COVID, we started working with SRI and GOED on what became Nevada's plan for recovery and resilience. This provides a pandemic-based strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis using 2011 bench markings, economic forecasting, and it identified some priority areas and policy recommendations. Since that report came out, a lot of things have changed. We are in the process of finalizing a report. It will be out later this month or in early March and will include an evaluation of what happened since 2011. We also provide demographic and economic trend data for both Nevada and its regions. We evaluate regional economic development successes and ongoing challenges there. We also provide a summary of federal and state actions that have happened since the onset of the pandemic, and then we offer a series of policy recommendations, both state and regional. I am going to talk about higher education, workforce, and innovation ecosystems. My colleague, Dr. Martinez, will follow and talk about K-12 education.

A little background as to where we are coming from when we say regions in Nevada. What we define in our report is essentially this idea that if we look at Nevada and its demographics, its economy, there is no such thing as one Nevada—it is very regionalized. And so, our regional definitions differ a little bit from the traditional Clark, Washoe, the rest of the state, or rural Nevada. You will notice we put Pahrump in southern Nye County in with Clark County because there is a lot of economic exchanges. Those are going to increase, I think, in the coming years as a lot of people get priced out of the housing market in Clark County; they may be heading over the hill of Pahrump. We look at sort of the cohesiveness in metro, what we call metro Reno, Carson City, Washoe, Storey, Douglas, and Lyon, and then the rest of what we call Central Great Basin.

Now, the demographic predictions are not all that surprising. Obviously, southern Nevada is going to continue to grow faster than the rest of the state. It is going to become much more diverse. You are going to see growth obviously in the rest of the state; the diverse case will be a bit slower, and the diversification is going to be largely among Hispanics. We want to point your attention to one thing. I think it does not get lost in these discussions here and that is, our population is getting older in Nevada. You are going to see in the coming years an increase in the dependence ratio, that is, more retirees, more younger folks not in the workforce, being supported by fewer workers. That is something to consider with an aging population. Nevada is in a little better position than some of the other states, but this is a concern here.

The other concern I want to point your attention to, is that this is a large state with these distinct regions, and these create a lot of isolation within Nevada. That limits our intrastate economic and social exchanges. Now, the good news is Nevada is also blessed with its geography, in the sense that we are highly connected to what we call “megapolitan clusters.” This is the idea of my former colleague, the late Robert E. Lang, the initial director of Lincy and Brookings. He wrote a book with Chris Nelson at the University of Arizona about the idea of thinking about large population exchanges that go across state lines. Nevada is lucky here. You have connections through mining, up through Salt Lake City and even over into Denver, what we call the mountain megapolitan cluster. Obviously, Reno is close to the Sierra Pacific megapolitan cluster. And then down in southern Nevada, there is something we call the southwest triangle megapolitan cluster. If you think about this, this is the second largest concentration of population in the country outside the Northeast. So, there are lots and lots of potential exchanges here for economics and social exchanges. For those who live in southern Nevada, we know that COVID has brought a lot of southern Californians into our housing market. The point here is that this is the context in which we make the recommendations in the report, and we think the policy needs to recognize and capitalize on this reality.

In the report we make about ten recommendations related to higher education, workforce development, and what I call innovation ecosystems. The first of these is a little bit of good news for Nevada. This is the idea of what has happened at our universities here. Michael Crow, the President of Arizona State University (ASU), created a sort of typology of university models based upon different characteristics. Based upon these characteristics, you would say, UNLV and UNR operate under what they call the “academic bureaucracy” model. This is the idea that it is a state-led organization, funding comes through enrollment, goals are top down from the state organization, and the system is managed by nonacademics. Universities that operate in this model, their animating purpose is organizational preservation.

Compare that to the “academic enterprise” model. These are schools like ASU that are scaled for national and global reach. Obviously, they do get state funding, but they also are very aggressive and much more entrepreneurial in getting funding from private businesses, philanthropy, and local governments and in making those public-private partnerships, connecting knowledge to society-impacting scale, and management, which is drawn from and blended with faculty, as opposed to being distinct. For schools in the academic enterprise model, their animating purpose is social transformation.

Our universities—UNLV and UNR—are ready to make this jump from the state-based model to the academic enterprise model. If we go back to that report in 2011, *Unify, Regionalize, Diversify*, it made a lot of recommendations about improving the universities in Nevada, and those investments that the Legislature has made have paid off. Obviously, you have a funding formula that is based for universities that is provided and it also provides additional funding for research. That has been very beneficial here. You have invested in state-supported buildings for engineering; UNR’s is completed, and UNLV’s is being planned. You have a new hospitality building at UNLV in the middle of the part of the last decade. You have funded the Knowledge Fund, and that has led to investments to cultivate public-private partnerships. You have a UNLV Applied Research Cooperative, and UNR has the Nevada Center for Applied Research. As both President Whitfield and President Sandoval noted in their presentations, both schools are now Carnegie R1 status, something we did not have a decade ago, and more importantly, they were able to maintain it even through COVID.

What we see is, there has been a lot of one-offs that would be consistent with this sort of academic enterprise partnership. The Kirk Krikorian School of Medicine at the UNLV Medical Education Building is funded with a little bit of state money, but most of that money is coming from philanthropy. If you follow the saga of that, that was not an easy thing to get done; it should have been something straightforward, but it took years and years and years. Also, Black Fire Innovation is another example of an incredibly valuable asset that did not exist that has been funded with private funding. During the last legislative session, the Legislature passed legislation authorizing those partnerships between UNR's School of Medicine and Renown Health. Those would be examples of these types of partnerships, but these are all sort of one-offs. Moving forward, you as the Legislature, working with higher education leaders, we encourage you to create blanket rate language to allow these partnerships to be sort of the norm, not the exception. Think about what qualifying standards we would want, what kind of cost sharing you want for the facilities and programs, to keep pushing UNLV and UNR to be much more entrepreneurial and less reliant on the state-based model. What this also means is that the other institutions in Nevada have tended to get much less attention and much less investment compared to UNR and UNLV. You have a sense of that from some of the earlier presentations in terms of talking about funding, talking about facilities, those types of issues. We make a lot of recommendations because we see these institutions as being vital to workforce development and to find those midlevel credentials that I think a lot of the presenters discussed.

One of the things you need to consider, and this is obvious legislation that has been before your body a number of times, is locally based governing authority for nonuniversities. You can think about this as a real disadvantage for these regionally based institutions. All their peer institutions will have some form of regional governance or local governments. We do not have that in Nevada. You can think about what that might look like in terms of bringing in those people who are making these partnerships, having these companies sit on the board and help direct the curriculum.

We also think there should be a clarification of the missions of the two- and four-year colleges. It is amazing all the things they tend to do. This also means they are not doing other things that you, the Legislature, and the economic development community might like to see. One thing to think about is aligning the zones to reflect this economic geography. Right now, Pahrump is served by GBC, even though we know there are lots of people commuting into Clark County from Pahrump. It is part of our economic area. That should be something to consider. We think if you look at GBC, it is one of the biggest four-year college deserts in the country. They are closer to the University of Utah than they are to UNR. You are already offering a lot of four-year degrees at GBC. Our recommendation is to make that a full four-year status akin to what you see in NSC.

One of the other things that we know is occurring here is what we call mission creep. We asked the federal government how many community colleges Nevada has, and the answer was zero. According to the federal government, we do not have any community colleges because all of our schools offer a mix of two- and four-year degrees. When the federal government makes comparisons, those comparisons do not work for Nevada. Some of this stems from the funding formula. One of the consequences of the funding formula is, it provides more funding for upper division and graduate level education; those are weighted much more heavily and that creates an incentive for nonuniversities to act like universities. We need to think about separating the funding formulas. And part of this is to do an actual cost study to understand what these costs are. One of the things you heard in those discussions was a lot of these vocational, certification programs are very expensive to do; that needs to be accounted in the funding. Right now, it is very inconsistent in terms of how

these programs get funded, and that is what we want these colleges to do. That needs to be reflected here more generally. When the funding formulas were developed back when in 2012, there was never a Nevada-specific cost study done. We simply borrowed numbers from other states and plugged them in.

The other thing we know is, we have been inconsistent in funding and aligning workforce development in Nevada, relying on a mix of federal money, some state money. We recommend creating a workforce development fund that requires matching contributions from your industrial partners that are aligned with the regional economic development priorities. If you have the Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) trying to attract certain businesses to the state, if you have those workforce pipelines ready, that makes us a much more attractive place to be rather than saying, "Oh, we can, we might be able to develop that or you can import your labor from Arizona or California, wherever it may be." Another thing to consider is the Legislature, to the degree that GOED does have workforce development monies, allowing GOED to carry those over unspent workforce dollars so we do not have to reinvent the wheel every two years when the Legislature meets.

Obviously since 2011, UNLV and UNR have made advances as research institutions, but they still lag well behind neighboring universities. I think moving them to the academic enterprise model will allow them to catch up. The two- and four-year colleges have not been prioritized because they are operating in a university-based system. We also know that because we have two-year and four-year hybrid institutions, workforce development is less robust. It is less integrated with regional economic development policy than what we are going to see in our neighboring states, particularly if you look at, for example, Arizona, to a lesser extent California and Utah. This highlights the point that a number of other speakers made as well—not everyone needs a four-year degree, but the jobs of the future are going to require training, and they are going to find some level of certain certification. If we can have nimble and regionally based work development institutions, that is going to allow Nevada to compete and thrive and be able to capture more of the higher-level jobs and the economic exchanges we have with California, Arizona, and Utah. I would be happy to address any questions the Committee may have. Thank you for your time.

Chair Denis:

Great information. Thank you. Any questions? Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you so much. This was really great information. How are we alerting, if you will, or letting our youth know that jobs of the future will need a degree or some type of extra? I know we say college and career ready; we talk to them all the time about this in school, but is there something coming from another voice that is telling them they are going to need additional training?

Dr. Damore:

That is a good question. I think this is a little bit of a challenge, because there is a chick and the egg here. Do we keep funding what we have been doing, or are we thinking ahead? What are these jobs going to be? Thinking about all the infrastructure money that is going to come in, do we have that pipeline? Thinking about climate change and those sorts of issues, are we developing those pipelines now? My guess is probably not. That is something where you need coordination between the higher education institutions and grades K-12, beyond college readiness. Because again, a lot of these students are not going to need to go

to UNLV or UNR. They can go to these other places, but if they come out of that, they are going to want to know that there is going to be a job waiting. That is why I think if you have regional-based governance of your community colleges with folks from the industries that you are trying to lure and promote workforce development, that helps a whole heck of a lot.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you. I worry about that a little bit, because I think sometimes, especially kids who might be in middle school or high school right now are thinking they do not need to go to college to do whatever, that they can learn it on the job. That may be true with some positions, but then there will be other things that will require additional education.

Dr. Damore:

In southern Nevada, you have the building trades, which have been very successful, such as the culinary union. But there is also real concern that those jobs are not coming back, particularly hospitality. Where you might have been able to move into a job and get on the ground training and move up through those organizations through automation, and through reassessment post pandemic. I do not think a lot of those jobs are coming back, and we are not talking about 500, we are talking tens of thousands of jobs that will not be replaced here. We need to think about where those workers are going to go. How can we retrain them? That is a big lift.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you so much. This was helpful.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Other questions? Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you for the presentation. I will echo what the Senator said. This was an informative conversation that you have given us to consider. A question on the reach out with students in our high schools. Are you working with CCSD to get them to realize that they can teach our students to have those dual degrees? Like some of the kids that are at CSN high school, when they graduate, they are graduating with an associate degree and their diploma. Has that been considered?

Dr. Damore:

You do have those partnerships out there. The magnet schools are the best example of that. But to the degree that is the direction the state wants to go; we should need more of that. Thinking about what those jobs are going to be—a high tech job, for example, cybersecurity jobs, those type of jobs—if you can begin that in high school that gets them that much farther along. I think we need closer engagement with the economic RDA, with GOED, with NSHE, instead of one-size-fits-all state-sized solutions. Realizing there is a whole lot of variety, that what may work in GBC is not going to work in Clark County and accept that. Embracing regionalism and thinking about what governance and what resources you can bring at the regional level to address those concerns. But you are absolutely correct.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? I do not see any.

I always appreciate having this discussion, especially when we talk about the megapolitan. We do not really think about that; people do not look at state lines and you stop when you get to the state line. These are all good things that you have seen.

Dr. Damore:

A lot of the firms that you are attracting are coming from California for regulatory reasons. We know we have huge population gains from southern California, even from Arizona as well. We need to think about how we can maximize those as opposed to just thinking this is one state. We are one state that is part of a much bigger economic zone.

Chair Denis:

I appreciate that. Thank you so much. That can be helpful as we move forward.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—PRESENTATION CONCERNING K–12 HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SOUTHERN NEVADA AND KEY K–12 POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO A PEOPLE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Chair Denis:

Let us go on to Agenda Item VIII, a presentation concerning K–12 Hispanic students in southern Nevada and key K–12 policy issues related to a people-based economic development strategy. We have Dr. Magdalena Martinez here with us.

Magdalena Martinez, Ph.D. Director, Education Programs, The Lincy Institute, and Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy and Leadership, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs, UNLV:

Thank you very much for having me today. As my colleague mentioned today, I will be talking about K–12 education policy issues ([Agenda Item VIII A-1](#)) ([Agenda Item VIII A-2](#)). Dr. Damore set the stage for the larger conversation related to economic development and the role of the Lincy Institute in helping to expand and amplify the conversation around workforce needs and economic development and the role of regionalism. I will be taking a little bit of a deeper dive on K–12 specifically.

Research confirms the close connection between education and a robust workforce. What we have heard today, unfortunately, high school graduation and college participation rates are stratified along socio demographic lines, and economists warn us that an increasingly diverse population is a threat to keeping pace with an educated workforce demand. According to the College Board, Nevada's traditional aged population is even more diverse than the rest of the country, with 69 percent of Nevada's K–12 students of color indicating a vulnerability, or opportunity, of the state's skilled workforce pipeline. Moreover, we know that at least 62 percent of Nevada's jobs will require some form of postsecondary education, as we have heard today from other speakers. Finally, Latinos in Nevada will make up an increasingly large percent of our state's population.

With regards to education and COVID, we are all familiar with the implications in our K–12 system, and specifically high school graduation rates have dipped in at least 20 states, including in Nevada. *Excelencia in Education* reported that Latino and Black college students have lower retention rates than their Asian and White peers. This is especially the case at community colleges, and this was in particular during the recession. Of course, the under production of teachers and COVID closures have intensified many of these inequities as you have heard today. Nowhere is this captured best than in the Nevada Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. These challenges were captured in last year's report by the Advisory Committee. In Nevada by 2030, Nevada's Latinos will continue to comprise a significant portion of the state's population and workforce.

That said, I would like to share two specific briefs that can help close the gap for Latinos and other underrepresented students. In this report by Reeves and Smith, and a Brookings fellow, Richard Reeves, *Improving K–12 Education for Hispanic Students in Las Vegas and Beyond*, public K–12 education serves as a launching pad for economic mobility, opportunity, and preparing students for college or a good paying job. Latino students, in particular, constitute a significant and growing portion of the U.S. population, yet are often overlooked in educational literature because they are not the lowest performing demographic. In this particular brief, the authors examine how well public K–12 education serves Latino students in Clark County, specifically, where nearly half of the students are Latino. The authors then consider factors that may influence student performance, including both in-school factors and family background, and conclude by recommending paths to improve the educational outcomes for Latino students in Clark County and beyond. These recommendations include—and of course, you all have heard about many of these recommendations and actually what they look like on the ground, with many of our institutions taking the lead—helping to recruit and retain diverse teachers; improving food security; providing additional resources to close the remote learning gap; providing support for a family-friendly immigration policy, something that has not really been talked about much but is key to students, particularly Latino students overall; outside experiences; their academic success; and promoting fair scheduling, particularly the authors talk about the ambiguity and sometimes the inconsistent scheduling of many of our hospitality workers.

The second brief I would like to touch on, *The Growing Need for Diverse Teachers in the Mountain West*, is by Michael Hansen and his colleague Quintero. In this policy brief, the authors examined the racial and ethnic diversity of the public teacher workforce in five Mountain West states, including Nevada. Drawing on survey data from 1993 to 2016, the authors find increases in student diversity are outpacing teacher diversity in all the states. In addition, the authors demonstrate the recruitment and retention of non-White teachers in these states lagged considerably behind the rest of the United States. This brief concludes with recommendations to help Mountain West states and its districts promote greater racial and ethnic diversity among teacher workforces. Relevant to Nevada, the authors find that Nevada contains the largest percentage disparity in the Mountain West states where 68 percent of the student population is non-white, and 22 percent of the teacher population is non-White. Among the Mountain West states, New Mexico and Nevada have experienced the largest percent change in non-White teachers between 1999 and 2018 with an increase of 13 percent and 12.7 percent, respectively. Among Mountain West states, Nevada experienced the largest percent increase in students of color between 1999 and 2018. The policy recommendations they propose are to make teacher diversity a priority. A state-level strategic approach to promoting more teacher diversity may prove more effective in raising awareness of the issue and offers a broader potential to reach results. Along the same lines, state universities and colleges can promote teachers for the region and should also develop robust strategic plans in partnership with school districts and state policymakers. We have seen some of that already taking place, and our university,

community college, and state college presidents have talked about that. Examine how existing policies help or hinder recruitment and retention of teachers of color. Current state and district policies, though implemented in race-blind ways, may inadvertently raise barriers for teacher candidates from non-White groups. For example, licensure exams, student teaching requirements, and license reciprocating policies across the Mountain West states may raise barriers that affect teachers of color. Create and support professional development for serving a diverse student population for the existing workforce of teachers such as unconscious bias training and culturally relevant pedagogy.

My colleague, Dr. David Damore, discussed the Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West's upcoming report on economic development. As part of this report, we highlight key K-12 education policies that can align with a robust economic development and workforce strategic plan. Our report highlights how since the Great Depression, states' policymakers have targeted K-12 education investments. While helpful, these categorical investments did not meet the overall student learning and funding adequacy needs of Nevada schools. Several reports have documented Nevada students falling short in math and English outcomes long before the school closures. Since 2013, however, state lawmakers have made significant public education investments, including full-day kindergarten, class-size reduction, funding for English language learners, funding for high poverty students, and Read by Three initiatives. However, the pandemic underscored unresolved policy challenges and revealed new education challenges and possible opportunities, like building a people-based economic development strategy that puts Nevada on a long-term path to build its workforce, which requires overcoming deficits and public education funding. They focus on Latino educational opportunities, governance, broadband, and digital inclusion. For instance, in K-12 funding, policymakers should use the implementation period to ensure adequate per-pupil funding levels are achieved and weights are appropriately distributed for the various student populations, including high-poverty students, English learners, special education, and gifted programs. Moreover, proportional regional representation on the 11-member Nevada Commission on School Funding charged with reviewing the base per-pupil funding and the weights for each student category should be maintained to ensure the plurality of the state's population and their needs are appropriately represented.

School board governance bills proposing to restructure school board governance have repeatedly been introduced in the Nevada Legislature but failed to advance. Public trust and support for the current structure continues to decline. COVID-19 accelerated the exodus of families from the public school system. Rightsizing urban school boards should continue to be a priority. Whether proposals include a shift to a hybrid model or divided into multiple school districts with their own governing boards, key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and municipalities should play an important role in ensuring equitable representation in alignment with localities, goals, and priorities. Nevada's strong state county governance model underutilizes cities and localities in areas where locality matters, such as K-12 governance. Considering the exclusion of localities in the governance of K-12, southern Nevada's three largest municipalities have created their own initiatives or departments in response to their constituent's education concerns.

Latino education, again, Latinos will continue to constitute the largest student group in the state for decades to come. While Latino high school graduation rates are improving, the rates lag behind Asian and White students. As a result, Latinos are not enrolling in postsecondary or vocational training at the same rates as their peer groups. Furthermore, Latinos are overrepresented in two-year colleges compared to four-year institutions. National and local reports recommend policymakers identify pivotal interventions that can be meaningfully scaled and replicated for Latinos. Specific to Nevada, this means diversifying the teacher pipeline as we have previously covered, improving community

relations through culturally relevant communication strategies, ensuring funding for English learners and high-poverty students, and the creation of representative decision-making bodies. Several Nevada school districts have convened advisory boards to suggest policies and strategies targeting specific student groups, such as Latinos and their education needs. It is time for state-level policymakers to similarly convene a statewide study group to address the specific education needs and policy interventions for Latino students and develop a long-term funding and implementation strategy.

Broadband is also critical to the delivery of remote education and distance learning. Even in the states most urbanized counties, CCSD estimated in July 2020, that as many as 40 percent of students may require assistance to gain adequate Internet services. Securing available federal funds to support these broadband programs and investments should be complemented by collaborations with private partnerships to develop, maintain, and enhance capabilities.

In conclusion, Nevada lawmakers have advanced significant education policy bills to improve public education for all students, yet there are many bills that have failed to make the legislative agenda. Evaluating and sustaining promising programs should be a priority for lawmakers and school districts. These include student support programs, such as the teacher recruitment and retention initiatives, including the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force.

Counseling and counselor ratio priorities—I recently published an academic paper that used CCSD data and found the more positive the experience a student has with a counselor, the more likely they are to hold high career aspirations.

Credit retrieval programs will become increasingly important as we continue to see COVID outcomes in education. Food security and culturally relevant community communication to families are also key to supporting students.

Finally, you heard a lot about college access programs. Continuing to evaluate and promote these types of programs will be key for college and career knowledge programs. For instance: the summer bridge programs through public-private partnerships, the Latino Youth Leadership Conference offering one example; early pipeline programs such as GEAR UP and Upward Bound; and college affordability programs—you heard from the postsecondary institution presidents regarding how they have made a difference on their campuses including the Silver State and the Nevada Promise Scholarships.

Thank you for your continued support and service to our State of Nevada and our children. If you have any probable questions, I am happy to answer them.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Very timely information to help us hopefully get ahead of the curve, which we do not tend to do. There are some good opportunities as we move forward. Questions? Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

A quick question, Dr. Martinez. Thank you so much for this information. Where can we access your papers that you have written?

Dr. Martinez:

The paper I referenced right now was the paper on counselors, using CCSD data. I am happy to forward that.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Would you please? Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Any other questions? I am sure all this information that was shared is available, at least the presentation is available with our meeting packet today; that is online. Thank you very much, Dr. Martinez. We appreciate your insight and your information, and it will be helpful as we move forward.

AGENDA ITEM IX—PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF EARLY EDUCATION IN NEVADA

Chair Denis:

We are now on [Agenda Item IX](#), a presentation of the state of early education in Nevada. We have Dr. Raines, Director of Kids Count Initiatives and Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA), and Annette Dawson Owens, Director of School Readiness Policy, CAA. Welcome and we look forward to your message.

Tara C. Raines, Ph.D., Director, Kids Count Initiatives, CAA:

Thank you, Chair Denis. I am joined by Annette Dawson who is going to deliver part of this presentation with me. A little bit about CAA. We are a nonprofit organization that is committed to promoting equity and access in education, health, safety, and economic well-being. We do this through targeted policy initiatives, monitoring outcomes across the state and comparing them to outcomes nationally, community engagement, and a number of public and private partnerships. ([Agenda Item IX](#))

Annette Dawson Owens, Director, School Readiness Policy, CAA:

Thank you so much, Dr. Raines, Chair Denis, and the Interim Education Committee. We are going to talk today about our earliest experiences and how they shape our lives—focusing on the state of early learning in Nevada, the effects of the pandemic, barriers and challenges, priorities, and where we go from here.

Early childhood experiences, as we know, good or bad, lay the foundation for later success. Young children who are exposed to high-quality early learning at home or in the classroom have a much greater chance of success in adulthood. Human capital creates economic capital. The viability of our economy depends on the skills and abilities of its workforce, and the development of Nevada's workforce starts at birth.

Some of the facts about the importance of preschool—According to several sources, as well as Equity Starts Early, 90 percent of brain architecture is developed by age five. At-risk children who did not receive a high-quality early childhood education are 25 percent more likely to drop out of school; 40 percent are more likely to become a teen parent; 50 percent are more likely to be placed in special education; 60 percent are more likely not to attend college; and 70 percent are more likely to commit crime.

Concerning school readiness in Nevada, we know at CCSD, it has recently been shown that our students have a 47 percent proficiency in reading and a 31 percent proficiency in math. The new targets, which can be found on CCSD board docs, postpandemic, are now lowered with third grade aiming for a reading proficiency of 39.2 percent. However, for African Americans, the aim is 25.1 percent proficiency; Hispanic is 32.7 percent proficiency; and this is compared to 47 percent previously prepandemic that we are attaining. In math, the new aim is for 25.3 percent proficiency universally; with 10 percent proficiency for Black students; 17.5 percent for Hispanic students; and this is compared to 31 percent previously that we had obtained. This is why high-quality education early experiences matter—they give students, including those at-risk, a strong footing and tools that equip them for future success. Access to high-quality pre-K is not only a funding, but also an equity issue.

State policy choices can empower our parents and support healthy development of children. We must also care for the caregivers who are caring for our children. Systems of support require combination of broad-based economic and family supports and interventions. Variation in state policy choice leads to a patchwork of supports for families depending on where they live. At CAA, we are committed to mapping out these supports across the State of Nevada, so we have an accurate representation of true access for all Nevada families. We are committed to advocating for caregivers where there is a high rate of turnover and where training can be intense with low wages.

At the Alliance were part of a Strong Start Advisory Committee. It is made up of, but not limited to, the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy, the Children's Cabinet, United Way of Southern Nevada, the Las Vegas Urban League, Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), and Nevada's Department of Health and Human Services.

In Nevada, we are united in our effort to support a significant expansion of high-quality early learning opportunities for children, particularly those in low-income families in order to better achieve the education, health, social, and economic outcomes for all. There is also a national initiative and movement for every child access, not only a high-quality early learning experience, but also a continuum in K through 12 education.

Barriers and challenges—In 2019 to 2020, all public pre-K funding in the state served about 27 percent of the state's four-year-olds. We think of a stadium as only one-third full. We know Nevada Ready! Pre-K served 8.2 percent; Title 1 served 6.45 percent, and Head Start served 3.66 percent. Spending for 2019 to 2020 was \$6,428, while best practices suggest \$12,129, which is \$5,701 less than the high-quality programs. Recently, we addressed the actual cost of high-quality pre-K and making those investments. Changes over the years that the state has made include limiting support for structured classroom observations. According to reports by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Nevada met six out of ten of the NIEER benchmarks, but missed the following: an assistant teacher having a child development associate or equivalent; requiring all teachers or classrooms to participate in coaching or job-embedded training; expanding child screenings to include vision, hearing, and health; and having continuous quality improvement systems. Dr. Raines, I am going to turn it over to you for COVID impacts.

Dr. Raines:

One of the data sources we review at CAA is from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's American Community Survey. They identify households throughout the country that have children in different age ranges. They asked them a series of questions at several time points throughout the year. So, what we have is data that was collected in their COVID impact

survey. What you see are the number of households with children from ages 0 to 4, who had childcare arrangements that were disrupted by the pandemic here in Nevada. In July-August of last year, that number was at 35 percent; due to a lot of targeted interventions, we saw a reduction in that by December. Households with children ages 5 to 11 went from over a quarter of those households to about 15 percent. There are some ways in which the work that is being done in Nevada has been helpful for parents and families with children. What we also see is that households with children did continue to have difficulty paying for their typical household expenses, and that persisted from the summer through the end of the year.

We also saw continued childcare disruptions because of the pandemic in households with children ages 0-4. The reason, and this was a positive one, is there was an increase in the number of folks who were able to access childcare. That went from folks who are not impacted from about 65 percent up to 74 percent at the beginning of December. We do anticipate that when we get the next round of that data, it will not be as optimistic because there were disruptions again in January.

The number of parents who took unpaid leave in households with children ages 5 to 11, increased from July to October. We did not have enough data collected in the State of Nevada to report on the December numbers for this particular data point. We saw an increase in the number of adults from July to September who had to take unpaid leave or sick leave to care for their children ages 5 to 11. We saw a decrease in the number of adults who reported they did not look for a job because they did not have anyone to care for their children. We saw an increase in the number of households where folks were having to supervise one or more children at home while working from home. We saw an increase in the number of folks with children under age 12 who cut their work hours from the summer to the fall, a slight increase there, and a decrease in the number of folks who left their job.

The COVID data in Nevada regarding how childcare was impacted is mixed. It followed the peak, so when we had higher COVID cases, we saw more disruption in childcare, and when we had lower COVID cases, we saw less disruption in childcare. We do know that COVID is continuing to impact our childcare centers. Personally, my childcare center was closed all but about seven days in January due to the Omicron spike. Many centers that we work with through CAA are still reporting a struggle to staff with coverage and have closures due to the impact of the COVID restrictions around illnesses—children not being allowed on campus if they have cold symptoms and staff also not being allowed on campus if they had cold symptoms.

Ms. Dawson Owens:

We are talking about the focus on Teachme and our caregivers. Discussions with the Division of Welfare and Support Services reported high rates of turnover and staffing. The provider trainings are changing quite a bit, which was a concern. There were four trainings that childcare workers had to complete. Now, all those will be in 90 days versus in the past when they were able to do half of them in 120 days, and that is due to federal funding they receive. They talked about this putting a strain on staff and a concern that it will impact centers; whereas we know conditions can be difficult and the compensation is not always great. We at CAA advocate for increased investments and finding ways to elevate the profession. The friends and family providers are on the increase a little bit, which makes it easier for families to access centers. The CAA is also working with youth living in foster care with an interest in early education training and connecting those youth to those pathways.

Dealing with accessibility and different ways that we can access childcare and improved outcomes for children—A couple of statistics for Nevada provided by the Center for Economic Development showed that in 2021, 67 percent of mothers with children under age five were participating in the labor force, which was up 6 percent from 2019. Again, this highlights the continual need for childcare and solutions. In 2020, an average family with children under five spent approximately 6 percent of their income on childcare. Childcare can be very expensive, costing more than college for families. That is something we continue to find ways to work around that and provide incentives.

As far as opportunities, at CAA, our focus is to increase per child spending to implement policies that support quality, increase access for four-year-olds to attend Nevada's Ready! State Pre-K, and work to expand eligibility to also include three-year-olds. At CAA, we also advocate for increased support for aftercare hours and centers to serve children with disabilities.

The CAA's priorities—We also want to note that Dr. Raines did a great job of preparing these Assembly district reports for each area so that we know where we stand in different areas of children's well-being. We cannot stress the need for quality-of-care access, universal pre-K, as well as those mental health supports, which I was pleased to hear President Whitfield talk about, and that the community is calling for and is in such need of postpandemic.

We appreciate the work of the Legislature. It has been an amazing meeting to see all the things going on with education. It is a lot of information, so thank you for the work. The CAA is working during this interim to partner on future outcomes for the next legislative session.

In the past, these are the things that we advocated for at CAA, specifically preserving childcare slots and supporting the Quality Rating Improvement (QRI) System. In addition, some other issues we worked on were school readiness, restorative justice, summer school, financial planning, and class-size reporting.

The CAA was actively involved in training parent ambassadors. You have heard some of them call in to some of your meetings. We are listening and sharing stories that are so important. We know what the needs are and what the community is calling for, what is really happening out there. We are partnering with the UNLV historian and UNR facilitator training parent ambassadors across the State of Nevada virtually to share their stories, and there is about 20 of them in the cohort. We are hopeful to involve them in our work in the future with committees and advocacy efforts. They are an amazing group of individuals. We are excited about what is going on with advocacy impacts with parents.

The impacts of advocacy are creating access and equity, ensuring that we have quality standards, saying that basic needs are met, providing funding, and supporting safety and well-being.

How to get involved in CAA? We are doing town halls, op-eds, listening sessions, cultivating legislative champions, individuals like yourself that want to partner in the work. We are happy to help with anything that would be of service to this Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to present here to you and our contact information is there.

All children deserve to be born healthy and raised in nurturing environments with limited exposure to adversity. Nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life lead to healthier brains and bodies, which influence health and well-being over the course of life. Chronic adversity harms children's neurological, biological, and social development and can have

lifelong consequences. Many children lack the opportunities to live the healthy start they deserve. Historically, children of color may face more adversity and may be less likely to have the opportunities that all children deserve. We at the CAA advocate for all children having equity and access to those things that they need to thrive. The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child, it is whether we can afford not to. We appreciate your time today and all your efforts that you put in on behalf of Nevada's children.

Chair Denis:

Thank you for all the work that you do to make sure we keep track of little ones who are just getting ready to come in. Any questions? Yes, Assemblywoman Thomas.

Assemblywoman Thomas:

Thank you, Chair Denis. Not so much as a question, but I just wanted to note to Dr. Raines and Annette Dawson Owens, that I appreciate this presentation. I appreciate that it is showing the foundation needed for us to build upon higher education, to build upon our CSN's, community colleges, and things like that. We need a foundation. The foundation begins with pre-K. I really do believe that this presentation opens up big light to what we have to invest in our state. If we do not do it now, when do we do it? I heard earlier through Lincy, that some of the jobs we currently have in hospitality are going to go away, so why not build upon educating our three- and four-year-olds, to give them the foundation that they deserve. We are behind because we are not investing in our children. We are investing in jails, but we are not investing in our kids. I really do appreciate all the work the Advocacy is doing, and you presented a good argument today. Thank you so much.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. Yes, Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I have a comment to make. I too, so appreciate this information. As someone who taught elementary school and has an early childhood degree, I will tell you that we cannot wait to educate any longer. We have to start these children out early and strong and give them the best base and foundation that we can. I hope that we can make headway and get our little people started early. There is a lot to know about educating little people. People think sometimes that it is just immediately putting them into reading or immediately putting them into math; there are a lot of skills, social skills, and listening skills and learning things that go on in those environments that are not necessarily alphabet-driven, if I can use that as an example. Thank you so much.

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much, Dr. Raines and Ms. Dawson Owens for your presentation.

AGENDA ITEM X—PRESENTATION ON THE USE AND FUNCTION OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN NEVADA

Chair Denis:

We will go next to [Agenda Item X](#), a presentation on the use and function of education management organizations and charter management organizations in Nevada. We have Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director of the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), and Ryan Herrick, General Counsel for SPCSA.

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority:

Good afternoon, Chair Denis, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to present this afternoon regarding management organizations. Today, I will present a high-level overview of management organizations ([Agenda Item X](#)). First, I will address what an educational management organization, or EMO, and a charter management organization, or CMO, are; then I will discuss the services these organizations provide. Finally, I will provide information about the EMOs and CMOs that operate in Nevada.

Before we discuss EMOs and CMOs, I will provide a bit of background that may help in understanding the role that EMOs and CMOs play. As you are aware, each charter school is overseen by its own governing body and is subject to a performance contract with the sponsors, such as SPCSA. The sponsor holds the charter school accountable for meeting academic, organizational, and financial performance expectations. To be clear, charter schools are prohibited by statute from operating for profit, and they may, but are not required to, incorporate as nonprofits. Since SPCSA is not a school district, we do not provide any centralized services that a school district would typically provide, such as human resources, payroll, special education, or legal services. So as a result, charter schools have to either provide those services themselves or procure those services. Oftentimes, charter schools use the services of outside entities or vendors to help meet some of those needs. For example, a school district may contract with an accounting and payroll company for services rather than handle those functions internally. Sometimes schools contract each of these services out separately—a contract with an accountant, then another contract for IT services, and then a separate contract with a law firm for legal services. In other cases, there are organizations that provide bundled services or packages of services. That is where you get into the territory of the EMOs and CMOs.

Here is a high-level overview of the basics in terms of what an EMO or CMO is. In both cases, these are organizations that are providing bundled services to a charter school. I will talk about the types of services here in just a couple of minutes because they can vary greatly from one EMO or CMO to another, but in both cases, these are organizations that provide a package of services. The primary difference between the EMOs and CMOs is the tax status; EMOs are for-profit entities and CMOs are nonprofit entities. The one thing I also want to emphasize here is the structure. I want to be clear that all our contracts at SPCSA are with local governing bodies of schools, not with an EMO or CMO. These governing bodies that the SPCSA has a charter contract with may then contract with an outside entity. That could be an accounting firm or it could be an EMO or CMO to provide a package of services.

As I mentioned earlier, EMOs and CMOs provide a very wide range of services, so it is hard to find two that are exactly the same. This list details the types of services we often see provided by EMOs and CMOs. To be clear, most of EMOs and CMOs we see provide a

sampling of these services and not everyone that is listed here. For example, we have some CMOs that really focus on the educational side of the work, primarily on curriculum and instructional support, professional development, and coaching school leaders, but then do not provide any of these other services that might be more operational. We also have some EMOs that are very much focused on the operational components—human resources, staff recruitment, website management, reporting, accounting, and legal—but do not provide any of the educational services or limited educational services. So, again, each of our EMOs and CMOs services are unique. This is just a sampling of what we tend to see as the types of services that EMOs and CMOs provide.

One topic I know that has come up in the past is the oversight of EMOs and CMOs. Let me start by sharing that there are clear parameters for EMO and CMO contracts. The contracts between the governing body and EMOs or CMOs. I want to highlight first, an EMO or CMO contract cannot give direct control of the educational services, the financial decisions, the appointment of board members, or hiring or dismissal of administrators to EMO or CMO.

Second, the contract cannot require the school to prepay for its fees or require a certain level of student enrollments. There are some terms that are prohibited to be in those charter contracts. In addition, an EMO or CMO contract cannot allow for charges that are not directly attributed to actual services being provided. The fees have to coincide with the actual services being rendered by the EMO or CMO. These contracts may not include any automatic renewal terms. They do need to give the governing body an opportunity to evaluate and make a decision as to whether or not to continue to get the services from that organization. They also cannot conflict with the terms of the charter contract between the sponsor and the school. There are a number of restrictions on EMO and CMO contracts that ultimately help to maintain the authority of the school's board to run that school.

Regarding the CMOs currently operating in Nevada, there are four charter schools out of our 38 charter contracts, which represents approximately 11 percent of our charter schools that contract with an CMO. We have 14 charters that contract with an EMO, which represents 37 percent of our charters.

I know that was a very high-level overview. I anticipate there will be a number of questions. I would be happy to address any questions you may have or provide any additional information.

Chair Denis:

Questions? Assemblywoman Miller.

Assemblywoman Miller:

My question is about the charter schools that are contracted with EMOs and CMOs. Most people recognize there is a necessity for the services they provide. However, the concern comes from that distinction between nonprofit and for-profit management companies. With EMOs, the for-profit management companies, which are the majority of the services that are being contracted with here in Nevada—can you further define for-profit? And is the intent of these for-profit companies to make a profit off our schools and these contracts? And if so—I realize you may not be able to answer this right now—but how much profit are they making off our charter schools here in Nevada?

Ms. Feiden:

Thank you, Assemblywoman Miller, for the question. First and foremost, I want to say, the majority of organizations that our schools would contract with—whether it is an IT company, a law firm, or an accounting firm—are typically for-profits in the business world. I want to briefly say a large number of for-profits—even most of our curriculum providers, McGraw Hill, Pearson—are big for-profit companies. So, in terms of EMOs then, I think your question is, what is their purpose? What are they set up to do? The answer is different for some than others. The largest EMO that our schools contract with here in Nevada is Academica Nevada. What they do is support schools in Nevada. I think that if you were to ask them, I would expect they would say that is their primary purpose. But there are some organizations that are broader; for example, you saw that one of the schools that we have here contracts with Pearson Online and Blended Learning. Pearson is a giant company. It is a branch of the Pearson entity, and so they have a broader goal and purpose in the way they are structured. It is a little hard to say how one versus the other operates. I will note that we do receive revenue and expenditure reports from each of our EMOs that help us understand how much funding is going to those EMOs and the types of services they are providing through that, as well as the charter the EMO and CMO contracts that our schools are required to provide us with as well.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Follow up, Chair Denis. Thank you. Let me try to tighten this question up, because I do recognize everything a school does to operate is working with a for-profit company. But when I look at the actual EMO, we know that all schools are operating and partnering with someone to provide the lights, computers, and curriculum, and all that kind of stuff, but what is unique about an EMO is, as you mentioned before, there is not a school district and even as the SPCSA, that is not your role or abilities. We worked on a bill last session to make sure that we put some limits on the amount of public funding and taxpayer dollars that could go to these EMOs and CMOs. I guess my question is, more specifically, for these for-profit ones, when you talk about revenue margins, how much money are they getting from our schools? Is it just enough money to operate and provide the services that are necessary, or are they making a profit off our schools?

Ms. Feiden:

Thanks for the question, Assemblywoman Miller. If you are asking about the fees, and I think that is where you are getting, Academica Nevada is the EMO that the largest number of our schools contract with. For example, their fee is \$450 per student, which works out to about 6 percent, if you were simply using the distributed school account (DSA), now the Pupil-Center Funding Plan (PCFP). That is one example, and again that is the broadest. Typically, the range for others is in the range of about 10 to 15 percent; and again, it varies widely based on the services. This is part of the answer to this question as well. When we get an application for a school to partner with an EMO or CMO, we look very closely at that service agreement in advance. One, because we want to make sure that it is reasonable; that those costs are reasonable; and two, we want to make sure that it complies with the terms that we have highlighted previously. The last piece I will add is that our charter school boards are responsible for evaluating the services provided by their EMOs, and so part of their responsibility, too, is to say, "Here are the things you are supposed to do for us, and here is how much money we are paying you. Are we getting what we are paying for? Are the services being rendered meeting our needs?" That is a piece of our process as well to monitor that evaluation that is conducted by those governing bodies.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you for that, Director. I am still a bit unclear though. My question is specifically, are these companies making more money than is necessary to provide the service? That is what we would consider the difference between revenue and profits. So, are they indeed making a profit off our publicly funded schools?

Ms. Feiden:

I cannot speak to specific profits of exact schools, but I can tell you when we look at a service agreement, for example, the expenditures of the Academica schools, they appear to be in range when you look at the variety and range of services being provided for the amount of funding. It is a little hard to do because if you go out and you hire one lawyer, you hire one accountant, and you hire this, sometimes they add up to be quite a bit. It is a little hard to compare apples to apples, but part of our processes is evaluating whether these are reasonable costs for the services being provided.

Assemblywoman Miller:

Thank you for that, Director. It is only fair to note to that two years ago, I suppose, when we had these discussions about the companies, when they first initiated that, except for one extreme case that had already been addressed, the EMOs and CMOs were within national average ranges here in Nevada. It was more of a preemptive concern because of what we saw in other states, where these companies were taking advantage of. I do not want to imply that it has been an issue here in Nevada, but again, being proactive to ensure that it does not. But at the end of the day, everyone, especially anyone listening to this Committee right now, the number one concern is always when it comes to our public taxpayer dollars, where is it going? How is it being used? Is it effective? And again, how much of it is going into the students in the classroom? Thank you for that.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Following up on my colleague with Assemblywoman Miller's train of thought, I totally support that when it comes to the taxpayer's dollars, we need to know where this money is going, whether it be buying textbooks, curriculums, and all the myriad of purchases that school districts are doing. I would agree we need this kind of information. To EMOs and CMOs, the majority seemed to be EMOs. I know in the private sector when we are looking to get services done, to outsource them, we take bids and then we compare. Is that how the process works? It looks like the majority of schools are going with the EMOs. Could it be possible they use the bidding system? And are they finding because they only have a pot of money that can go so far that these management companies are at a better price?

Ms. Feiden:

Assemblywoman Hansen, that is potentially part of this. I will also say when we review an application for a charter, one of the questions we ask is, "Why have you selected this EMO?" Why does this board want to contract with this EMO? What was that process like for them to select that organization? I think the other thing that I would add here is, we have had a handful of schools separate from their EMO. Those were situations where the governing body said, "We had these services, they were helpful at first, but now we want to do it

differently,” or they said, “We are not getting from this EMO what we expected.” This process illuminates the importance of strong governing boards, which I know is something the Assembly Education Committee, last session, was focused on. And certainly, it is an important part of this. If we have strong governing boards, and they evaluate those services or they go out to bid for services and realized they could get a better deal elsewhere, they make those decisions with the best interests of their school, with their students in mind. So again, it can go both ways. We have had three schools in the last three years that have separated from their EMO for a variety of reasons.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

A quick follow-up, Chair. Regarding the contracts, is there a certain date? Are they a year? If you want to get out of the contract, are you locked in for a minimum of three years, five years?

Ms. Feiden:

Thanks for the question. The initial term of a CMO or EMO contract can only be two years at the longest. That is a provision that is in either regulation or statute, and there cannot be any automatic renewal. The board needs to have the ability to sever that partnership. In addition, one of the things we look for when we are reviewing charter applications and the associated proposed management contract or service agreement is that the board has a lot of authority to say, “You are not doing what you need to do, or this is not meeting our needs. We would like to separate and no longer engage in this agreement.” Again, some of our CMO and EMOs date back before this agency existed. That is something we look closely for at this point, which is making sure those agreements give authority and power to the local board in order to make decisions in the best interests of their students.

Chair Denis:

We are going to Senator Buck.

A quick follow-up. How many charters do we have that actually have chosen to do their own management?

Ms. Feiden:

Thanks for the question. We have three in the last three years that have said they no longer want to have an EMO. In terms of our total number of charters, we have 38 charters and 20 of them do not have an EMO or CMO. I will note that the vast majority of those do, however, have an accounting firm and other contractors they work with, but they are not bundled. Hopefully, that answers your question.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Yes, it does. Senator Buck.

Senator Buck:

I know that 6 percent, ranging from 6 to 15 percent, is what an EMO or CMO would be charging per se. I have been fortunate to live in both worlds—to be a principal in the district, to manage a budget and see how much money goes to the schools in that system, as well as in the charter system and being able to really craft a budget around students and the monies that go to students. And then also teaching for the university, teaching school

finance class and having principals on both sides of the spectrum lay out how much money goes to the schools that are providing the services for students. As opposed to a district, which would be similar to a charter EMO or CMO, a district is much like our district admin, payroll, all of those services you would get in a district. And so, when you calculate the math, it is about 40 percent that trickles down to schools. I would challenge my colleagues to look into that. I just wondered how does it compare to districts? Have you ever done the math on that?

Ms. Feiden:

Thank you, Senator Buck. I have not done the math. I am not an expert in how school districts are structured. I will say that I know in the reorganization bills from a couple of years ago, there were potential limits set to how much funding could be kept at the district level versus passed through the schools. So, that may be something that is worth looking at. I do not recall that off the top of my head. I would say the same would be true for a school district; if a school district does a lot of things centrally, they do all the special education services in house, they do everything centrally, then less money may be going directly to school. But if the school has to hire all their special education staff, then more money would be going to school. There are certainly some parallels to your point, in terms of the services an EMO provides versus the services the school district provides. It is just a bit of a different structure.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I am going to go back to a couple of things we talked about. I was trying to go back to your presentation; I think it was slide six, the last bullet point. Can you read that to me?

Ms. Feiden:

I believe you are referring to contract terms. The last one stated the contract may not conflict with the terms of the charter contract between the governing body and the sponsor.

Senator Dondero Loop:

What does "may not conflict mean"?

Ms. Feiden:

Our contracts have terms related to a whole host of things, most of which are outlined in statutory requirements. For example, we may say in our contract that the school's maximum enrollment is X; the school is located in this location; or the school has to provide special education services to any students who walk in the door. Their contract with an EMO or CMO cannot conflict with our contract, meaning our contract prevails and supersedes anything that is based in our state law in the way our contract is structured. Does that answer your question?

Senator Dondero Loop:

Sort of. You also made a reference to Pearson, who has one school. I am not defending or judging. Academica is a privately held corporation worth, like what, \$40 million or

something, and Pearson is a whole different type of company that has one school here. So, having a private company is not the same type of thing. It is a nonprofit. I always say, and I truly believe this, I absolutely do not pass judgment on how anybody educates their children, whether it is private, public, homeschool, or charters. What I do—as a community member, as a taxpayer, as a public official—is believe very strongly that we have public accountability when we have public dollars being spent. With that being said, having Academica or having a charter does not beget us better teachers because a lot of our teachers who are in charters came from the school two blocks over. I believe in the educator; I believe in the teachers and the administrators who have done the work. I think it is important we get the facts on the line that this is a privately held company that is a nonprofit, and it is not even close to being compared to a Pearson that has many other things they do over the years. And, yes, they all make money, and yes, they all have their different pieces they bring to the pie. I do feel it is important that if we are going to spend public money, we should know that if school X with WCSO, or Elko County School District, or CCSD—I do not care—gets a million dollars to educate kids, we should also know what they are spending everything on, because that is what we are asking. We are saying, “Why are you spending so much money on testing? Why are you spending so much money on this reading program?” We are all out there. So, then it is important that if Academica is making a million dollars on every school, because this is a big business that is doing this work, they are going to spend those public dollars. This is not a private school that is spending dollars, this is a public school that is spending public dollars. That is where everybody is trying to go with this. They are not required to have all certificated teachers, for example. We heard that bill last session, so if they are not going to have certificated teachers, then they are not matching all the mandates that we have. Those things are important when we talk about specifics, when we talk about all the things, and schools are lucky to have people like Senator Buck who has gone through several systems. I myself have educated kids lots of ways. I have been out there and seeing those same things. I do not know if there is a question in there, but I think the questions that have been asked were important to be answered. Thank you.

Chair Denis:

Thank you. Any other questions? That was very helpful information. We have had a lot of discussion on this. I think especially for the members, as well as the public that is listening in, so they can understand how that really works. We talk about it, we hear about it, and we see different articles on it. Thank you very much.

AGENDA ITEM XI—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Denis:

We now come to [Agenda Item XI](#), which is our last public comment. As a reminder, we ask that public comment be kept to three minutes per person so that everyone interested speaking can be accommodated. A person may also submit public comments in writing either in addition to testifying or in lieu of. Information on how to submit comments is available on the agenda. BPS, if you could please add the first caller into public comment.

BPS:

Thank you, Chair Denis. The public line is open and working; however, we have no callers in the queue.

Chair Denis:

Let us give it a minute. I know there is a little bit of a delay.

BPS:

We have a caller to provide public comment.

Angie Sullivan, Teacher, CCSD:

Hello, my name is Angie Sullivan. I am a teacher, but I am having health problems, so I am out on leave. I wanted to make public comment about the Blue Ribbon Committee to review the CCSD trustee governance. The behavior exhibited by almost all of our CCSD trustees is just not tolerable. Many of their actions, using their legal "term of art" title would lead to an investigation or reprimand if used by licensed labor. This leads to millions in costly lawsuits. An election for trustees is difficult. I know all elections are hard, having participated all my life in Nevada politics. The areas are extremely large and the positions are actually listed at the end of a very long ballot. Participation is miniscule compared to even the voting population and not very representative. Along with that, trustees were allowed to gerrymander. I think this group of trustees did a good job of looking at that to have that be better. It is very difficult to attract a qualified person because the job is full time and does not pay. I think that you would understand, as folks who also have a burdensome elected position without much compensation, how difficult that is. There is a small stipend, but that is usually used for gas. They also have no staff to do the work. You can imagine with a \$3 billion budget, a 40,000 staff, and 320,000 students, it is unreasonable. Obviously, trustees must be supported, otherwise they have to maintain their full employment and do the job part-time, which leads to probably some of the problems that we have. Diversity is also an ongoing issue. Representation matters. Having all the ethnic groups with a voice in the room is very important on most of our issues. When you try not to be elected as the trustees, there is not qualification. This is not to say that voice is not important to hear, but often the skill level is not the same as what would be required for the job. When I was recently listening to an NDE meeting, they kept saying college and career ready. I would suggest examples of this should be shown from the trustee level all the way down to the classroom level. The trustee name is a legal "term of art." It suggests the highest financial obligation. When \$3 billion dollars in the budget is given to folks who can only give it partial attention, I think it prevents them from doing the job even if they are well-intentioned. It also fails our kids. I believe we should appoint some skilled talent. I do not think this should take away from the democracy portion of the elected, but I do believe the work is hindered because we do not support our elected trustees enough to be able to do the job. I am looking forward to this being discussed. I know Senator Denis said it would be a Blue Ribbon Commission, and I am hoping to hear more about that because as you know, sometimes these things take multiple years. Teachers need to be paid. We keep talking about retention and recruitment. Honestly, for two decades now, it seems like all we do as licensed labor is fight every level to be able to get a decent amount of money, decent insurance, and decent working conditions. I think there is a bottleneck there at the governance that has been highlighted by recent behavior. I think this Committee can get on that Blue Ribbon Commission and make a real change. Thank you for your attention.

Chair Denis:

Thank you, Ms. Sullivan. I would be interested in your thoughts as we move forward on that, so make sure you share those.

Let us go to the next caller.

BPS:

There are no additional participants wishing to provide public comment at this time.

Written Comments Submitted for the Record:

Mike McCoy, Coalition Manager, Nevada Parents for Online Education, submitted written comments ([Agenda Item XI](#)).

Chair Denis:

Thank you very much. I want to thank the members and all those who presented today. We had a firehose of information, but hopefully things will help us as we move forward in the different things that we are going to be discussing in our meetings.

An archived version of today's meeting will be available online.

Our next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, March 16, and will likely be in person with an option to attend virtually or hybrid. Let me know your thoughts one way or the other. I know I would like to get together as a committee in person at some point. We appreciate your time today. Thanks for everyone and we appreciate staff for putting this together. I have no other items to bring forward at this time.

AGENDA ITEM XII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Harper
Manager of Research Policy Assistants

Jen Sturm
Senior Policy Analyst

Alex Drozdoff
Senior Policy Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item IV	Nevada's Department of Education	List of Possible Appointees to the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force
Agenda Item V A	Yvette Williams, Chair, Clark County Black Caucus	Legislative Committee on Education's Bulletin 21-13
Agenda Item V B	Andrew Post, Chief Innovation Officer and Head of Behavioral Health, Hazel Health	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI A	Brian Sandoval, J.D., President, University of Nevada, Reno	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI B	Federico Zaragoza, Ph.D., President, College of Southern Nevada	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI C	Kumud Acharya, Ph.D., President, Desert Research Institute	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI D	Joyce Helens, President, Great Basin College	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI E-1	DeRionne P. Pollard, Ph.D., President, Nevada State College (NSC)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI E-2	DeRionne P. Pollard, Ph.D., President, NSC	NSC Institutional Metrics
Agenda Item VI F	Karin Hilgersom, Ph.D., President, Truckee Meadows Community College	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI G	Keith E. Whitfield, Ph.D., President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI H	J. Kyle Dalpe, Provost and Vice President of Finance, Western Nevada College	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VII A-1	David F. Damore, Ph.D., Interim Executive Director, The Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West, and Professor, Chair of the Department of Political Science, UNLV	PowerPoint Presentation

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item VII A-2	David F. Damore, Ph.D., Interim Executive Director, The Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West, and Professor, Chair of the Department of Political Science, UNLV	Links to Publications
Agenda Item VIII A-1	Magdalena Martinez, Ph.D., Director, Education Programs, The Lincy Institute, and Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy and Leadership, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs, UNLV	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VIII A-2	Magdalena Martinez, Ph.D., Director, Education Programs, The Lincy Institute, and Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy and Leadership, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs, UNLV	Links to Publications
Agenda Item IX	Tara C. Raines, Ph.D., Director, Kids Count Initiatives, Children’s Advocacy Alliance (CAA) Annette Dawson Owens, Director, School Readiness Policy, CAA	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item X	Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item XI	Mike McCoy, Coalition Manager, Nevada Parents for Online Education	Written Public Testimony

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