

## University of Nevada, Reno comments on AB 407

**Underlying premises:** Assembly Bill 407 proposes splitting University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (Cooperative Extension) into two separately administered units—one in Southern Nevada, managed by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas’s (UNLV) President (to include Clark, Lincoln and Nye Counties) and one including the remaining counties in Northern Nevada, managed by the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) President. This proposal would significantly disrupt Extension’s ability to address the critical needs of citizens across the State and would irreparably damage Cooperative Extension’s programming efforts focused on high priority statewide issues. Some of the concerns that the proposal generates include:

1. The premise, articulated in a report issued by UNLV’s Lincy Institute<sup>1</sup>, that Extension activities in Clark County cannot be effectively designed, delivered and evaluated by the University of Nevada, Reno;
2. The premise that UNCE’s educational programs are ineffective, do not address critical needs and that Clark County residents are dissatisfied with Extension’s current activities;
3. The premise that UNLV can improve Cooperative Extension’s program delivery in this region by assuming management of Extension’s activities in three counties in southern Nevada; and
4. The premise that responsibility for Extension programming and resource management should reside in the offices of the Presidents of UNR and UNLV.

We question the need for the proposed administrative restructuring, based on the points below. AB 407 ignores the potential effects on stakeholders throughout Nevada with a unilateral and administratively unclear vision for how Nevada will be better served by the proposed change. The unsupported foundation upon which this legislation is built ignores the legacy of dedicated service by committed Extension professionals and those citizens whose lives have been improved and enriched for the past 102 years of by Cooperative Extension’s work in Nevada.

**Insights about Cooperative Extension:** We offer the following points about Cooperative Extension as facts that members of the Assembly Committee on Education must have to evaluate the merits of this proposal.

1. Cooperative Extension has statewide programs for rural and urban communities, mandated in Nevada Revised Statutes 540.010-070<sup>2</sup>, pertaining to agriculture, community development, health and nutrition, horticulture, personal and family development, and natural resources in the State of Nevada.
2. All Cooperative Extension’s programs are based on careful assessments of local and statewide needs. Extension uses a variety of methods to assess and document needs, establish priorities, and to design, deliver and evaluate educational programs to meet said needs.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page\\_files/27/LincyInstitute-ComparingTheAdministrationofUniversityCooperativeExtensions.pdf](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/LincyInstitute-ComparingTheAdministrationofUniversityCooperativeExtensions.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/nrs-549.html>

3. The University of Nevada, Reno has a long history of Cooperative Extension program delivery to address critical issues facing the citizens of the State. The administrative mechanisms and county, state, and federal partnership relations are well established and long standing. The legacy of the University of Nevada, Reno is inseparable from the intent of the Land Grant University mission of teaching, research, and outreach education.
4. Cooperative Extension depends upon the talents and dedication of specialists (who work throughout the state), educators (who are based in individual counties) and staff members to deliver educational programs.
5. Specialists rely on resources from throughout the Nevada System of Higher Education, the Land Grant University system in the United States and, in fact, the global knowledge base that is accessible through their affiliation with University of Nevada (Reno and Las Vegas). This includes faculty from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and stakeholders and community groups with whom Cooperative Extension faculty and staff regularly collaborate.
6. Several notable and award-winning programs managed by Cooperative Extension reach all of Nevada, including Clark County. These include 4-H, the Radon Program, Living with Fire and Master Gardeners. It is unclear how these would be managed with the proposed administrative structure. The inefficiencies in developing and delivering statewide programs under the proposed structure are glaring.
7. The 4-H program, which is Cooperative Extension's widely applauded youth development program, included 53,000 participants in Nevada in 2015-2016, with almost 2000 volunteers across the state working with youth. Of these, 22,300 youth were from Clark County. This program requires linkage with national initiatives to provide Nevada's youth with the best possible opportunities for club and activity-based education. **No** state Cooperative Extension systems have 4-H programs managed by more than one institution.
8. Some 4-H programs (such as *Military Kids* (which extends 4-H programs to Nevada's military families) and the National 4-H mentoring grant) are funded by federal grants, which support only one effort per state. AB 407 would force a choice between Extension programs, which would direct support to either northern or southern 4-H programs, rather than sites throughout the state, as is done under the current administrative arrangement.
9. The Clark County Commissioners annually review and approve Clark County Cooperative Extension's plan of work and budget.
10. Cooperative Extension's activities in Clark County reached over 34,000 people<sup>3</sup> in 2016, through more than 36 programs working with over 80 partners. In fact half (82) of all Extension faculty and staff in the state (165) live and work in Clark County.
11. In Clark County, faculty and staff use funding provided by Clark County, the State of Nevada, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and independently obtained grants and contracts to meet the needs of Clark County residents. These efforts often involve faculty members from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and many other organizations and entities with whom

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unce.unr.edu/areas/southern/files/pdf/SouthernProgramGuide.pdf>

Cooperative Extension shares resources to develop, design, deliver and evaluate relevant local programs that meet carefully identified needs.

12. As examples, in 2016 Cooperative Extension delivered nutrition and nutrition education programs in Clark County. These included but are not limited to: three *All 4 Kids* programs (which reached 771 pre-school children, 575 school-aged children, and 895 adults in 9 child care centers, 3 community centers and Clark County School District schools and one public event), which involved 114 volunteers and 187 agency partners; the *Calcium, It's Not Just Milk* program, which reached 2200 students in 9 middle schools; *The Expanded Food and Nutrition Program for Adults*, which reached 720 participants at 2 community locations, 1 health center and 30 schools; *The Healthy Eating on a Budget* program, which reached 393 participants, affecting 1572 family members; *The Healthy Steps to Freedom* program, which reached 450 adults and the *Your Best You* program, which included 4356 participants.
13. The current administrative costs of Cooperative Extension are minimal as a result of a several years of concerted effort to devote funds to programs for Nevada's citizens. Establishing a separate Cooperative Extension system at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas would require **at a minimum** an estimated \$941,000 per year, doubling the amount currently used to manage statewide Cooperative Extension.
14. It is unclear how these additional costs would be met, though the proposal has the clear expectation that state and federal funds would be allocated to UNLV for this purpose.
15. This would diminish the resources needed to meet statewide needs, especially in rural counties not included in the proposed new southern area. Most of Nevada's smaller counties would suffer loss of services as a result of this bill. In some instances, the county Cooperative Extension office is the last remaining public service facility available to the residents of these financially strapped locations.
16. Cooperative Extension programs in the proposed three counties (Clark, Nye, Lincoln) that would be managed by UNLV are very effectively managed by the existing Cooperative Extension southern area, which also includes Eureka, White Pine and Esmeralda counties. Cooperative Extension's geographic organization allows area directors to keep in close contact with stakeholders, especially members of county government. This bill would impair Extension's ability to maintain contact in the new northern area or would require additional expense to administer the new significantly expanded area.

**Summary:** UNR recognizes that there are issues to be addressed and room for dialogue regarding Cooperative Extension services in southern Nevada. The insular outcome inherent in this bill does nothing to address the issues giving rise to its introduction and in fact, substantially erodes the long-standing county-state-federal partnership that continues to be the strength and foundation for Extension's success. As a consequence, this bill would create regional disparities, administrative inefficiencies and complexities, and in the end weaken services not only in three southern counties, but in the rest of the state as well.