

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-second Session
March 20, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Roberta Lange at 1:04 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair
Senator Edgar Flores, Vice Chair
Senator Dina Neal
Senator Fabian Doñate
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Carrie A. Buck
Senator Robin L. Titus

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Pat Spearman, Senatorial District No. 1

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Counsel
Kirsten Oleson, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dave Brancamp, Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support, Nevada
Department of Education
DeRionne Pollard, President, Nevada State College
Dale Erquiaga, Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education
Kanani Espinoza, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Kandice Townsend, City of North Las Vegas

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Paul Moradkhan, Vegas Chamber
Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson
Devlin Daneshforouz
Omar Saucedo
Amber Stidham, Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance
Glenn Christenson
Kevin Osorio Hernandez
Don Suguitan
Tess Espinoza
Eddy Avalos
Jesse Cruz
Hiue Le
Karin Hilgersom, President, Truckee Meadows Community College
Kent Ervin, Nevada Faculty Alliance

CHAIR LANGE:

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 214.

SENATE BILL 214: Revises provisions relating to governmental administration.
(BDR 18-898)

SENATOR PAT SPEARMAN (Senatorial District No. 1):

I am here as the Vice Chair of the Sunset Subcommittee of the Legislative Commission for the 2021-2022 Interim. Senate Bill 214 terminates various boards and commissions as approved by the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee is charged with conducting a review of all boards, commissions and similar entities in Nevada that are created by statute. There are roughly 231 entities. The Subcommittee is responsible for determining whether each entity should be continued, modified, consolidated with another entity or terminated. Improvements will be recommended to the entities that are to be continued, modified or consolidated. It will be determined whether any tax exemptions, abatements or money set aside for an entity should be continued, modified or terminated.

During the 2021-2022 Interim, the Subcommittee held six meetings. We reviewed 18 entities and received reports from several entities that were previously reviewed in past interims. The recommendations included in S.B. 214 concern six of these entities. Most, if not all, of these recommendations were requested by the respective boards, committees and commissions.

Representatives from these entities are available for any detailed questions along with the Subcommittee's policy analyst.

Sections 1, 9, 15 and 17 terminate the Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and eliminate references to the Council in various statutes. The Subcommittee voted to terminate the Council after representatives of the Office of Science, Innovation and Technology within the Office of the Governor reported several challenges experienced over the years. Some of the challenges include obtaining the necessary number of appointments; meeting a quorum; scheduling council meetings with busy Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers who, without funding allocated to provide substitutes, have difficulty meeting the statutory requirement to meet twice a year; lacking a clear mission and regulatory authority for the Council; and following rigid statutory duties of the Council, such as holding region-wide recognition events for students in northern and southern Nevada.

Sections 2 through 8 and section 17 terminate the Commission on Educational Technology that exists through the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and makes changes to transfer the duties of the Commission to NDE. During the Subcommittee's review of the Commission, representatives of the Commission recommended repealing the Commission in favor of the State Board of Education's recent work with NDE Digital Learning Collaborative. According to representatives from NDE, the Commission has not met since 2018 due to several member vacancies.

Sections 10 and 17 terminate the competency-based education network within NDE. The NDE recommended terminating the network since the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Blue Ribbon Commission for a Globally Prepared Nevada and relevant NDE programs are currently carrying out the charge of the network. In addition, representatives noted that the network has accomplished its duties pursuant to A.B. No. 110 of the 79th Session and submitted its final report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The network's final report was submitted to the Governor and Legislature on August 23, 2022.

Section 11 amends *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 439.518 to remove the specific authority for the Advisory Council on the State Program for Wellness and the Prevention of Chronic Disease to appoint a subcommittee to study patient-centered medical homes. Staff of the Division of Public and Behavioral

Health under the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services confirmed that the subcommittee was formally dissolved. Staff further reported that the subcommittee was ineffective in conducting studies of health care delivery through patient-centered medical homes, largely due to its inability to meet a quorum.

Sections 12 through 14 and section 17 removed the authority for the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) to establish the Committee on Anatomical Dissection. During the Subcommittee's review of the Committee on Anatomical Dissection, the Committee reported its inability to meet the duties outlined in NRS 451.360 through 451.470, primarily the duty to retain bodies. We recommend terminating or consolidating this Committee with another entity. The Subcommittee learned that the medical schools in the State operate under willed body donor programs pursuant to the U.S. Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act and NRS 451.500, and do not accept unclaimed bodies for medical, educational or research purposes.

Section 17 terminates the Advisory Committee to the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission. Representatives for the Committee reported that all six positions have remained vacant for two years, and the Committee has not held any separate meetings since its creation. Instead, previous members attended meetings of the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission.

These recommendations are the result of considerable work done by the Subcommittee during the 2021-22 Interim. One of the themes you will find throughout all these recommendations is boards and commissions that have yet to be filled and, statutorily, unless there is a quorum, there cannot be a meeting. In some cases, these commissions were dissolved because they did not have the required number of people. When talking about the Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, we are asking STEM teachers who are overworked and underpaid to take time away from their duties. Many of those teachers are also working at night. Some of the expectations, although laudable, are slightly extreme and could not be met.

CHAIR LANGE:

We have representatives from the various boards and commissions in Las Vegas, online and in person.

SENATOR TITUS:

I have stated many times my frustration with the number of commissions that we appoint. There is a limited capacity of our professionals to fill boards. We need to be mindful of that when we are starting these commissions. I appreciate that we are doing audits to make sure the commissions we have created are functioning in their capacity.

To address the removal of the Commission on Educational Technology, instead of giving duties to the superintendent of the schools, I am wondering about the capacity of the school superintendent and NDE to receive that charge. Is there somebody from that Department that could address that issue?

DAVE BRANCAMP (Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support, Nevada Department of Education):

I am part of the staff on the Commission on Educational Technology. During the coronavirus pandemic, we used 1:1 devices. The Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative picked that up from NDE Superintendent Jhone Ebert. The Commission would be responsible for the devices instead of the school districts. The Commission would help oversee how the material would go out to the schools.

SENATOR TITUS:

Would the accountability piece or the reporting requirements be the same?

MR. BRANCAMP:

Yes, the Commission would still maintain the same accountability. For the last four or five years, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) has done outside evaluations of our State's technology needs. If funding continues, the Commission would continue to use UNR's evaluation. It is important to get an outside perspective, so we know what is needed and where the resources need to be given.

SENATOR NEAL:

I have a question about section 4, subsection 4, paragraph (b). There is a lot in section 4, but this relates to the education technology. In those lines, there was an allocation of money from the Trust Fund for Educational Technology. I have heard about the Digital Learning Collaborative, but where is the money going now?

MR. BRANCAMP:

The outside evaluation costs \$20,000. It evaluates the technological needs and resources around the State. We used the money from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund to create the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative to build extra resources. The money that was originally designated for our 1:1 program for our middle schools is no longer available.

SENATOR NEAL:

Were there prior evaluations that were paid for?

MR. BRANCAMP:

As part of the original bill, there was an outside evaluation that was done through UNR every even-numbered year. The additional funds were set aside to develop the Nevada Ready 21 program, which is the 1:1 program for our middle schools. Those were originally in the bill, but are no longer in place.

SENATOR NEAL:

With the evaluation that is currently in place, how has the Digital Learning Collaborative used that information to move the needle forward in the conversation about the digital divide?

MR. BRANCAMP:

The evaluation looks at the need for equipment. Usually, Director Brian Mitchell with the STEM Advisory Council looks into that. He often finds the funding to help with equipment. The evaluation also looks at classroom needs, such as resources material that might be helpful in a digital format. In the past, we used the emergency funds from the federal government to help build material for the digital divide. Teachers and some of my staff helped develop that material.

SENATOR NEAL:

I am curious about the resources that are used in the classrooms and what has been found or indicated post-coronavirus? I know that the digital and hybrid learning environment does not suit all modalities of children. What is the Digital Learning Collaborative doing for different types of learners?

MR. BRANCAMP:

When the coronavirus first started, we were scrambling to figure out what we needed to do. As time has passed, we have adjusted. For example, we have figured out how to make a worksheet more interactive. Our teams, including

some of the best teachers in our State, have figured out ways to engage our students. Another example, social studies teachers used discovery education to plan a virtual field trip. We emphasize that teachers should not be burdened with costs and parents should not feel obligated to pay for the resource.

CHAIR LANGE:

Is there anyone wishing to speak for, against or in neutral on S.B. 214? Seeing no one, Senator Spearman will continue with closing remarks.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

Thank you for hearing this bill. I brought it forward on behalf of the Sunset Subcommittee of the Legislative Commission.

CHAIR LANGE:

I will now close the hearing on S.B. 214.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I will now open the hearing on S.B. 273.

SENATE BILL 273: Changes the name of the Nevada State College to the Nevada State University. (BDR 34-968)

SENATOR ROBERTA LANGE (Senatorial District No. 7):

I am here with President DeRionne Pollard and Interim Chancellor Dale Erquiaga to present S.B. 273. This bill seeks to change the name of Nevada State College (NSC) to Nevada State University.

Although Nevada State College is referred to as a college, it operates as a university. Despite an increased focus on expanding programs, including graduate-level programs at NSC, prospective students, employers and others in the community tend to think of a college as offering undergraduate courses. Many do not realize NSC has two approved graduate degree programs and an additional program on track for approval later this year. The perceived difference by the community and the actual mission of NSC ultimately hurts students and could even lead to the devaluation of degrees earned at the institution.

The second reason for the name change is to increase student enrollment. Research shows colleges that change their name to university experience a 5 percent increase in first-time students within five years and a 7 percent

increase for six years or more. Additionally, the total number of undergraduate full-time equivalent students also increases by 3 percent within five years and over 5 percent after six or more years. This change in enrollment ultimately adds to the availability of an educated workforce and, thus, further strengthens Nevada's economic competitiveness.

We have submitted a conceptual amendment ([Exhibit C](#)) but, after speaking with legal counsel, found it to be unnecessary. I would respectfully ask you to allow legal to respond.

ASHER KILLIAN (Counsel):

There are a couple of points from the proposed conceptual amendment, [Exhibit C](#), that I have been asked to address in the context of the bill itself. [Senate Bill 273](#) provides for the name change of “Nevada State College” to “Nevada State University.” As drafted, it explicitly retains the legal status of a Nevada state college—despite the name change from “College” to “University”—for the purposes of state law.

Section 5 of [S.B. 273](#) makes it clear that this bill is accomplishing only a name change and is not making any change whatsoever to the functions, rights, powers, obligations, liabilities or classification of the institution currently known as the Nevada State College. The reason for this distinction is the term state university has a particular constitutional meaning under Article 11, section 4 and section 8 of the Nevada Constitution. The State University is the land grant institution for the State of Nevada. My understanding of the intent of this bill is not to make Nevada State College a land grant institution. Instead, the intent is to retain its current status of not being a land grant institution. For that reason, we had to be careful in drafting this bill so that it is clear that while the name of the institution will be Nevada State University, it does not change its status as a state college under State law and the Nevada Constitution. It will not become a land grant institution. Significant portions of the proposed conceptual amendment were addressing that issue. The bill was drafted to take that into account.

Part of the proposed conceptual amendment was to ensure that conforming changes are made throughout NRS to change the name of Nevada State College wherever it occurred in the law, which is found in sections 2 and 3 of the bill. Another portion of the proposed conceptual amendment is the land grant status of the university, in particular, the section and chapter of NRS 549 that defines

the components of a land grant institution in the State, namely UNR, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and the Desert Research Institute (DRI). The proposed conceptual amendment asked to add in that Nevada State College, now University, would not be a land grant institution. We recommend against making this change because this section currently states all the components of a land grant institution and says what NSHE institutes are land grant institutions. Naming one institution that is not a land grant would leave the remaining institutions unclear. There would be ambiguity about whether any other community colleges would be land grant institutions.

There is a component of the proposed conceptual amendment that deals with monetary concerns, specifically the funding formula for NSHE. That component does not exist in NRS; it exists as a matter of budget policy, and it is decided upon by the money committees each session. That component would be more appropriately addressed in the budget closing process in the money committees.

The remaining component of the proposed conceptual amendment defined both the names and statuses of various institutions that currently exist within NSHE as well as defined their duties and general degree-granting powers. We do not believe this amendment is necessary under existing law. The Legislature has delegated the power to the Board of Regents to classify its various institutions within the three statutorily-defined classifications of university, state college and community college. It determines the powers and duties of each of those classifications. While we could add that amendment to this bill and make those categorizations statutorily, it is not necessary to do so as the Regents can make any necessary changes to those sections. In general, this addresses the concerns raised by the proposed conceptual amendment.

SENATOR LANGE:

With that information in mind, we believe it is unnecessary to have the conceptual amendment. Therefore, we are going to withdraw the conceptual amendment and deal with the bill, as written.

DERIONNE POLLARD (President, Nevada State College):

Southern Nevada has one of the lowest educational rates of all adults in this Country, particularly as it relates to completing their bachelor's degree. Overall, Nevada ranks 46 in the Nation in the rates of students going to college. Less than 25 percent of the population has a master's degree. As southern Nevada's

population grows to 2.3 million residents, it is more urgent than ever to have clear educational choices and pathways that expand access to higher education.

Higher education is necessary for economic mobility in the State. I am sitting here as living testimony to that. Persistent inequities from race and income leave some students, especially black, latino and adults from low-income backgrounds, without equal access to higher education. Students from all backgrounds deserve access to the same educational programs as well as university designation to reflect the full value of their work.

A new university will facilitate economic growth and diversification in Nevada. Among its western competitors for business investment—including Utah, Arizona and Colorado—Nevada ranks last in economic diversification according to the Hachman Index. The increase in enrollment resulting from the name change will strengthen Nevada's economic competitiveness and help overcome the State's top challenge of recruiting new companies with the availability of an educated workforce.

In every sense, except the name, NSC has operated as a university for years. Nevada State College is the only primarily four-year institution in Nevada that still uses "college" in its title to represent its mission. A name change to "university" during its twentieth anniversary is the best way to demonstrate NSC's growth and bright future. Changing the institutions name from "college" to "university" is part of the natural progression to better reflect NSC's youngest, most diverse and fastest growing institution in the State. Over the last 20 years, NSC has grown to 7,200 students and now offers a master's degree. This past year, NSC graduated its largest class ever, nearly 1,000 students.

This proposal already has strong community support. In October 2020, NSC contracted with a third-party firm to gauge support for the proposed name change. Overall, 82 percent of students, faculty and alumni were supportive or very supportive of the name change. Over 900 individuals were surveyed, 400 of whom were students. Among NSC's national peers, only one other school similar to NSC in the western United States still uses college in its title. Ninety-five percent of similar western region schools use university. Nationally, 317 out of 334 of our peers use university, only 16 state colleges use the term college.

Interestingly, between 2001 and 2016, 122 4-year colleges in America changed their name from college to university. According to the research you heard from Senator Lange, this has significant potential for impacting enrollment, which is the goal, along with increasing pathways to higher education. The College of Southern Nevada and Western Nevada College changed their names in 2007, removing community and taking on the college designation.

The name change has created some confusion about mission and degree offerings in the higher education space, specifically between the College of Southern Nevada and NSC. Nevada State College has a significant transfer population and, for some of our students, they find it perplexing to begin their studies at a college and then transfer to another college.

There is minimal cost with this name change. In fact, we currently brand logos and other apparel with Nevada State. Costs and challenges with transitioning to a new name will grow if we continue to grow as an institution. Nevada State College commits to implementing the name change in the most cost-effective manner and securing private funds to ameliorate any cost to the State.

This is not a change in our mission. Nevada State College is unapologetically proud of our mission to serve as a college in Nevada. This is not a change in our funding formula; we believe in good stewardship and we understand that this formula has been designed with that purpose in mind. This is not a change in our admissions requirements; access to higher education continues to be our primary driver. This is not an intent to grab land grant status. I watched the land grant fight from afar, and I do not want to be a part of that. I am hopeful that this Committee will support this legislation.

DALE ERQUIAGA (Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education):

The Board of Regents voted to approve this name change. The Board has authority to name its institutions. The Board took that action on March 10, 2023. This bill aligns with action the Board took and makes the necessary statutory changes. I appreciate legal counsel's clear statement about the contents of the conceptual amendment. Your counsel knows that my counsel and the Legislative Counsel Bureau do not always agree. It was important for us that our beliefs about this bill be stated; your counsel has done a wonderful job.

I would like to underscore a few things. We have been through a very lengthy discussion concerning the implication of a State University as a constitutional

term and land grant institution. As your counsel has declared, this bill does not do that. We have also been concerned about the rights and responsibilities that pertain to a name. As President Pollard and your counsel have both said, this will not change student fees or admission requirements and will not set or change salary schedules; that is all handled by the Board of Regents through the handbook. The Board will not change those things for NSC. We will use the State college schedules in each of those instances to keep that mid-tier status. We have a three-tiered system. We very much agree with President Pollard, this change is necessary for many reasons and the tiers are necessary. I appreciate the agreement on that subject.

Because the transitory language exists in the Statutes of Nevada and not in NRS, we ask that you make it clear the weighted-student credits are differently allocated for R1 universities versus different kinds of disciplines or courses. We want to be sure none of those things are implicated in this change.

SENATOR NEAL:

When the Board of Regents voted, it was not unanimous. What were some of the concerns? I think it is interesting how many hoops you are having to jump through to change the name. I am concerned because there has been lots of repetition, clarification on the record and, at one point, an amendment. Why the anxiety?

MR. ERQUIAGA:

The vote was not unanimous and the Board expressed a couple of concerns including whether NSC's interests would change in the future. Dr. Pollard has presented what she wants, but the Board is concerned about a "slippery slope." Most of those concerns were addressed.

As for the anxiety, a lot of that anxiety is mine. I have been in this building a long time and just because the Constitution says the sky is blue, some lawyer comes along and says it is actually azure; then I am in court. I do not mean to be flippant, but this is a constitutional question. We had many conversations with your counsel and with the NSC President to be sure we did not get it wrong. You were there for the conversation about land grant status. I do not want that conversation to have to take place over NSC—which is serving the exact niche it needs to serve in Nevada—because somebody lawyered up. It is my job and the Board's job to be sure that those future conversations stay focused on students, not somebody's interpretation of the law.

SENATOR DOÑATE:

I want to give Dr. Pollard a shout-out. I think many of us in this community have seen your work on this project for a very long time and to have it in front of us shows how impactful your leadership has been. This bill is a testament to the work that you and your staff have done.

The amendment has two instances of changing the Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship Program and the Silver State Opportunity Grant. Are those the only two scholarships that might be affected by NSC's name change?

MS. POLLARD:

I will defer to counsel on this question. My understanding is these are the only two spots in NRS where Nevada State is specifically referred to as it relates to financial aid. I believe counsel will say it has been covered in the existing bill.

MR. KILLIAN:

Yes, the Millennium Scholarship and the Silver State Opportunity Grant are the two statutorily created scholarships that students at NSC qualify for. The way this bill was drafted is, while the name of the institution is changing, its legal status as a state college is not. All the students at the institution would still be at a state college, so they would qualify for the Millennium Scholarship and the Silver State Opportunity Grant.

SENATOR BUCK:

Mr. Erquiaga, you have addressed faculty pay. If I were a UNR faculty member, I would want higher pay than if I worked at Nevada State College.

MR. ERQUIAGA:

That has been our concern. Salary schedules are set in the handbook. The salaries differ by institutions. The Board's intent is that it does not change. There are different types of work at a research university and at a teaching university; therefore, the schedule is different.

MS. POLLARD:

Currently, the funding formula has different tiers. There are tiers for admissions, fees, faculty hiring, and presidential salaries; they are different based on the mission of the institution. The intent of this particular piece of legislation is not a change in our mission. For the record, faculty need better compensation across the board. I have been very clear about that, but I also think we have to

decouple the issues. The issue of enhancing faculty salaries is an important one, which I understand the money committees and others will take up. The other issue, as it relates to statutorily-reflecting what we do at Nevada State College, is maintaining that NSC is a university by name only. We are not trying to change any of those other factors—including the salary schedule—is the point of this bill.

MR. ERQUIAGA:

The reason the Millennium Scholarship is specifically mentioned is because there is a different dollar value for a university, state college or community college. We have been concerned that a student might say “I am at a university; I want a higher value scholarship.” However, the student fees and faculty pay are not higher. We have worked with your counsel and President Pollard to preserve the tiers to avoid public confusion or legal shenanigans down the road.

SENATOR NEAL:

Will there be some research that will probably happen within the teaching university if we are building this pipeline of teachers for the future?

MS. POLLARD:

Undoubtedly, we already have faculty who do research. That is important for our faculty, particularly in the education department and many of our other departments. They have a deep commitment to producing scholarships. One of my faculty members said, not too long ago, she does not want to be in the “publish or perish” mode. She is more interested in the teaching and transforming space. There will be faculty who engage in research because that is something they believe in. However, as faculty members, they recognize that their primary purpose is teaching.

Promotion and tenure take into account faculty dealing with students who require a higher level of engagement. At Carnegie R1 institutions, their components for promotion and tenure include research, scholarship, service and teaching. Our faculty promotion and tenure is based on teaching and service. It is very clear there is not an expectation of research, although staff may choose to engage in research.

The scholarship of pedagogy is another inherent part of the question that you posed. That is a part of what we consider as we continue to evolve as an institution. We look at how students learn—we are intensely engaged in that—

and ask ourselves how we can build other reward structures and opportunities for engagement. We look at how faculty are supported in the work they do and in the professional development we can provide them. It will evolve because teaching is the mission we serve at our institution.

SENATOR NEAL:

There has been an encroachment argument around research. If the State believes that this niche is needed, then there should be some acceptance around the growth of this niche. If you do not have research coming from professors at Nevada State College who are innovating in the teaching space or evaluating the system, then where do they go? The argument about encroachment limits the school's future and where it can go. The Board of Regents seems to be more concerned about money and positions being taken and not wanting to share resources. How does their fear affect the growth of a teaching institution that we have already decided needs to exist?

MR. ERQUIAGA:

I agree with you. We are concerned that fear would prevent growth and we would lose a three-tiered system. By calling NSC a university, we would begin to have universities that are Carnegie R1 research institutions—not the kind of research that President Pollard has discussed—and community colleges. Senator Lange has crafted a bill with your legal counsel that preserves the three tiers. The middle tier is important for all the reasons already mentioned. The Board is beginning to look at mission differentiation so that we are very clear what belongs at a community college, in the middle tier or at a Carnegie R1 university. Our universities have recently achieved the Carnegie R1 rating. During the next few Board of Regents meetings, we will have a conversation about mission. To reiterate, our fear is that we would lose the three-tier system. This bill and the Board's actions and conversations have preserved the tiers so that students are not charged more and faculty get to do the type of work they wish to do at an appropriate tier.

SENATOR NEAL:

When conversations were happening, there was fear that if President Pollard continued to push for the university name change, there would be punishment or retaliation that might befall her. That was happening during back-room conversations. Some legislators watched the Board of Regents meetings to make sure there were not any shenanigans going on. We were waiting to see if the Board was going to do right by her. That was concerning for us. We

wondered why we were put in this situation, having this conversation and needing to watch the meeting to make sure no harm came to President Pollard. It was a strange situation to be in being on-guard for a new President who is simply asking for a school name change. Many of us legislators asked why we were having this conversation and how do we engage in case the Board's votes flipped. There was a rumor that a couple of things could have occurred during that meeting. I find it unfortunate that whenever someone pursues changing the system, they are met with defensiveness about their innovation on campus and moving forward. I say this as a comment because I wanted to address this during the hearing. This event occurred and we were in a position where we felt we needed to be prepared to jump in and defend the president of the campus. We need to have a larger conversation about the system and how there is protectionism or strange behavior—I am leaning towards believing it is protectionism—that is harmful.

MR. ERQUIAGA:

Let me state, unequivocally, that I am very sorry for the rumors. I am sorry for that feeling. As the person who was on the inside with President Pollard, this was not about President Pollard; this was about us trying to do the right thing by and for a system we are charged with guiding. I am sorry that people felt differently on the outside. I am also a little offended by your statements. We are trying to do the right thing for students, faculty, staff and taxpayers. I am sorry about how people feel, but we are here to do the right thing. We have done the right thing. The vote has been taken. I am here as her supervisor, and nothing has happened to her. She asked me to be here, so we are here together. That is all.

SENATOR NEAL:

This is not a personal attack on you. This is a comment from a group of individuals who might not have addressed a statement to you, but it is not about you. I need you to be absolutely clear that I am not coming for you, that is not my issue. I am putting something on the record that happened. Your offense is equal to my offense. This is not an indication that I dislike what you have been doing or you personally. This is addressing a culture that exists at the Regent level. We did not believe that you, as her supervisor, were somehow a ringleader in the background. That was never stated or commented on. It was a general consensus that the Board was going to do something against her. I want to be absolutely clear because when someone says that he or she is offended, it spreads. I am not coming for you. This was a general statement

that was made by a group of individuals and I am stating it on the record. I do not have a problem with you and I never have.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I would like to invite forward those wishing to speak in support of S.B. 273.

KANANI ESPINOZA (University of Nevada, Las Vegas):

President Whitfield of UNLV has signed a joint letter of support ([Exhibit D](#)) for the Nevada State College name change. Along with President Whitfield, DRI and the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) also signed. University of Nevada, Las Vegas has one of the most diverse campuses in the Nation. As stated in the letter of support, renaming Nevada State College to Nevada State University will help accelerate more opportunities for their diverse student population. As a research university, we understand the growth of Nevada State College and fully support the renaming to better serve the community as a teaching university. We urge your support this bill.

KANDICE TOWNSEND (City of North Las Vegas):

I am testifying in support of S.B. 273, which changes the name of Nevada State College to Nevada State University. Studies have shown that by changing the school's name to include "university" increases enrollment for first-time students. Nevada State College serves a diverse student population; 56 percent of students identify as first-generation students. This past fall, Nevada State College served approximately 600 students and has produced 515 graduates from the City of North Las Vegas. Having higher education is vital for economic mobility and generational advancement for many in our City. It also strengthens our City's economic competitiveness by ensuring the availability of an educated workforce as North Las Vegas attracts new companies and industries to our growing City. For these reasons, North Las Vegas City Council passed Resolution No. 2705 and testified in support of the name change during the subsequent NSHE Board of Regents meeting. We appreciate Senator Lange for sponsoring this important legislation, and we are in strong support of S.B. 273.

PAUL MORADKHAN (Vegas Chamber):

The Chamber's leadership and Government Affairs Committee is in support of the name change. We believe Nevada State College has been true to its mission since its founding in 2001. Their leadership is engaged, their faculty is dedicated and their students inspire our entire community. We believe this name change does not change its mission—it will remain focused on teaching. We

believe Nevada State College is an integral point of entry for our students in Nevada. This bill will elevate the value of the degree held by thousands of alumni and their students who are currently enrolled. Thank you for your support of this bill.

NICOLE ROURKE (City of Henderson):

You have two resolutions ([Exhibit E](#) and [Exhibit F](#)) passed by our Mayor and City Council in August 2022 and a letter from Mayor Michelle Romero very specifically supporting [S.B. 273](#) ([Exhibit G](#)). As Nevada State College, soon to be a University, is in the city of Henderson, we are very supportive. We appreciate the relationship and the partnership that we have with the school. This bill is creating and adding to our workforce and all of the various programs that we work with Dr. Pollard and her staff on. We are here in strong support of [S.B. 273](#).

DEVLIN DANESHFOROUZ:

I am here as a member of the Nevada State College Foundation Board to proudly support [S.B. 273](#), which changes the name of Nevada State College to Nevada State University, to better reflect its mission. Nevada State College is a comprehensive, four-year public college with a graduate program that serves Nevada's new majority—proudly defined as first-generation students, students of color, dreamers, immigrants and anyone looking for the opportunity to improve their economic mobility. Students work hard to complete their four-year degree or two-year master's degree. They are often working full-time jobs and juggling other family or personal commitments. It is unfortunate when I hear students and graduates, who have sacrificed for four years, recount stories of being denied by potential employers and have to explain they did go to a four-year institution. [Senate Bill 273](#) will help fix the confusion and better reflect the student's accomplishments.

OMAR SAUCEDO:

I am also a member of the Nevada State College Foundation Board and I am here to fully support this bill before you today. For the purposes of brevity, I am going to echo the comments that my fellow Board member made. I want to point out that Nevada State College serves a large Hispanic population. It was one of the first Hispanic-serving institutions in the State. I admire the work they do. I admire the students and the faculty for how they are willing to help their students succeed and position them for greater success, post-graduation.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

I represent Senatorial District No. 1, which is located entirely in the city of North Las Vegas. I echo the support for Nevada State College's name change. A little more than 25 percent of the students in Nevada State College are residents of North Las Vegas. I see this as an equity issue because students will work hard, fight hard and go into debt to accumulate the degree only to go out into the work world where people think they went to a two-year community college. I applaud the work Dr. Pollard has done. It is innovative and about time we have equity—with respect to the Black, Indigenous and People of Color community—here in the State. I strongly support this bill.

AMBER STIDHAM (Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance):

We are also in support of this bill. We believe that renaming Nevada State College to University more accurately reflects the four-year education provided by the institution—including graduate degree programs. As the economic development authority for the greater Las Vegas region, we spend a considerable amount of time answering the talent-pipeline question with business and industry prospects that are coming to our region to help diversify our economy.

We also look at pathways where Nevadans can put their education to use for the betterment of the community and, more importantly, how they can apply their education to enrich their own lives. That is a chief goal for economic development. We know that higher education, including universities, plays an important role in attracting business and industry to our area.

Overall, higher education appeals to industries by providing a skilled workforce, fostering research and innovation, promoting entrepreneurship, building partnerships and collaborations, increasing community productivity and promoting diversity and inclusion. When we support opportunities for valued learning, more variety in the type of education that Nevadans can receive and support and grow cultural presence and prestige, it lends itself to the State's economic competitiveness. For those reasons, we strongly support this bill.

GLENN CHRISTENSON:

I am here to register my strong support for renaming Nevada State College to its more appropriate designation as Nevada State University. The name change is appropriate because it better reflects Nevada State College's progression and perceived status in the system of higher education in our State. Nevada State is

playing a key role in providing quality higher education at a reasonable value. It is preparing students in our State for the evermore diverse and expanding workforce that the community needs for economic development.

I am pleased that the mission of the institution will not change with the name change. Nevada State College will continue to function in its current role as part of a three-pronged approach to higher education. Because of this strategy, students have the option to attend a two-year community college, a tier-one research institution or a four-year university focused on bachelor's degrees. Nevada State College has been highly successful at attracting underserved, first-generation and economically disadvantaged students because of its mission. That is why my wife Andy and I have been strong supporters of the institution for over 20 years. Renaming Nevada State College removes any confusion about the mission of the school, better reflects the success of the institution and reflects the desires of the students, faculty, foundation, donors as well as the community. Due to the perceived higher status of a university, Andy and I also believe the name change will make it easier to attract and graduate education majors—a critical need for our State. Finally, the stars aligned to make this decision. This is the right time, under the right leadership and with the right faculty administration to make the change. We encourage you to approve this bill.

KEVIN OSORIO HERNANDEZ:

I am a first-generation student majoring in history pre-law and minoring in communications at Nevada State College. I plan to go to graduate school to study public policy so, one day, I can be a policymaker and sit in your seat.

I come before you to express my wholehearted support for S.B. 273 and many students across Nevada are also in support. During the last Board of Regents meeting, we had a long line of students who testified in support from Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC), CSN and UNLV.

I would like to read a poem that I wrote as I was anticipating the approval from the Board of Regents:

In the heart of the desert a college did stand,
with students who sought knowledge
and a future so grand.

Nevada State College is a name well-known,
a place where minds flourished,
where dreams were grown.

But change was afoot,
a transformation in sight,
towards a brighter light.

For the college had grown
and had expanded its reach
and to reflect this growth,
a new name, it would teach.

Nevada State University, the new moniker declared
a name that spoke volumes
a name that showed that they cared
for their students, their faculty, their community too
a name that stood for excellence,
for innovation anew.

A university for all,
where knowledge and wisdom reign,
where ideas flourish and minds are not in vain.

Where students from all walks of life come to learn
and the new majorities, voices heard
with great concern.

So here's to Nevada State
soon to be a university grand
a place of higher learning where knowledge will expand.

May this new name be a beacon
and a symbol of success.
We guarantee a university for all, for you and me.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:
Thank you for sharing that with us.

DON SUGUITAN:

I am a student at Nevada State College majoring in communications with a concentration in public relations. I also plan to attend graduate school in public policy. I am providing my support for S.B. 273, which would codify the name change of Nevada State College to Nevada State University.

According to <worldpopulationreview.com>, Nevada is the fifth fastest growing state in the western region; however, we do not have a State university like many of our neighboring states.

The word “college” has changed over the years to be associated with two-year institutions and the word “university” with four-year institutions. Although some may say they are indistinguishable, that is not the case. The name change to university will diminish the confusion around Nevada State College—whether it is a two-year or four-year institution.

This is important because, like myself and many other students that have applied or transferred to a four year, we use the word “university” in our search for postsecondary education. Our State has two amazing research-focused universities, but, when searched, results lack information about teaching-focused universities.

According to the website Academic Influence, research universities put greater effort into producing more knowledge. While teaching universities also do research, those efforts emphasize student instruction, support and success—that is what Nevada State College is already doing.

As the fifth fastest growing State in our Country, it is time for our State to provide the option of a teaching-focused university for aspiring students. With this Legislative Body’s approval of S.B. 273, Nevada State University will become that option.

TESS ESPINOZA:

I am a student at Nevada State College, double-majoring in communication and history. I have many minors, one of which is business. I am also the Student Body President at our institution. I am in support of S.B. 273. On March 10, 2023, at the Board of Regents meeting, Nevada State College along with other student government presidents from CSN, Yvette Machado, and TMCC were also in support of the name change. All these students advocated and

understood that this would have an impact on the education and history of Nevada.

EDDY AVALOS:

I am calling on behalf of a historically black college and university. Pastor Kelcey West and his students would like to wholeheartedly lend their support. Students of Nevada State College deserve the same recognition as many of their peers across the Country who are attending similar institutions receive. We thank the Committee for entertaining this discussion and ask for your support of this bill.

JESSE CRUZ:

I am a current sophomore at the College of Southern Nevada and reside in Senatorial District No. 4. I am calling in support of S.B. 273. As a current student in NSHE wishing to transfer from my community college to an affordable university within Nevada, I wish the name would change. This would reflect the institution I wish to be a part of and add to the culture of the campus.

There is a hesitancy among current high school students when choosing an in-state institution to attend. Having the school titled as a college can create confusion among students and parents, especially for first-generation students navigating those spaces for the first time. I hope you will support this bill.

HIUE LE:

I am from Senatorial District No. 6 and Assembly District No. 34. I am testifying in support of this bill.

KARIN HILGERSOM (President, Truckee Meadows Community College):

I am the President of TMCC. This is such a wonderful change for the system of higher education, particularly as it relates to TMCC students. We have some excellent partnerships with Nevada State College including a 3+1 program, where the first three years of our graphic design and multimedia program are taught by TMCC faculty and the last year is taught by an NSC faculty member who is paid to work in Reno. Through this program, students are able to get a bachelor's degree at one college location. It is a marvelous program. The name change would make the transcripts clearer to reflect TMCC and Nevada State University. I strongly support this bill and hope it passes quickly.

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VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I have also received other letters of support ([Exhibit H](#)). Is there anyone wishing to speak in neutral?

KENT ERVIN (Nevada Faculty Alliance):

We work to empower our members to be fully engaged. Nevada Faculty Alliance has remained neutral on the name change to Nevada State University throughout the consideration process. We are neutral and it is not because there is opposition among our members. We believe it is important to clarify the name change, and it does not indicate a change in mission or legal status.

Faculty members believe that expectations for performance evaluation and standards for promotion should not change because of this name change. Faculty members who accepted a position with a primary focus on teaching, because that is their passion, should not at some later point in their career be expected to publish research or do other scholarly activity. That is especially true without a negotiated change in their job description and teaching workload. Changing professional expectations as an academic institution grows is a general personnel management issue that happens in academia regardless of a name change.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I will close the hearing on S.B. 273.

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CHAIR LANGE:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in public comment? Seeing none, the meeting is adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Kirsten Oleson,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Roberta Lange, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 273	C	8	Senator Roberta Lange	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 273	D	17	Kanani Espinoza	Letter of Support
S.B. 273	E	18	Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson	Resolution 2705
S.B. 273	F	18	Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson	Resolution 4489
S.B. 273	G	18	Nicole Rourke, City of Henderson	Letter of Support, Mayor, City of Henderson
S.B. 273	H	23	Senator Edgar Flores	Letters of Support