

# University and Community College System of Nevada

## MASTER PLAN



February 2005  
(revised)

# Executive Summary

The University and Community College System of Nevada has created the following seven interrelated goals that establish a roadmap for the growth of higher education in Nevada:

- **Student-Focused System** – The higher education system in Nevada will create a welcoming, respectful, and friendly environment where all students have the opportunity to participate and succeed at every level of higher education.
- **Reputation for Excellence** – Nevada’s institutions of higher education will increase their national, regional, and statewide reputation based on targeted, outstanding, innovative programs and other accomplishments.
- **Quality Education** – Nevada’s system of higher education will provide consistently excellent learning experiences for its students through instruction, research, and service.
- **A Prosperous Economy** – Through instruction, research, and service, higher education in Nevada will be an essential element in developing and sustaining a strong, dynamic, knowledge-based economy for Nevada.
- **P-16 Education** – Higher education will increase partnerships with the K-12 system to ensure the cooperative delivery of education from pre-kindergarten through college degrees.
- **Building Quality of Life** – Higher education in Nevada will be instrumental in advancing society’s objectives and enriching the lives of Nevada’s citizens.
- **Opportunity and Accessible Education for All** – Nevada’s system of higher education will increase the overall participation and success of Nevadans enrolling at all levels of higher education and in all ethnic groups, and will address the unique educational needs of a highly diverse and non-traditional population.

Continuous progress toward these goals will be expected, measured, and demonstrated. The goals are not stated in priority order and no single goal stands alone. Each is inextricably linked with the others in a variety of ways, as seen through the targets and strategies developed for each goal. Clearly defined benchmarks will be established to measure progress toward each goal. Once benchmarks are established, they will be monitored regularly to make sure there is consistent improvement and steady advancement, both systemwide and by each institution.

The strategies are based on actions the System can take internally and with its partners to improve not only higher education but also P-16 education statewide. This plan incorporates key findings and recommendations from a study conducted by the RAND Corporation in 2001 as well as a report by the Battelle Memorial Institute issued in 2000. In addition, the original goals established in 2002 have been reviewed and discussed by both the Board of Regents and the UCCSN institutions. Based on this feedback, the Board approved modifications to the Master Plan goals in 2004.

Implementation of the plan will rely on the efficient use of existing structures and institutions. The UCCSN is committed to reexamining all operations so that the most effective and efficient use is made of every available human, financial, and physical resource. Nevertheless, over the next decade Nevada’s economy will require thousands more graduates of the universities, state colleges, and community colleges every year.

The current capacity and funding of the University and Community College System of Nevada is incapable of meeting the increased needs for college-educated workers in the long term. Without reform, the state will become even more dependent on individuals trained outside the state. All youth and adults in Nevada should have the opportunity to gain the postsecondary education they need for a bright economic future. A vibrant state economy in the future will also depend on improving the research capacity of the state’s universities and research institute, a

capacity that builds new enterprises and attracts high-paying jobs to the state.

Nevada has a choice to make. It can continue funding its higher education system at the present level, thus constricting access even more in the face of intense growth and widening diversity. If Nevada can only fund higher education at roughly its current level, adjusted for inflation, its statewide college-going rate would be reduced from its already low 40 percent to 25 percent. This not only would place Nevada at less than one-half the college-going rate of other western states participating in the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE), it also would place Nevada below almost all developed countries in the world. In reality, participation would likely not decline to this level, because many students would likely look to attend colleges and universities in other states, but the resulting “brain drain” would create other long-term problems for the state. Thus, attention to increasing access to match population growth must necessarily remain a strong focus of any master plan for higher education in Nevada.

Without a significant growth in resources for higher education, the gap will widen between:

- The number of college graduates needed and the number produced will increase.
- The needs of the economy and the research capacity of the universities.
- The educational opportunities and accomplishments available for poor students and their wealthier counterparts.

However, through a shared responsibility model, Nevada can supply the resources necessary to meet the varied educational needs of an expanding and changing population. This Master Plan requires Nevada to pursue a compact between the regents, its colleges and universities, the state, and its students to step forward, support higher education, and build a bright future.

## Highlights of the Plan

The Master Plan is marked by several key proposals and concepts:

- There is a strong reliance on building a more comprehensive base of effective and collaborative partnerships with K-12, business and industry, and state and federal government.
- A focus is placed on inter-institutional collaboration rather than competition, with rewards and incentives proposed in order achieve this principle.
- There is an emphasis on continuous improvement over time according to established benchmarks.
- Strategies emphasize internal efficiencies that can be made for low-cost or no-cost to the state.
- A public accountability plan for student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness will be developed.
- Students will be required to have technology-mediated instruction by the time they graduate, thus being better prepared for the world of adult learning.
- All students will have opportunities for internships, cooperative education, international education, or community service experiences in their educational program, experiences that will link them to the community to which they will contribute throughout their life.

# Building Nevada's Future

## Introduction

Historically, Nevada's government has demonstrated a strong commitment to providing support for higher education. Nevada's citizens expect a quality system of higher education that is affordable and serves all segments of society. They expect colleges and universities to play an active role in helping non-traditional and disadvantaged students to succeed. They expect higher education to equip them to compete in the changing workforce. Government and industry leaders expect universities and research institutes to be partners in pursuing research areas that will benefit the state's economic development. Nevada students expect learning experiences that are relevant and rewarding to their lives and careers. Meeting these expectations will demand a comprehensive approach – an integrated network of strategically focused, high performance campuses, each achieving excellence in its own mission under standards of continuous improvement.

## Challenges to Nevada

This Master Plan recognizes that no other state faces a greater challenge to its higher education system than Nevada. At the time the Master Plan was developed in 2002, the following information played a vital role in creating and implementing the plan itself, and it remains important today.

- Nevada is the fastest growing state in terms of percentage growth. More than 600,000 new residents are expected in the state by 2010.
- The population growth will be marked by a 40 percent increase in the Hispanic/Latino population.
- Concurrently, the White/non-Hispanic population will increase by only 15 percent.
- One-third of Nevada's population will be from underrepresented groups by 2010.
- Nevada trails most other states in the percentage of its high school graduates who enroll in higher education and continue until they successfully earn a degree.
- The educational attainment of Nevada's overall population is below national averages at the associate's and bachelor's degree levels.
- Nevada has a compelling need for basic education and workforce training for its citizens.
- Nevada has very distinct regional differences, both economically and demographically, that affect the delivery of higher education as well as the academic programs offered.
- The distribution of population in Nevada makes it simultaneously one of the most urban states in the nation and one of the most rural.
- Characteristics of the state's demographics and economy as a whole sometimes work against the perceived need for higher education.

The State of Nevada will fail if it does not respond effectively to the inescapable necessity of providing quality educational opportunities to a growing and more diverse population – now and in the future.

Using the Master Plan as a framework, the UCCSN will reexamine and improve the way it conducts higher education in Nevada. With that process underway, the System will turn to students, their families, Nevada residents, K-12 educators, and others for additional resources. Ultimately, however, assuring access to quality education in the challenging era ahead will require more than just the commitment of the UCCSN. Achieving the ambitious agenda set out in this Master Plan will require shared responsibility between all of these stakeholders.

## Mission Differentiation

As Nevada grows, so will its system of higher education. Nevada's demographic upsurge compels the UCCSN to determine the most efficient and effective way to manage growth in the best interest of students. No single institution can provide all things to all students. Some students are better served in one educational setting than another. Needless duplication and competition among a relatively small number of institutions do not make the best use of limited resources.

Without clear mission parameters, the strain of explosive growth will compel haphazard, inefficient use of finite

public and private resources. With them, reasonable criteria are possible to help the System meet the challenges of the next decade more effectively and efficiently. Consequently, these mission parameters:

- Define distinct missions for the primary components of Nevada's system of higher education.
- Envision a comprehensive role for the community colleges, including the potential for offering baccalaureate-level programs in some limited areas.
- Address a current gap in technical education.
- Call for different but complementary research missions for Nevada's three research institutions, with some common programs and emphases where advantageous and critical to the state's unique characteristics.

**Comprehensive Community Colleges** serve specific regional areas. With an open-door admissions policy, these institutions will emphasize opportunity for all Nevadans to gain access to a quality education. In fulfillment of the community college mission, these institutions offer remedial and developmental education, general education, workforce development, vocational and technical training, and associate degrees that provide seamless transfer to state colleges and universities. In some cases and under specified criteria, these institutions may offer selected niche baccalaureate degrees.

**High Tech Centers** are associated with the comprehensive community colleges and are located on high school or college campuses. These centers provide linkages with the K-12 educational system and promote economic diversity through workforce development and technology training. The centers may provide beginning-level general education courses and remedial course work to both students currently enrolled in high school and people who wish to continue their education.

**Institutes of Technology** are associated with existing institutions and may offer lower-division and upper-division course work leading to industry certifications as well as associate and baccalaureate degrees in specialized and applied career-technical fields. Through articulation agreements and transfer policies, these institutes serve as the hub for Tech Prep 2+2+2 programs.

**State Colleges** are regional institutions offering comprehensive education at the baccalaureate level in specific, regional niches with limited professional graduate degrees. Admissions policies define minimum levels of preparation that match the academic focus of the institution.

**Universities** are comprehensive research institutions offering education from the baccalaureate through the master's and doctoral levels. The universities provide selected graduate and professional programs, and doctoral programs correlate with defined research and academic strengths. The universities make significant contributions to new knowledge, economic development, and the culture of the state. Selective admission policies define specific preparation levels necessary for student success.

A **Research Institute** focuses on environmental sciences and engages in fundamental and problem-oriented research within an entrepreneurial and academic culture. The Institute fosters interdisciplinary approaches and scientific teaming, improve management of natural resources, and apply technologies to global issues while helping to meet the needs of Nevada. The Institute does not grant degrees but supports the educational programs at other UCCSN campuses by partnering in teaching and mentoring programs, student support, and internships.

These mission guidelines serve as templates to develop policies and criteria that:

- Guide new or expanded teaching and research.
- Provide educational access to Nevada citizens at various levels of instruction.
- Expand alternative delivery systems.
- Increase collaborations with the K-12 system.
- Provide efficient administrative structures.
- Allow the establishment of new institutions upon reaching established thresholds.

## **Collaborative vs. Competitive Model**

Many argue today for allowing market forces to address the future needs for higher education through competition for students, research dollars, buildings, and budgets. This method has worked in several states but generally requires a large number of statewide institutions and an overall high level of funding in order to be most effective. Due to Nevada's limited resources, its relatively small number of higher education institutions, and its unique demographic and geographic characteristics, a more collaborative model is viewed as the best response to the challenges of sustaining access and quality in the challenging years ahead.

In a collaborative model it is essential to distinguish the missions of the System's various segments so that resources are allocated and programs operated equitably, efficiently, and in a justifiable manner. Clearly defined missions provide the foundation for policies that help match educational supply to the demand for services brought on by growth. But these policies can also provide the stimulus for appropriate competition that improves individual institutions. In some cases – especially in terms of building research strengths – it will be advantageous to deliberately build strength through common programs and emphases.

## **Creation of New Institutions**

Another important component of mission differentiation is the establishment of minimum thresholds and other necessary policies that must be met prior to forming new public institutions, branch campuses, off-campus centers, or satellite centers. The emphasis always should be on providing the most efficient administrative structures for the delivery of education, locating institutions where best needed, and on cost-effectiveness to the state.

## GOALS, PRINCIPLES & TARGETS

### **GOAL: Student-Focused System**

The higher education system in Nevada will create a welcoming, respectful and friendly environment where all students have the opportunity to participate and succeed at every level of higher education.

#### **Principles**

Nevada students should see a clear path to their educational goals through the institutions of public higher education.

All students should be welcomed and individually assisted to plan their educational goals and to reach their aspirations.

It is vital that students feel a high level of satisfaction with all elements of their higher education experience.

#### **Targets**

- Increase the percentage of Nevada's general population who participate in some form of higher education, whether through coursework, workforce training, certificate programs, lifelong learning, or degree programs.
- Strive to continually increase the percentage of students that express a high level of satisfaction with teaching, advising, and overall educational experiences at UCCSN institutions.
- Work to increase the persistence rates of first-time students that return to UCCSN institutions with each advancing semester.
- Increase opportunities for students to co-enroll and transfer to institutions throughout the state of Nevada.

### **GOAL: Reputation for Excellence**

Nevada's institutions of higher education will increase their national, regional, and statewide reputation based on targeted, outstanding, innovative programs and other accomplishments.

#### **Principle**

Excellence in all we do is a guiding principle in the planning, development, and implementation of academic programs, research and scholarly activity, and contributions made to the state through public service.

#### **Targets**

- Continue to develop and maintain programs, centers, and institutes that elicit national, regional, or statewide recognition for excellence.
- Increase the number of degree and certificate programs that receive national, regional, or statewide accreditation.
- Continue to expand opportunities for UCCSN faculty to engage in innovative teaching and research.
- Contribute to Nevada's quality of life and the efficiency and productivity of the state's enterprises through public service rendered by Nevada's faculty, staff, and students.

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## GOALS, PRINCIPLES & TARGETS

### GOAL: Quality Education

Nevada's system of higher education will provide consistently excellent learning experiences for its students through instruction, research, and service.

#### Principles

High expectations and quality learning experiences help students develop to their fullest potential.

Accountability demands that we be measured by our success, not merely our efforts, in each of our endeavors.

#### Targets

- Develop and implement an assessment plan and effective measures of student learning outcomes at each institution and for each academic program. Assessment plans for educational programs will be congruent with the differentiated missions of the institutions. Each plan will be required to define student learning outcomes, assess student performance on those outcomes, and use results to improve teaching and learning.
- Develop effective measures of institutional performance, collect data on the institutional indicators, and demonstrate that the results are used in the planning and evaluation process. These indicators are to include the regular evaluation of programs and justification for program continuation.
- Differentiate the instructional and research missions of Nevada's institutions by creating a System academic master plan and System research plan to define future institutional activities, to guide effective decision-making, and to eliminate unnecessary redundancy.
- Increase the number of rich learning experiences available to students through creative performance, scholarly and research collaboration with faculty, and through community service learning.

### GOAL: A Prosperous Economy

Through instruction, research, and service, higher education in Nevada will be an essential element in developing and sustaining a strong, dynamic, knowledge-based economy for Nevada.

#### Principles

All Nevada students should have access to the courses, degrees, training, or credentials needed for entering the workforce of the 21st century and for adapting to changes in the workforce over time.

The future economic success of Nevada depends on an educated, trained workforce and an entrepreneurial environment supported by first-rate higher education.

#### Targets

- Develop and increase responsive educational programs that focus on state needs and critical shortages in identified fields.
- Increase the proportion of workers and the number of graduates in high-skill fields who come from Nevada's higher education institutions rather than from out of state.



## GOALS, PRINCIPLES & TARGETS

- Increase the leverage of state dollars for research and development by attracting more federal and private support for each state dollar expended for these purposes.
- Increase institutional collaborations with the private sector and target significant research resources to achieve specific economic development objectives.
- Increase and focus workforce development to meet community needs in those sectors with the highest potential for growth.

### GOAL: P-16 Education

Higher education will increase partnerships with the K-12 system to ensure the cooperative delivery of education from pre-kindergarten through college degrees.

#### Principle

Success in higher education is a joint endeavor that begins at pre-kindergarten and continues to grade 16 and beyond, with seamless transitions and articulation throughout all levels of education.

#### Targets

- Increase P-16 programs that provide seamless transitions and result in student success in college.
- Through P-16 efforts, decrease the percent of recent Nevada high school graduates taking remedial/developmental courses.

### GOAL: Building Quality of Life

Higher education in Nevada will be instrumental in advancing society's objectives and enriching the lives of Nevada's citizens.

#### Principle

Higher education enriches the quality of life for Nevadans through benefits from research, the arts, the humanities, civic engagement, faculty service, and educated alumni.

#### Targets

- Increase public service and cultural opportunities that position higher education institutions as intellectual, cultural, and artistic centers and as the "marketplace for ideas."
- Ensure that all students have an opportunity to experience some form of internship, cooperative education, or community service in their educational programs.
- Improve Nevada's "educational benefits" measure on the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's Report Card from a C minus to at least a B grade.
- Ensure that all students have an opportunity to increase their understanding of other cultures through their educational programs and activities.

## GOALS, PRINCIPLES & TARGETS

- Increase support for student activities that may lead to national, regional, or statewide recognition for academic or leadership achievements.

### **GOAL: Opportunity and Accessible Education for All**

Nevada's system of higher education will increase the overall participation and success of Nevadans enrolling at all levels of higher education and in all ethnic groups, and will address the unique educational needs of a highly diverse and non-traditional population.

#### **Principles**

All students should be given the opportunity to be successful and to complete a degree or credential if that is their goal.

Lifelong learning is a noble endeavor, and providing multiple and varied opportunities is necessary for a citizenry that must continuously adapt to changing societal and economic conditions.

Higher education should provide flexible and innovative scheduling and delivery systems designed to meet the educational needs of Nevadans.

#### **Targets**

- Raise the percentage of Nevada's high school graduates who continue into postsecondary education within the UCCSN.
- Maintain minority enrollment distributions within the UCCSN that meet or exceed the minority population distributions within the state of Nevada. Minority graduation rates will meet or exceed rates of white, non-Hispanic students.
- Increase the percentage of students who successfully complete bachelor's degrees in six years and increase the percentage of community college students who complete associate degrees in three years.
- Increase programs and courses designed to meet the needs of working adults.
- Increase programs and courses designed to meet the needs of under-represented groups.
- Increase need-based financial aid for Nevada students.
- Expand the use of shared, new, and existing facilities on weekdays, evenings, weekends, and summers for the most cost-effective delivery of education.
- Expand distance education offerings so that, on average, all students will have participated in some technology-mediated instruction prior to graduation.