

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Eighth Session  
February 12, 2015**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Becky Harris at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 12, 2015, in Room 2135 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 Becky Harris, Chair  
Senator Scott Hammond, Vice Chair  
Senator Don Gustavson  
Senator Mark Lipparelli  
Senator Joyce Woodhouse  
Senator Moises (Mo) Denis

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Tick Segerblom (Excused)

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Todd Butterworth, Policy Analyst  
Risa Lang, Counsel  
Beth Ann Reykers, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jeannine Sherrick-Warner, Director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education  
Laura Hale, Manager, Primary Care Office, Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services  
Constance J. Brooks, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor, Government and Community Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education

Senate Committee on Education  
February 12, 2015  
Page 2

Crystal Abba, Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada  
System of Higher Education  
Ray Bacon, Nevada Manufacturers Association

**Chair Harris:**

I will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 76.

**SENATE BILL 76**: Revises provisions governing the Western Interstate  
Commission for Higher Education. (BDR 34-320)

**Jeannine Sherrick-Warner (Director, Western Interstate Commission for  
Higher Education):**

I will now read from my written testimony ([Exhibit C](#)). A proposed  
amendment to S.B. 76 ([Exhibit D](#)) has also been provided to the Committee.

**Chair Harris:**

What medical-related education programs and funding are available through  
the Nevada office of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education  
(WICHE) program?

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

In the next biennium, WICHE has a proposed \$1.1 million budget. Nevada  
WICHE is currently serving 90 participants and will decrease to between  
55-65 participants in the upcoming biennium. These estimated figures  
include both new and continuing students. Through the Professional Student  
Exchange Program (PSEP) administered by WICHE, physical therapy,  
physician's assistant, veterinary medicine, second year nursing, mental  
health internship, and psychiatric nurse credentialing program participants  
will receive funding. Nevada WICHE has the ability to respond to the  
shortages of health care providers throughout Nevada.

**Senator Harris:**

As the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) expands its health career  
programs and mental health programs specifically, how will it impact  
WICHE?

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

Nevada WICHE will take funds from programs such as the dental program now offered in the State, and use the money to support the expansion of participants pursuing careers in mental health occupations.

Workforce research was completed recently to determine which health occupations are most needed in Nevada. Psychiatry and psychology were ranked as the highest-demand occupations in the health fields in the State. The need for psychologists is 50 percent greater than the number of current practitioners. Nevada WICHE determined that future funding should be directed to address the critical shortage of mental health care practitioners.

**Senator Hammond:**

Senate Bill 76 caps the amount of service time required for loan forgiveness at 2 years. What happens if a participant receives funding for more than 2 years? The student should be required to provide more years of service in the form of a payback.

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

Nevada WICHE offers two different programs, the PSEP and the Health Care Access Program (HCAP). If a PSEP program participant receives a year of funding, he or she is required to repay the funding by providing service equal to the number of years for which support was received. There is no geographic constraint as to where the service may occur, thus the year-for-year payback requirement.

The HCAP program imposes restrictions related to the geographic location where participants may provide their payback service. Since service must be provided within a specifically prescribed area, a maximum 2-year service obligation exists. The proposed amendment modifies this requirement to include payback credit for participants providing services to underserved populations as well as underserved geographic areas.

**Senator Lipparelli:**

Does the language in section 5 of the bill suggest that the Nevada WICHE commissioners acting jointly can adopt regulations? Would such regulations be subject to the Legislative Commission?

**Risa Lang (Counsel):**

"Yes, those do go to the Legislative Commission for approval."

**Senator Lipparelli:**

Does S.B. 76 give the WICHE the authority to enter into binding agreements? Does the bill then allow for the delegation of that authority to staff? As stated, would the director of WICHE have the authority to bind the State? I would like this language reviewed by Counsel.

**Chair Harris:**

There seems like a gross disparity exists within the payback service requirement. One participant may receive \$2,400 as a stipend annually, while another participant may receive \$30,000 for that same year; yet both are required to pay back 1 year of service.

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

Support fees are determined by the 15 Compact States within WICHE based upon its biennial budget. Support fees are established by field of study. For example, nursing program participants each receive approximately \$2,400 per year. Veterinary medicine participants receive approximately \$33,000 per year. Both are required to pay back through service, for each year they receive educational support from the WICHE.

**Laura Hale (Manager, Primary Care Office, Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services):**

The Department of Health and Human Services supports S.B. 76. The Division of Public and Behavioral Health intends to propose an additional amendment to the bill.

Senate Bill 76 will expand access to out-of-state applicants in high-demand health occupation areas. The Nevada WICHE will use funds to support a psychology internship program. Nevada is pursuing national accreditation in this field.

Nevada has shortages in every health care profession; however, the mental health care provider shortages are the most severe. Almost the entire State is designated as a shortage area for behavioral health practitioners. This bill and subsequent amendments permit payback services for underserved populations in addition to geographically underserved areas.

**Senator Hammond:**

What non-rural area might be classified as an underserved population for the purpose of providing loan repayment service?

**Ms. Hale:**

All of northern Nevada is classified as an area of high need for behavioral health services. West Las Vegas and central Las Vegas also qualify as high-need areas and will meet the criteria of this bill and amendment. These areas have received federal designation as high-need populations using the following criteria: ratio of population to providers in a geographic area, demographics, income level, ethnicity, health data and health statistics in the area. In the calculation of behavioral health care needs, substance abuse rates and population age were also taken into consideration.

Nevada has more than 100 defined health care shortage designations.

**Senator Hammond**

Senate Bill 76 will allow program completers to perform their required payback service in Reno and Las Vegas in addition to rural Nevada. This concerns me because rural Nevada has such a great need for health care professionals.

**Chair Harris:**

I have the same concern. What is to prevent practitioners from staying in urban areas and not serving rural Nevada?

**Ms. Hale:**

Service credit can be received for work in rural Nevada counties as well as specific areas in Clark and Washoe Counties. Within Clark and Washoe Counties only areas that have been designated as "most in need" will qualify as areas that meet the payback service requirement for the WICHE.

**Chair Harris:**

Does Nevada WICHE support the proposed amendment?

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

Yes, the Nevada WICHE supports the amendment in general terms.

**Constance J. Brooks, Ph.D. (Vice Chancellor, Government and Community Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education):**

The Nevada System of Higher Education supports this bill and amendment.

**Chair Harris:**

With the expansion of payback options to include underserved populations in Washoe and Clark Counties, where is the safeguard for rural Nevadans? Why is this change in terms for service credit necessary?

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

It is important for practitioners to work in an area that best meets their needs. This will support retention of health care practitioners. Nevada WICHE recruits and encourages applicants from rural areas because statistics show that an individual who comes from a rural area is more likely to go back to a rural area. If a program "completer" does choose to work in an urban area, that person will still be required to work in an area with an underserved population. Nevada WICHE will continue to encourage payback service in rural areas.

**Chair Harris:**

What is the retention rate of the WICHE program practitioners staying in the State, and more specifically, remaining in the rural communities where they completed their payback service?

**Ms. Sherrick-Warner:**

Nevada WICHE conducted a 10-year assessment. All but two rural counties had been served through our participants. We also did some retention data collection to examine if participants remained in Nevada after they completed their service obligation. Our data showed four out of five of the WICHE participants stayed in Nevada and continued providing services. This was a limited survey, as we do not have the resources to look at all program completers.

**Chair Harris:**

I will close the hearing on S.B. 76. We will now have a presentation from Crystal Abba on College Affordability and Complete College America.

**Crystal Abba (Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education):**

Throughout my presentation, I will be referring to “Creating a Culture of Completion: A Policy and Initiative Review” ([Exhibit E](#)). In 1996, the United States was ranked second among developed nations in the proportion of youth that held an associate’s degree or higher. Just 4 years later, the U.S. ranked fourteenth.

As a result, President Obama set a goal for the United States: by 2020, at least 60 percent of the Nation would have a postsecondary credential. Many other organizations followed the President’s lead, each one defining a postsecondary credential a little differently. Complete College America (CCA) is one such organization.

In 2005, Nevada ranked last in the Nation with only 26.2 percent of its young adults aged 18–24 holding an associate’s degree or higher. In 2012, data, Nevada still ranked fiftieth among states in that area. Although Nevada has moved up four points in 7 years, it has barely moved on the graph. At the current rate, it will take approximately 52 years for Nevada to achieve the 60 percent goal.

**Senator Hammond:**

The number of people who have degrees or credentials could change quickly depending on economic development efforts. For example when Yucca Mountain shut down, there were several people who lived in my district who had college degrees. They left the State right away. In the future, that could happen in reverse, depending on the labor market demand.

**Ms. Abba:**

That is a valid point. Nevada imports more college graduates than it does high school graduates. Employers must often look out of State for qualified employees.

Under the leadership of Governor Sandoval, Nevada joined CCA in 2010. To meet the goal established by the President, Nevada adopted a degree completion goal recommended by CCA. Degree attainment from both public and private institutions within the State is included to measure goal attainment. In the first 3 years of CCA, Nevada exceeded its goal. Each year, however, the margin by which the goal has been met has narrowed.

A great deal of the focus of CCA is the issue of a skills gap. By 2020, it is projected that 58 percent of jobs in Nevada will require a postsecondary degree or credential of value. Only 30 percent of Nevada's workforce currently has a degree or credential of value. This 28 percent represents the skills gap. The graph on slide 8 of [Exhibit E](#) illustrates this percentage. Approximately 43 percent of new positions created in Nevada will occur at certificated levels. This statistic speaks directly to the demand for Nevada's community colleges.

Complete College America also focuses on closing the achievement gap for underrepresented populations, including students of color. Nevada has made considerable progress in this area, but there is more work to be done. Across the NSHE, more minority students are enrolled than ever before. In the last 10 years, the number of awards conferred to minority students has increased by 158.6 percent. Specifically, the NSHE has seen a significant increase in Hispanic student graduation rates since 2003.

The original data reported for 2005 did not include skill certificate programs offered by Nevada's community colleges. Quite simply, the NSHE did not count them. A skill certificate is a certificate that typically requires between 9 and 29 credits. Some examples include HVAC, auto repair, phlebotomy, and certified nursing assistant programs and specific computer programming areas within information technology.

The NSHE identified in excess of 80 skill certificates that provide training leading to state, national or industry certification subsequent to 2005. The identification of these 2,400 skill certificate program completers is significant because they were not included in the NSHE baseline data. While other states are still struggling with how to identify, count and track skill certificate completers, Nevada is now able to include them. This will positively affect Nevada's postsecondary completion rate.

**Chair Harris:**

Is a certificate different from an associate's degree? Are they counted in terms of Nevada's rank among other states for an associate's degree or higher?



**Ms. Abba:**

In the 30 percent calculation, skill certificates were not included. That is an important distinction between the goal the President set versus what CCA measures. Complete College America includes degrees, certificates, and credentials of value, in their completion calculation. Certificates that require a minimum of 30 credits as well as certificates requiring less than 30 credits are now both included in Nevada's measurement. Regardless of the credit value, a certificate program must lead directly to employability and the economic development efforts of the State. That is the defining criteria for CCA and Nevada.

In direct relationship to employability and economic development, degree attainment is the goal of the NSHE. To achieve its goal, the following policies have been implemented within the last 5 years. The intent of these policies is to increase Nevada's college graduation rate.

The first change in policy made by the Board of Regents is the 60/120 credit policy. This policy requires that degree programs consist of either 60 or 120 credits for graduation. Prior to the adoption of this policy, many liberal arts programs required 124 or 128 credits to earn a degree. A student could not reasonably expect to graduate within 4 years. The Board has granted exceptions to the policy for programs such as engineering, teacher preparation and nursing, which cannot be achieved in 120 credits.

The next policy adopted by the Board is the low-yield policy, which requires graduation rates to be monitored at the program level. If a program fails to meet defined thresholds, it can be eliminated. The low-yield policy sends a message to the institution that each program offered by an institution has a responsibility to confer degrees. It is unacceptable for a program to graduate only one or two students every other year.

As an aside, there have always been program review policies in place within the System. When a program is first introduced, the institution submits the program to the Board of Regents and states their expectations in terms of student enrollment and program cost. During the first, third and fifth year of a new program, the institution must report on the program's progress with respect to its projected enrollment and expenditures. At the 10-year mark, the NSHE refers to the program as an existing program, and it is added to the 10-year program review cycle. The program review is a rigorous review

sometimes conducted by outside entities for accreditation purposes. These reviews are critical to ensure the integrity of all NSHE programs. The low-yield policy has been added as an extra criterion within the review process.

**Senator Lipparelli:**

How are some of the outlined changes not just moving or reducing the goal to achieve a desired outcome? Are we reducing standards to increase outcomes?

**Ms. Abba:**

I do not think any one of these policies is going to increase Nevada's graduation rates significantly and meet the goal of 60 percent postsecondary degree attainment. The NSHE has adopted policies recommended by Complete College America that are intended to increase graduation rates.

**Senator Lipparelli:**

Are you satisfied that these integrity checks are firmly in place and we are not just lowering the bar?

**Ms. Abba:**

Yes. The program reviews are thorough, comprehensive and critical to ensure program integrity.

**Chair Harris:**

How does Nevada compare with other community colleges with regard to the number of credits needed to complete a comparable degree program? Is that in line with other programs throughout the Country?

**Ms. Abba:**

Associate's degrees offered through community colleges generally require 60 credits. Bachelor's degree programs offered through community colleges, colleges and universities, typically require 120 credits. Nevada is consistent with the rest of the Country in its program requirements.

The last new policy aligns the NSHE with federal policies for financial aid. The policy states that a student will be required to pay a 50 percent surcharge if there is an accumulation of 150 percent of the credits required for a degree program. The Board made it clear that institutions shall notify

students as they near the threshold. This policy went into effect in fall of 2014. It was surprising that some students did not know they were close to graduation.

According to federal policies for financial aid, once a student reaches 150 percent of credits required for a degree, he or she becomes ineligible for federal financial aid. This policy states clearly it is the institution's expectation that the student will graduate and the State will not provide the considerable subsidy to their degree program indefinitely.

**Chair Harris:**

We do not want to discourage education and learning and recognize there are those who explore different routes before they select a program of study. If I am hearing you correctly, we will continue to encourage students to get a great education, but emphasize degree attainment. If after obtaining an undergraduate degree, a student who wants to take more credits would be encouraged to pursue an advanced degree.

**Ms. Abba:**

The Board is allowing students 60 additional credits to explore different programs of interest. However, the expectation is now clear to students that they should earn a degree if they reach 120 credits. Expectations established by other states, as well as the impact those policies have on graduation rates, were examined prior to adopting this policy. Nevada is consistent with other states.

I will now discuss the NSHE performance-based funding. There are two components to the NSHE funding formula. The first is a base formula that is driven by course completion. The second component is the performance pool. The performance pool is determined through a series of metrics. These metrics align with institutional mission, and the Regents' goal to graduate more students. The metrics for the universities consist of the number of bachelor's degrees earned, bachelor's degree conferred to minority students, bachelor's degrees earned by low-income students, and similar items. For year one of the performance pool, all institutions achieved their targets except two. For year two, all institutions except one, achieved their performance targets. Institutions that did not reach their targets in year one, are given a chance to over-perform in year two. If they over-perform by the points missed in year one, they can earn back the funding lost in the first

year. Since funding is now driven by graduation rates, the NSHE had to ask itself why its students were not graduating.

First, its students are enrolling unprepared for the rigors of college level coursework. Students cannot earn a degree in a reasonable time frame if they lack the basics of reading, writing and mathematics necessary to credit-bearing course work. Nevada students are no different from students across the Country. When they are enrolled in remediation, they often languish there. Students who finish the gateway courses within their first year are more likely to ultimately graduate.

The second challenge is that many of Nevada's college students are enrolled part time. Part-time students do not graduate in the numbers necessary to meet the goal of college graduation within 4 years.

Complete College America outlines a new normal today in college enrollments. The new normal is nontraditional students. These students are often struggling to support themselves and their families. As a result, they may be working full time. The percent of part-time students at our community colleges is about 73.5 percent. These students will not earn a degree within 2 years.

Another issue highlighted by CCA is the achievement gap: making sure that supports are in place for students of color and other underrepresented populations. These students face unique challenges; many are first-generation college attendees. The NSHE has many programs in place designed to support students of color and underrepresented student populations graduate.

The final issue addressed by the CCA noteworthy for Nevada is the time it takes our students to graduate. Students are taking too much time to finish their program of study. Students do not earn a bachelor's degree within 4 years; associate's degrees are not completed within 2 years. A student cannot and will not graduate on time if he or she cannot attend full time.

Although the NSHE has changed the way remediation rates are calculated through an improved data system, there remains a difference between placement and enrollment. Placement is a result of a student taking some type of placement test. The ACT or SAT is often used, and result in a

student being placed into a remedial course or a college level course. There are many students that are placed, but do not enroll. That distinction has skewed the remediation rate calculation in the past. Through a change in data collection, the NSHE is now able to identify how great the impact of remediation is on its college graduation rate.

**Senator Hammond:**

Does this mean that if a student's placement test requires the enrollment in a remedial course and will not be counted unless enrolled in a course within 1 year?

**Ms. Abba:**

That is correct. Many students who required remediation were not captured in earlier studies. We are now able to look at a full year of placement data and compare it to a full year of enrollment data. This allows the NSHE to identify clearly by discipline, English and mathematics, how many students who took placement tests were never enrolled in classes.

This is useful information for the institutions. Forty percent of students who were placed in remediation programs did not enroll in college. The new placement rate suggests that 55.6 percent of Nevada's college students are not placing into college courses and require some type of remediation course work. This issue must be addressed.

**Chair Harris:**

Are we talking about Nevada high school graduates?

**Ms. Abba:**

Yes. "The 2013-2014 Remedial Placement and Enrollment Report" is available on the NSHE Website at <[www.nevada.edu](http://www.nevada.edu)> with more detailed information.

The next issue affecting college graduation is affordability. Are our access institutions affordable? By access institutions, I am referring to the 2-year institutions—the community colleges in this State. The challenge with an affordability discussion is that historically the conversation in Nevada has been centered around the base registration cost, or per credit fee. The fee per credit at a community college in Nevada is \$84.50. At Nevada State College, it is \$138.25 per credit. At the two universities, it is \$191.50 per

credit. This figure does not capture a student's total cost of attendance, which includes other items such as room, board and living expenses.

Another challenge is that college affordability is subjective. What is affordable to one student may not be affordable to another student. The equalizer is financial aid. One of the biggest challenges we face is the individual's perception of the price tag and what that means to whether or not he or she goes to college. National data shows low-income students are far less likely to enroll in college than upper- or middle- to higher-income students. The same is true for graduation rates.

The importance of the perception of the price tag for college is important and many times inaccurate. Low-income students often overestimate the price of a college education. They have no knowledge or understanding of what financial aid is, often because they are first-generation college students. Because of their perception of the price tag, they choose not to go to college.

A middle-income student is more likely to have better access to information regarding financial aid and as a result, their perception of the price tag is more accurate. Rather than go to a university, a middle-income student may choose to attend a community college. In contrast, the low-income student will not attend college at all. That difference and the difference in perception of the price tag are huge challenges in a state that does not have a college-going culture. This issue of access must be addressed for students of color and students who come from low-income families.

Nevada's base registration for community college fees with respect to the rest of the Nation is below the U.S. average, as a percent of those tuition and fees and as a percent of median family income. One of the statistics the NSHE has historically provided to the Legislature is where Nevada ranked relative to other WICHE states in regard to its registration fees. Nevada has ranked below the median. There were only four states below Nevada in 2012. For the same period, Nevada's universities ranked sixth from the bottom. This cost of course registration has always been the center of the conversation about the cost of higher education in Nevada; it has never focused on the larger, more accurate college affordability conversation.

Slide 25 of [Exhibit E](#) depicts the important difference between cost of attendance and the cost of registration. The graph illustrates the total base fees of attendance, and includes room and board and living costs, less financial aid. This frames the issue as to the affordability of Nevada's access institutions. It is significant to note that while Nevada's median household income dropped, tuition and fees rose. Financial aid went up, but it did not keep pace with the increase in tuition and fees.

**Senator Lipparelli:**

If I understand the graphs correctly, Nevada has flat incomes but rising tuition costs.

**Ms. Abba:**

Nevada has declining incomes and rising tuition costs. If we look at the census bureau data by household, there are more than 450,000 households in Nevada that have an income of \$49,999 or less. The percent of income to pay for 1 year of a community college is 62.4 percent of gross income. Think about that in the context of a mortgage. Most entities recommend spending about 30 percent of gross income on a mortgage. Who will pay 62.4 percent of their income on any one item? It is not affordable, so the choice is made not to go to college. In this context, it is easy to understand why Nevada's participation rate at 2-year institutions for students from Nevada low-income families is only 6.4 percent. The national average is 15 percent.

This percentage can be increased through financial aid. The unmet need, based upon the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) calculations on a student-by-student basis, was \$434.5 million for 1 academic year. If we do not address the affordability problem, we are not providing access to all Nevadans. We will never achieve our CCA goals without addressing access and affordability.

The next issue is Nevada's "15 to Finish" campaign. "15 to Finish" is an enrollment intensity and student achievement campaign designed to encourage students to attend school full time. This campaign is very specifically aimed at 18 to 24-year-olds.

According to national data, students who are enrolled full time in their first year are more than twice as likely to earn a degree as those who take fewer

credits. The key is completion of 30 credits. When students reach that benchmark, there seems to be a momentum that propels them forward. Perhaps having made a significant investment has a psychological impact on students.

Only 2.6 percent of students who enrolled in less than 12 credits during their first semester at a community college graduated. The data reflect a dramatic increase in the graduation rate if a student takes more credits during the first semester of enrollment. Students who took 15 credits in the first semester were ten times more likely to graduate than those students who took fewer credits.

**Senator Denis:**

Does this include the grade point average in the classes taken?

**Ms. Abba:**

No, this reflects enrollment intensity. This reports graduation rates, so students had to have passed the course of study. If they graduated, they had to have achieved a certain grade point average, meaning they met the requirements for graduation.

**Senator Lipparelli:**

Is there a difference in the amount invested for a student taking one credit versus a student who takes multiple credits? How is that calculated?

**Ms. Abba:**

As part of the NSHE chancellor's initiative, the NSHE Committee on Access and Affordability tracked investments in students both for who graduated and who did not. The definition of that investment includes how much the State invested in the student in terms of State-supported financial aid, fee-generated financial aid, which is a portion of the registration fee set aside for financial aid, federal financial aid and student loans. Using a cohort, students were tracked over a 6-year period. There were almost 9,000 students in the study; 6,945 students of those did not graduate. We invested \$39.4 million in aid for the 6,945 students who did not graduate. The student loan portion of that was \$16.2 million. Most of those students were attending part time. We spent roughly the same amount of money per student for students who graduated as those students who did not graduate.



Part of the challenge in this calculation is that Nevada and its institutions of higher education do not have control over all the funds in terms of who receives assistance. Federal loans, Pell Grants and federal financial aid monies are not determined by the institutions.

Ethnicity rates of graduates are congruent with the overall statistics. Graduation rates for students who are college-ready are higher than those students who require remediation.

The NSHE developed an aggressive advertising campaign surrounding the "15 to Finish" strategy. This campaign focused on 18- to 24-year-olds and has been incorporated into student orientation workshops. The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) adopted this campaign before the other institutions. As a result, the head count at UNR went up only slightly, but the full-time equivalent count, meaning students are taking more classes, rose significantly. Students understand this strategy and are responding.

In summary, Nevada will move up in national data comparisons, because we are now reporting the 2,400 skill certificates earned by Nevadans that were not previously reported. Even with the improvements during the first 3 years of CCA, Nevada will not be able to move statistically unless we address the affordability, remediation and full-time enrollment issues that face our students.

**Senator Denis:**

How do we address students working full time and wanting to go to school?

**Ms. Abba:**

This must be addressed through an affordability measure. If we give students a critical mass of dollars so that they can attend college full time for 1 year, Nevada will see significant progress in its college graduation rate.

The NSHE will present a shared responsibility program modeled after an Oregon program. Students enroll in college and the total cost of attendance is taken into consideration. For example, the total cost of attendance at a community college for a student living off campus is \$18,000. We begin with that figure and subtract what a student will receive from federal financial aid and expected family contributions. The FAFSA must be completed to obtain this information. Students are also expected to

contribute by working within this model. Once these amounts have been calculated and considered, the student's share could be covered by student loans. Whatever is the unmet obligation would then be provided through a State-supported financial aid grant.

Based on experience and data from other states, the NSHE believes this approach will make college more affordable, especially for the 6.4 percent of low-income students. As a state, Nevada will not make progress unless the issue of college affordability is addressed.

**Senator Denis**

If the success rate is so much higher for students who complete 15 credits or more in their first two semesters, would providing State support for the first year improve graduation rates?

**Ms. Abba:**

Yes, but in addition, students must enter college prepared for college level work. Students must be ready to enroll in credit-bearing courses, not remedial courses. We know there is momentum for students who complete 30 credits; if something can be done to get them to that 30-credit threshold, that would be helpful.

**Senator Denis:**

Does NSHE have the ability to count students who graduate from Nevada high schools and go on to colleges in other states?

**Ms. Abba:**

Yes, we now have the ability to capture that data.

**Ray Bacon (Nevada Manufacturers Association):**

The Nevada Manufacturers Association has been involved in the development of skill certificates. We learned of a program that came about through The President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness that was being executed in Minnesota, titled "Right Skills Now." It took students from the unemployment rolls to working as machinists in 16 weeks. Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada College have adopted the program. The program, partially funded by the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, is comprised of an interview process, drug testing, and completion of the National Career Readiness

Certificate, which is about a 3-hour course that measures mathematics skills, English skills and problem-solving skills. Program completers earned up to four national credentials. They were on track to become certified machinists. The Nevada Manufacturers Association has supported many similar types of certificate programs at the community colleges.

Nevada has a national reputation for under-educating its students. Nevada community colleges may have had good programs, but they were not widely accepted by other states. When we decided to utilize certificate programs, we said they had to be nationally portable and third-party verified. An independent board sets the scores; Nevada does not. The tests are challenging and the credentials meaningful. The Nevada Manufacturers Association is working with Nevada employers to accept these credentials.

I also urge the expansion of expanding career and technical high school programs and dual-credit programs. If Nevada was better at dual-credit programs, I think it would also address the remediation programs required for college. In some cases, children are coming out of our career and technical education programs with industry recognized certificates, but our colleges fail to recognize them. We need to do a better job in this area.

**Senator Denis:**

Do we have an idea of to what going to college and getting certificates or degrees from other countries equates? In other countries, are students enrolling and perhaps completing certificate programs earlier in their educational careers?

**Ms. Abba:**

I am not an expert in this area, but based on what I have read there are multiple factors on why other countries are more successful and what you have just described is one of those factors.

Senate Committee on Education  
February 12, 2015  
Page 20

**Chair Harris:**

There being no further comment or business before the Committee, the meeting is adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

---

Beth Ann Reykers,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

---

Senator Becky Harris, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit		Witness or Agency	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	3		Attendance Roster
S.B. 76	C	3	Jeannine Sherrick-Warner	Written Testimony
S.B. 76	D	1	Jeannine Sherrick-Warner	Proposed Amendments
	E	36	Crystal Abba	Slide Presentation