MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Eighty-third Session
February 12, 2025

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Angela D. Taylor at 1:06 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, in Room 2134 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, 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 Angela D. Taylor, Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Senator Fabian Doñate
Senator Michelee Cruz-Crawford
Senator Carrie Ann Buck
Senator Robin L. Titus
Senator Lori Rogich

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm-Gahner, Committee Policy Analyst
Alberto Quintero, Committee Policy Analyst
Cameron Newton, Committee Counsel
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Patricia Charlton, Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education
Renee Davis, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education
Brett Compston, Administrator, Division of Emergency Management/Homeland Security, Nevada Office of the Military
Susan Keema, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Adrian Hunt, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Stacey Montooth, Executive Director, Nevada Department of Native American Affairs
Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education
Julie Bowers, Education Programs Director, Office of Inclusive Education, Nevada Department of Education
Fredina Drye-Romero, Education Program Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, Nevada Department of Education
Riata Palmer, Student, McDermitt High School
Brian Mason, Tribal Chairman, Shoshone Paiute Tribes
Will Adler, Silver State Government Relations
John Eppolito, Protect Nevada Children
Doug Unger, Nevada Faculty Alliance

CHAIR TAYLOR:
For our first presentation, we have our friends from the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) in the room.

PATRICIA CHARLTON (Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education):
We are very grateful for the time today to share this state of the system of higher education presentation (Exhibit C contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.) to the Senate Education Committee. This provides us an opportunity to take a moment and assess where our system has been; specifically, our institutions, in terms of our core mission producing college graduates.

Today, I am going to focus on two primary purposes. First is to reflect on how far we have come in the number of decades that we are going to provide information for. Second is to identify where there is additional work to be done. All of this is framed relative to the mission of NSHE as prescribed by our Board of Regents.

Our formal mission at NSHE is codified in our Board of Regents handbook. It is a very long mission statement, as you can tell, but our primary focus is on graduating students, particularly for the benefit of Nevada. There are other elements in our mission such as research, which we are very proud of, and the fact that we have two, not just one but two, R1 [high level research] institutions is really a testament to the support of this Legislature. The focus on building that research profile has been one that we have been very committed

to and we would be happy to come back at another time and talk specifically about our research mission.

Today, I am going to again focus on the primary role of educating and graduating students. Our strategic goals are enrollment, graduating students, our workforce contribution and funding. This is something that we will be talking about throughout the session, but not in this committee today.

First is access. Access refers to the opportunities that students have to participate in higher education. The most fundamental measure of access is enrollment, as it is a direct measure of the number of students that are participating. Our institutions have a clear objective, and that is to increase participation in higher education.

How are we doing? This first chart gives a look since 1970 of how Nevada has looked over the last 50 years, as compared to the national level. The graph shows postsecondary enrollment per 100,000 population for Nevada, which is the blue line; and the U.S. is the red line. This enrollment is for our degree-granting institutions that report to Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). For Nevada, that includes private institutions that also participate in IPEDS. We have more private institutions today than we did in 1970, and we also have more institutions within NSHE than we did 50 years ago. Ideally, we would like to see the blue line—those participating in Nevada—above the red line. Absent that ideal, we are doing better as a State relative to the nation when those lines come closer together.

It is also interesting to note that in 1980, there were eight institutions serving Nevada reporting to IPEDS. However, in 2022, there were 37 institutions, 7 of which were NSHE. In other words, while the State is getting bigger, because we have so many more institutions, you'd expect that we would also be serving a higher percentage of that population per 100,000. But, as you can tell from the graph, we are not moving those lines as close together, but we have some benefits that we have seen recently.

Now I want to show you specifically the NSHE enrollments. In prior years—and as you have said, some have served on this committee before—you've seen different variations of the next slide. But what this shows you is that the system really reached our peak enrollment in 2010, as Nevada was coming out of the Great Recession. During prior periods of economic downturn, enrollments

in postsecondary education typically have increased at high levels—particularly at our community college, where the opportunity to retool skill sets or seek new pathways was often sought.

On a quick historical note of the Great Recession, as a nation, that typically is defined as the period from December of 2007 to June of 2009. However, in Nevada, given the nature of our economy, we were a little slower to recover and essentially were still in a recession in 2010. As is common during an economic downturn, as I mentioned, many individuals returned to college to obtain training, which is exactly what we saw at that time.

Another year that is important for us is going to be 2020. This is the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had severe ramifications for our enrollment recovery, post the Great Recession, and particularly at our community colleges. And this is a national trend not just specific to Nevada.

As we look now at our sector enrollment, our sector is based on two-year institutions and our four-year institutions. All the enrollment data in this presentation is coming from IPEDS, so there is a little bit of a lag in the manner in which data is reported. We do not go back to 1970; however, we do have the baseline of 1980 for IPEDS purposes.

From 1980 to the Great Recession, the majority of our enrollment within NSHE was within our community colleges. You see this in the red line that represents those community colleges, and it was above the blue line representing our four-year institutions. This is driven largely in part to College of Southern Nevada (CSN) which, for decades, was our largest institution.

This all changed, however, during the pandemic. The community colleges enrollment—and again this was happening nationally—continued to decline and has still not recovered from the pre-pandemic levels. However, what is wonderful to note is that all our community colleges are experiencing enrollment growth.

The following table is just a snapshot of that comparison from 1980 to 2023. And again, this is all IPEDS-level data. You can see where the institutions grew. And while 2010 really was an anomaly, in that year, all our institutions continued to grow. I will be able to share additional data for fiscal year (FY) 2023-2024.

A takeaway and a quick recap of what we see in our enrollment: our universities exhibited extreme resilience following the recession, and Nevada has had steady and strong growth since the recession and up to the pandemic. It has been a different story for our community colleges, which realized enrollment declines; but again, they are recovering at a nice pace and, in some cases, having some astronomical growth.

Let us move on and look at the enrollment of our historically underrepresented students, which falls under our strategic goal of closing the achievement gap. We'll begin first by looking at NSHE relative to the nation in terms of the distribution of students enrolled by race and ethnicity.

The blue bars represent the distribution of NSHE students. If you add them together, they will total 100 percent. The red bars are at the national level. You can see clearly, that as a system, our enrollment of underserved populations, particularly Hispanic, Asian and two or more races, exceeds the nation.

Now let us look at our general population of Nevada. This is a distribution of Nevada's population as identified from the state demographer. It is important to note that NSHE uses race and ethnicity categories as defined by the federal government and used in IPEDS reporting, which does include two or more races—that is different from the state demographer. With that said, from this you can see that as of 2023, Nevada is essentially a 50/50 majority/minority state.

However, when you look at NSHE and do a little bit deeper dive, you can see that NSHE crossed the 50/50 distribution a decade ago in 2014. And as of today, we are a minority/majority-serving system—we are very proud of that work—meaning that a majority, or 64.5 percent of our student population, are from historically underrepresented populations.

It is one thing to see the change over time when looking at our historical enrollments, but what does that look like when we look at the relative race and ethnic categories?

The next slide compares the race and ethnic distribution of the system from the fall of 2014, when we began at 50/50, to where were in fall of 2023, when we were at a 65/35 percent system. It is clear that the greatest gains in enrollment

distribution have been in Hispanic students, followed by the two or more categories. But the slide does note that we have additional work to do.

A takeaway in this area is that over the last decade, the greatest enrollment increase for historically underrepresented populations occurred in Hispanic, Asian, and two or more races categories. In an era when we moved well into a minority/majority status, we have seen declines in individuals being left behind, particularly our American Indian or Alaskan Natives; our Black or African Americans; and our Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. Unfortunately, these are the categories that we already had historically low enrollment and continues to be a challenge. We have work to do here.

The good news on the last slide is that we have covered a lot of ground. As such—I want to give a quick recap—our four-year institutions are all doing well and are holding steady in terms of enrollment and growing. They survived, and in some cases, like Nevada State University, thrived coming out of the recession and the pandemic. Our community colleges struggled a bit but are doing really well in their resiliency and moving forward.

And finally for the system, we have significantly moved the needle on the enrollment of our historically underrepresented populations, but we have work to do.

On a positive note, the fun part is talking about educational attainment, student success and our core mission—which is to graduate students. Educational attainment is the measure of the education level of the State's population. When we, as a State, joined Complete College America over a decade ago, this was a metric that we as a system developed into various strategic plans. Similar to the enrollment of students per 100,000 population, ideally, we would like to see the blue line above the red line or at least have those lines be closer together.

That said, it is very difficult to move the needle. Nevada has followed the nation in terms of a growing percentage of our population with a bachelor's degree or higher. In 22 years, we have gone from an 18.2 percent graduation rate to 27.3 percent. That is significant; however, we do still lag across the nation. I would say that improvement is because of the work that we have done with the Legislature on outcomes.

The most often cited measure of student success is an institution's graduation rate. So, the graduation rate is a good measure for some institutions, but not for all. The standard IPEDS graduation rate is the percentage of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students that graduate within 150 percent of normal time. So for a bachelor's degree, that is six years; for an associate's degree, that is three years; and 1.5 years for a certificate of achievement. The problem with this rate is that cohort—again, first-time, full-time and degree-seeking—is more prominent at a four-year institution than at a community college, where the traditional student is more likely to be part-time, work full-time and may also be a transfer student. Either criteria excludes them from being counted in the standard IPEDS cohort. That said, more students at our universities are full-time, so the standard IPEDS graduation rate tends to be a more decent measure for them.

In today's presentation, I am going to look at the standard IPEDS rate, and we will also look at the outcomes measure for community colleges with the goal of providing you with the most accurate picture possible of our improvements and student success. Over the last decade or more, NSHE, with your support, has made significant strides.

Let us start with the universities and look back at graduation rates over the last 20 years. Increasing graduation rates is more challenging than simply churning out more graduates, because they have to fall within that cohort in order to be counted and make the difference in the rate. As such, this and the next slide are intended to show the improvements made during that time when our board, in concert with the Legislature, shifted from an input to an output-based funding formula. We sent a very clear mission to our institutions: graduating students matters, and funding will be connected.

The improvements for all of the universities is clear here. The recent jump at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) to 62.4 percent now aligns with the national average. The graduation rate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) increased by 12 percent. For the size of that institution, it is phenomenal. Nevada State College did not have a graduation rate in the early years, as they were brand new. Today, they have a graduation rate of over 31 percent. That is significant growth in just ten years as you look at where they were in 2013.

Next, let us look at the community college rate. Again, this is a similarly dramatic picture. However, it is important to keep in mind that this cohort, or

the denominator in that rate calculation, is relatively small to the overall population. Again, it is only capturing that first-time, full-time, degree-seeking student.

For the cohort used in the 2023 graduation rate, the students accounted for are only 7 percent of the total college enrollment. That means that over 90 percent of our community college students are nontraditional and are not included in that cohort. However small the cohort, the increases are quite significant.

So let us start with CSN. What is not included on the slide is that in 2001, CSN's graduation rate was a mere 1 percent of that cohort. But now, it is 17.9 percent. That is an astronomical increase. We see the same thing as you look across each of our institutions and highlighting, for example, Western Nevada College (WNC) going from 20 percent in 2003 to just under 37 percent in 2023.

You have heard me mention that the standard IPEDS rate does a disservice to the community colleges, in that it does not capture the majority of their students. So, we have what is called the outcomes measure and this expands the cohort, or the denominator, in the IPEDS rate. It essentially includes part-time and transfer students that are excluded from IPEDS. It also tracks those students over an eight-year period, and identifies those students who at eight years are still enrolled in the institution or at another institution. Our goal is just to get them across the finish line. I am not going to review the outcomes measure for the universities because it is not nearly as significant as for the community colleges.

The next slide compares at that sector level, or for all the colleges combined, the outcomes from the 2009 cohort and the 2015 cohort as well. What is striking about the slide is the obvious improvement between the two cohorts from 19 percent graduating in eight years to over 35 percent. Again, in an era where there was a focus from the board and the State on the funding formula, which was driven on outcomes, this is a huge accomplishment.

Finally, the last slide on student success looks at the raw numbers of graduating students. These are the students that are ready to join the Nevada workforce. Here I would like to again highlight CSN with a 112.6 percent increase in completers during a time when enrollments have declined. This is a strong sign of the shift in outcomes. Also, look at Truckee Meadows Community College

(TMCC) with 118.2 percent. It compares, again, the number of completes in 2011-2012 to a decade later in 2023-2024. A 62.3 percent increase is pretty darn good.

You can see from the slides we are better today than ever before at our core mission of graduating students to support Nevada. That's not to say that there is not work to be done, but it is important to take a moment and appreciate how far that we have come. You can also see clearly that incentives matter. Where our funding formula was tied directly to outcomes, it made a difference. The state shift in the formula to those made a difference, particularly in this last decade.

Next, let us go back to our mission of graduating students to support Nevada's workforce. The obvious place to start is with areas of focus for the State that have been identified as critical—teachers and nurses. Going back two decades, the Legislature has made known its desire for more nurses. Even in the 2023 Session, we received additional funding to support the expansion of capacity in our nursing programs. And the same thing can be said for our teachers. The State is always in need of teachers, and you have been very supportive of that mission.

Our other question is whether or not our students are staying here when they finish. I want to discuss some of the data limitations that we do have as far as whether or not a student is working within the field that they graduated with. We know today if our graduates are working in Nevada the year immediately following graduation, but what we do not know is if they are working specifically in that area of the field. For example, someone could graduate as a nurse, but they could be doing hospital administration. A teacher could graduate with a teaching credential, but they could be working in administration. So that is a little bit of the challenge that we have with our data.

Despite that drawback, a significant percentage of our students who graduate with degrees in education and nursing remain in the State, and they work immediately following graduation: 85.8 percent in education and 81.2 percent in health care.

What does it look like for some of our other top graduates here? You can see those graduates in other fields—like engineering, engineering technology, computer science and information systems, for example—do not have the same

amount of retention in Nevada. So, for example, a computer and information sciences and support services graduate is only about 69.8 percent likely to still be working in Nevada.

As we go back to the mission of contributing to an educated and trained workforce, no doubt we are meeting that need. I would also like to add that having the data to back that statement up is significant as well. We have fabulous data dashboards at the NSHE website, and we encourage you to go look at the host of information that we have. All of this workforce data is also on our website and available to you and to the community at large. That's part of our primary focus on transparency and making sure that all the information is available.

Hopefully, this presentation leaves you with a better appreciation of where we have been—that we have more graduates than ever; that we are rebounding from the recession and from the pandemic; and that we are here to provide that support for Nevada. It should also give you a moment of pause to appreciate that our community colleges, in particular, have had a very difficult time with enrollment challenges, which feeds that pipeline to graduation. Our universities have achieved a monumental task of both being R1 certified. That work is vital and important to our economic development and diversification in Nevada.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
First of all, I love NSHE. We just need to take a moment to realize how great it is that we have this system within Nevada. We are the most easy-to-transfer to different institutions within Nevada than any other state, and we have some of the most affordable tuition and we have invested with many pathways.

My question is specifically on the slide talking about graduation rates and our first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students and how a lot of these students are first-generation students and then on the slide demonstrating how the rates in our teaching and nursing programs have just gone through the roof. One of the things I know about these two programs is that we have opened creative opportunities—no more traditional Monday through Friday. There are evening classes, online classes, and we invested in summer school with these programs.

When we think about first-generation students that are working full-time, they have to take a break during summer school. That slows them up; it can slow

them up to a year to two years from entering the workforce. In addition, if they are taking student loans, they are accruing debt or interest during that time.

What kind of work are you doing in forecasting the workforce that we need, so we can start creating and replicating some of these models for the careers that we will need five or ten years from now?

MS. CHARLTON:
One of the successes that we have, particularly in teachers and nurses, is exactly what you stated. We are able to move students through that pipeline faster because of the support to do year-round programming and alternative deliveries, because of the summer school in particular.

In our workforce development, we have a workforce committee board that is supported by an assistant vice chancellor, Dr. Natalie Brown. One of the things that we are working on with the chair of that committee, Regent Heather Brown, is to look at forecasting that data. We are looking at partners such as Lightcast, to be able to look at where the needs are for Nevada, not just today, but where they are going to be in the future. And what is the capacity of what we have within NSHE, in all of our institutions combined, to actually produce or to exceed those goals? We know that we have attrition in some fields, especially as you look at nurses and teachers. There's always attrition that is occurring. So, we are looking at that forecast so we can ensure that we have the capacity in those specific fields to be able to deliver and meet the needs of Nevada.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
I just want to say thank you. I have a bill for that coming up.

SENATOR TITUS:
I appreciate your enthusiasm. You're an educator, and I like the fact that you still love what you do. Having said that, however, statistics can be used as you want them to be used. If you sit with an eight-ounce glass of water and you say it has four ounces in it, it could be four ounces; and you could say that it is four ounces full or it is half empty. It does not really say what type of water or liquid is in there.

So back on your statistics slide, you point out that there is an impressive increase in Hispanic enrollment. But you do not really address, that between

2014 and 2013, what percent of our overall population were Hispanics versus what they were in 2014. What they were in 2014 versus what they are now? Not the population that graduated or enrolled, but now we have in Nevada 1 million Hispanic folks, and we would expect then that we have more people wanting to get an education, did we really change that demographics enrollment percentage in a college?

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly.

SENATOR TITUS:
So that does not show that?

MS. CHARLTON:
No. I have showed the 2023 demography of the State at the time. We'd be happy to see if we can get that information going back to that reference period so that we can show what that penetration rate is overall. Also, this is population as a whole. We also want to look at those that are attending by age group as well in that college.

SENATOR TITUS:
I think it makes a difference. On that same line of questioning, you certainly had an increased percentage of folks who graduated. No question about it, and good. But how many more slots did you have? How many kids attended? That is the percent I would like to see. Of the percent that are attending at that one time, you have X graduation rate. And now with the percent of kids attending, because there's a difference in your enrollment, and that number does not reflect that.

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly.

SENATOR TITUS:
Have you really been successful, or do you have ten times more kids enrolled? You should have an improvement in your graduation rate.

MS. CHARLTON:
We can certainly come back with additional information. Let me just say, I get the half-full/half-empty. There is significant work to be done. Any student that

is lost along the pathway—that drops out, does not complete, does not cross that finish line—is a problem. We also know that we have hundreds of thousands of individuals within the State with some postsecondary education but have not crossed the finish line. That is work to be done, and our institutions are very focused on that. We will definitely further slice-and-dice this information. We would be happy to provide additional follow up.

SENATOR TITUS:
Great. Thank you for that because I think it really makes a difference to see how successful you really have been. Certainly, you have expanded, and you have more enrollees, but have you been truly successful?

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly. I do not want this to come across as this is just all roses and birds chirping and all of that positivity. There is a challenge. Obviously, we have also known that in the same time period, Nevada's population grew astronomically. That is why the enrollment per 100,000 is so important, and that is our concern—why we have not moved that needle. We actually hit the high mark in like 1980 and 1990. So, we need to do better in getting people into our pipeline. I think that has been achieved, and I think our institutions would also weigh in.

Some of the opportunities that have been made available through the State are a Promise Scholarship, a Millennium Scholarship and the Silver State Opportunity Grant. All of those are access opportunities for individuals that probably would not have had the opportunity before. So, we need to make it easier for them to get in. We do not want our students graduating with high levels of debt. That is a problem for everyone, and we need to ensure we keep our education affordable because. We have done that because it has been important for the Legislature and it has also been important for the system, as well as our board.

SENATOR TITUS:
I want to see that the needle has moved. Not just because you changed metrics, that you went from miles-per-hour to kilometers-per-hour.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
I want to talk about two different subjects. The first one is dealing with the student environment. I have had a lot of conversations with students that are

facing a sense of fear, given the national climate. But I have also heard from them about what it means to be a student in our institutions. In my district, we obviously have seen concerns of campus safety. We've talked about the rights of students. I know that there have been recent reports as to students wanting to collectively bargain, specifically graduate students. I read your letter in terms of how the chancellor and the NSHE presidents do not have the power to make such a decision. Can you guide us through your rationale for that? I think I am a little bit confused as to how [*Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS)] Chapter 288 meets that because, from my understanding, the Board of Regents already has the decision-making authority. There is not anything in NRS that prohibits it. So maybe if you can walk us through why that decision was made.

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly. First, I do want to let you know that we are working with our graduate students who have recently expressed their interest to collectively bargain. There is legislation, and there is also a board policy. Currently, our board policy does not permit the chancellor and the presidents to enter into collective bargaining at that level. We have a meeting, in fact this week, regarding work that is being done on a collective bargaining bill that is coming forward. We are at the table participating in that conversation with the legislators who are crafting it. We know that the graduate assistants are in there.

However, we do not want to wait to work on their challenges, the issues and concerns that they have noted. So, both myself and representatives from UNLV, UNR and the Desert Research Institute are working to schedule that meeting to have that conversation with the students.

Some of this came up at the very end of the fall semester. It is important we know that there was also interest to potentially bargain similar to classified. Nevada System of Higher Education does not bargain directly on the classified. There is the Labor Relations Unit at the State that handles all of that. So again, we want to first address the concerns and make sure that we are aware of what those are. We are working with the Legislature on a bill that is coming forward, and then we will continue to pursue those challenges.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
I do think it is important to have this discussion, and perhaps you and I can have an offline discussion. Or maybe Legal can follow up on this. From my

understanding in some of the Governor's vetoes, and this is not a critique of his vetoes, but in one of the bills that he vetoed last year, his rationale for why it was vetoed was because the Board of Regents already has the authority to do so, and it was just duplicative. Perhaps Legal can follow up with us as to whether they do have the authority. I wanted to make sure that was clear because maybe I am missing something that I am not reading correctly in NRS.

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly. I was not really an active participant in the 2023 legislation, but I do want to also add that our Faculty Senate is also working with the Nevada Faculty Alliance, which is our faculty bargaining group for those positions. So, we are hoping to bring some revisions to other policy, but we also know that the legislation is happening at the same time. We want to make sure that we get this right.

SENATOR DOÑATE:
There's also been national conversations about online education and streamlining a centralized approach for centralized administration, centralized marketing of certain programs and the centralization or leveraging of distributive academic expertise. Is this something that NSHE has debated or talked about? What do you think needs to be done in order to get to that stage?

MS. CHARLTON:
So, that is a good question. I know, having been in the system for about three decades, there have been certain times when this conversation has come up. Because of the way in which we are structured and the way in which we are funded, with our funding formula to the institutions, we have not quite figured out the right nuance related to that. We have also been looking at how we can be piloting this within the community colleges—just have an open access enrollment. So for instance, maybe I am a WNC student, and I can't get Math 180, which is calculus, but CSN happens to have an opening. I might be able to partner and be able to fill that gap. It is easier between our community colleges and our State universities that all sit on the same Student Information System. That is something that is a work in progress.

I would say that we have fantastic expertise at each of our institutions and our faculty. Also, we are making sure that we have those alignments. We have common course numbering. We also have groups where our different academic units come together to talk about their specific programs. I think the strength is

there, and we can definitely give you updates on the pilot that we are trying out with the community colleges and the State universities on shared enrollment.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I just have some clarifying questions and not so much on policy, but can you talk a little bit about the precision production? I noticed where you listed the graduates working in Nevada, most of them had higher numbers, but precision production only had 40. Can you tell us a little bit about what precision production is and how specific it is and why we would only have 40 graduates?

MS. CHARLTON:
Precision production is actually a manufacturing-related field. When you look in 2020 and 2021, the growth of manufacturing had not really taken off yet in Nevada. Many students would also be getting certificates in that area. I think if we were to update that data point today for more recent information, you would see astronomically increased levels. There has been specific focus on the economic development and workforce in both the north and south. As well, there has been funding through grant opportunities to increase manufacturing.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I think this particular page is so important, because I think that our students, in some ways, are starting to do what they are really interested in, and what they really want to do as opposed to, "Oh, you should go do this." "You should be a teacher." "You should be a nurse." "You should be an orthodontist." I do not care what it is that somebody has put in their brain. What they really want to do is they wanted to build a house or be in precision productions or be in business management, right? And I think it is so important for them to understand they are probably going to do this a long time, so they've got to love what they do.

Is there a reason that we have never made the course numbers consistent? If you take English 101 at UNR or NSU or CSN, it may be English 101 at UNLV, but it may not be. And the higher up you get, they may change. I was wondering if there was a reason we did not do those course numbers consistently since we have a system that covers the entire State.

MS. CHARLTON:
We do have what is called common course numbering. So English 101 is English 101. We have implemented a model for expanding and developmental, but in English 101 E is still in English 101.

There are programs that may get into a more specific, detailed level. Perhaps it is in education or nursing, where the courses may be a bit different based on the program development. But we do have common course numbering. We have good data around that. I could ask our Associate Vice Chancellor Renee Davis to come to the table and provide more background on how we develop our courses and how those numbers are developed.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I think it is really important because we do have kids that transfer in between institutions.

RENEE DAVIS (Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education):
I would say that the very beginning is the common course numbering. Progressing from the common course numbering is kind of the next step and that entails what counts towards the degree, the program of study that the student is interested in, and that is where we still have some work to do. The Board of Regents just approved a new strategic plan, and that is one of the areas that we will be focusing on.

Some other things we are looking at exploring under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Daniel Archer are can we have some two-year degrees that are common across the system? So right now, we have a really good transfer system regionally. Our courses are aligned. There's a really good alignment in terms of students wanting to transfer with an associate-to-bachelor's program, north or south. Sometimes it gets more complicated when you mix that up.

So those are the areas we are looking at going beyond common course numbering. That system has been around, I believe, since at least 2013, perhaps even before that. We need to build on that success.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Yes. I think your dates are probably about right, because I remember when we worked on having courses even from UNR to be transferred to UNLV and back

and forth. We had teachers that would start there and then they would come here or vice versa. When they'd find out a course did not match, they had to take it all over again. In this day of people trying to find jobs and the right avenue for what they want to do, it makes sense because we have this overall umbrella arch of our system. It is not separate systems like in other states. I actually think we have a great system, and we have great institutions that feed a lot of information: photography, fire science, orthodontics, medical school. We really run the gamut, and I think that we do a great job here in the State.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I will close out with one question: will you update the committee on any of the efforts for any of the institutions to become HSIs [Hispanic Serving Institutions]?

MS. CHARLTON:
Certainly. Several of our institutions have achieved that milestone. I think emerging, and almost across that finish line, is UNR.

I think that there's a representative here that can also address this progress; they are right on the cusp of that. One or two others are maybe a little bit further down. We do have what is called an HSI Task Force. It brings together all our institutions and they look at strategies to help to accomplish that goal, because it really does serve the residents of the State. They work together in camaraderie. Here's another strategy that worked for us, and here is where we are.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Which are the institutions who've achieved that? UNLV and ... .

MS. DAVIS:
It is five institutions—UNLV, CSN, TMCC, Nevada State College (NSC) and WNC. I think Great Basin College (GBC) is also getting close to emerging but not quite as far as UNR.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Seeing no further questions, we are going to the hearing for Senate Bill 38.

SENATE BILL 38: revises provisions relating to school emergency operation plans. (BDR 34-270)

BRETT COMPSTON (Administrator, Division of Emergency Management/Homeland Security, Nevada Office of the Military):
Today, I have Ms. Sharon Luce with me, who's the deputy administrator, and Ms. Shari Grennan, who is my chief of plans. I also have my Chief Financial Officer Mr. Jared Franco in the back in case any of those things come up.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of S.B. 38 and the proposed amendments to NRS concerning the dissemination of school emergency operation plans to local public safety agencies. As the Nevada State emergency manager, I am here to emphasize the critical need for statutory changes to enhance emergency preparedness, coordination and response efforts within our schools and our communities. Current Nevada law mandates the school districts, charter schools and private schools develop and submit emergency operation plans to the Division of Emergency Management. However, existing statutes do not allow for the dissemination of these plans to local public safety agencies once submitted. This lack of access significantly hampers emergency preparedness and response efforts by first responders and emergency management personnel at the local level.

The proposed amendments seek to align the language in NRS 388.259 and NRS 394.1698 to ensure cohesion between public and private school emergency planning statutes. Additionally, the amendments introduced changes to NRS 414.040, allowing the Division of Emergency Management to disseminate school emergency operation plans to local public safety agencies for emergency response, preparedness and coordination efforts.

Ensuring timely access to these plans improve situational awareness, expanding the knowledge of school-specific emergency procedures for first responders. Providing public safety agencies with these plans fosters better interagency coordination, reducing confusion and response times during actual emergencies. Law enforcement, fire departments and emergency medical service personnel can conduct training and exercises based on actual school plans, enhancing readiness. This could be particularly critical during incidents such as active shooter events, fires or natural disasters.

Currently, NRS 388.259 and 394.1698 emphasize confidentiality but do not adequately account for the necessity of information sharing with emergency responders. The proposed language allows dissemination while maintaining

confidentiality and safeguards, ensuring plans are only shared with appropriate agencies for emergency preparedness training and response efforts.

In the September 7, 2023, Nevada Commission on Homeland Security meeting, Sheriff McMahill of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) and previous chief of the Division, Dave Overson, discussed the importance of providing access to final drafts of plans for responding agencies. In the same meeting, Governor Joe Lombardo directed that this topic be addressed in the 2025 Legislative Session. Failure to enact these statutory changes could result in increased risk to students, faculty and first responders during crisis situations. Additionally, missed opportunities for interagency collaboration and training could hinder efforts to enhance emergency preparedness.

The proposed amendments to NRS 388.259, 394.1698 and 414.040 are necessary to ensure that Nevada's public safety agencies have the tools and information needed to protect our schools effectively. This is a common sense, no-cost solution that strengthens our State's resilience and safeguards our children and our educators.

I urge this committee to support the passage of S.B. 38 with the proposed amendments, ensuring that emergency operations plans can be effectively shared with those responsible for responding to crisis. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

SENATOR TITUS:
At the current time, the schools, casinos and agencies are already mandated to have an emergency plan within those facilities throughout our State, correct?

MR. COMPSTON:
Yes, Ma'am.

SENATOR TITUS:
And they are currently mandated that they share that with your office?

MR. COMPSTON:
They are mandated to share those with our office. Individual schools are mandated to share it with their district. We receive the district plan; we do not receive the individual public-school plans.

SENATOR TITUS:
All 17 school districts have their plan that they share with you, and you have it on record. In the case of an identified emergency, you then can share it with local law enforcement? These plans are not now allowed to be shared with local emergency medical services (EMS)?

MR. COMPSTON:
Correct. So as written in NRS currently, we can share a plan at the time of an emergency. Imagine that you are a first responder to a school in which an active shooter event is occurring, and you need to get access to a school—either their plan, their collection points or the blueprint for the school. That is an onerous process to call back to dispatch, to reach back to my duty officer and to have my duty officer load up their computer—if it is a weekend—to get the plan to the responder who's responding. If those plans are already in place with local law enforcement, who are responding to a crisis, the time of response is simply going to be quicker. It is going to allow them to provide a quicker, more efficient and safer response.

SENATOR TITUS:
I think the big change here would be that the local law enforcement or the local EMS agencies would already have these plans for each individual school in their local school areas. So, say Smith Valley EMS would have a copy of the schools for just Smith Valley? Is that what you are telling me?

MR. COMPSTON:
As NRS is written, individual schools are supposed to provide those to their local law enforcement. I have no enforcement mechanism that this would provide another mechanism for us to provide that really before an incident occurs. So right now, it is really about coordination and preparedness. So, if you are a law enforcement agency, a fire agency, an EMS agency, this will allow us to share the plans before we are in the heat of the moment. They can conduct training, they can conduct preparedness, they conduct rehearsals and have these plans available to them before an incident occurs. The moment of the incident is not the time to be figuring out where the plan is.

SENATOR TITUS:
I guess I need clarity. Our local EMS does not already have the plans? It would only happen … they would share them at the time of emergency? You are looking at doing this so it is not shared at just a time of emergency. They

are going to have them all the time. I just worry. I think about the confidentiality of all that. Where are they going to sit? What are the computer systems they're going to use? How many eyes will be seeing this, as opposed to one database you would have it on? Okay, a 911 call goes out; you can identify where that is, and you send them that plan. So there's some confidentiality, some management, you know, cyber security, all of those issues. I just need some clarity.

MR. COMPSTON:
If I am in your seat, I would look at it this way. It is a risk. It is a risk-balancing option, right? Look at what the probability is that somebody is going to break into a law enforcement database, like LVMPD, for example. [A hacker] acquires the emergency response plans and uses that plan to develop an active shooter scenario. I think the probability of that is extremely low. I think the probability that we will see an active shooter event in a school in which those plans will need to be used and those responding officers or firefighters may have to use those plans and they've trained on those plans beforehand, I think that there is a high probability that will occur.

And so really what the committee has to balance is the risk of somebody breaking in and using those plans to develop an attack versus the probability that we will have an attack. And we want to be best prepared to respond to that attack.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I really do not have a question, just a response to my colleague and her concerns. I sort of feel like, as a teacher, the bad guy already has the plan. I mean he has got it and that is why he is there. He or she has been in the school. I can tell you, as a person who's been through some of those drills, I want someone to know where those kids are or where those people are. And I think it is better to err on the side of caution in these positions. So I guess I do have one clarifying question: is the simple CliffNote to this bill that now you can't do it, but if we pass this bill, you can share those plans?

MR. COMPSTON:
Yes.

SENATOR ROGICH:
I just want to confirm that these plans will be based on floor plans and not anything relating to a student's confidential personal information.

MR. COMPSTON:
Yes.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
I am a school principal in the fifth largest school district, Clark County School District (CCSD). And every year we are required to do an emergency plan that is pretty extensive. The floor plans do have people on staff or students that will need an additional plan on how to get out. If a student is in a wheelchair, that information is on there. Several times I have had police, fire and medics at school. Unfortunately, we are in an area that goes on lockdown frequently, or we do have students that elope. I partner with CCSD police, and I partner with fire. One time I had CCSD police, the City of Las Vegas Marshall and LVMPD on campus all at once. I think it is incredibly important to be able to share this information.

Obviously, there's a risk, right? But we've got to balance that risk and reward. It has been so much more beneficial to support our local emergency management, especially in a crisis when things are happening and they need to know how to get into the building the fastest. So, I do not see any problem with this. I think it is very much common sense.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
My only comment is, it sounds to me like it is about readiness, and I think that is really important when it comes to safety. We will take anyone who would like to testify in support of S.B. 38.

SUSAN KEEMA (Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Superintendents):
We support S.B. 38. Thank you for your time.

ADRIAN HUNT (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department):
We support this measure, S.B. 38. This bill will be positive and impactful based on the ability for school plans to be shared by the State to law enforcement agencies for preparedness efforts. This will eliminate the duplication between local and state agencies required to receive the plans. Thank you, we support.

CHAIR TAYLOR: We will close the hearing on S.B. 38. We will turn now to our agenda. We are hoping to get through three presentations. We're going to start with Ms. Stacey Montooth.

STACEY MONTOOTH (Executive Director, Nevada Department of Native American Affairs):
I will be as succinct as possible. The name of my presentation (Exhibit D contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.) is "Meeting Our Mission through the Native American Fee Waiver."

I will be sharing a little bit of our operations in Indian Country. We begin all formal meetings with an acknowledgment of the lands that we gather on: the Numa, the Newe, the Nuwuvi, the Wa She Shu and Pipa Aha Macav have lived in the Great Basin since time began. Please join me in offering our deepest respect and gratitude to our five major indigenous groups: the Northern Paiute, the Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, the Washoe and the Mojave—not just the original caretakers of this land we now call Nevada but for their enduring stewardship and protection of our shared land and waterways. Today, the Nevada Department of Native American Affairs reaffirms its commitment to improve the quality of life for our 28 tribal nations, bands, colonies and our 62,000 plus urban Indians who choose to make Nevada their current home.

Again, going back to our traditional ways, I want to underscore—you see my face, there's a slide with me featured prominently—and make sure that you understand, I am not here speaking for our Tribal Nations, I am not here speaking for our community members; I speak with them. So, the slide is to illustrate the great community that I am actually supporting.

You mentioned, Chair, that you do have some new committee members. So just quickly, I want to share or remind some of you that at the Nevada Department of Native American Affairs, our mission is to improve the quality of life for 28 tribal nations, 62,000 urban Indians. Our purpose is specifically codified in NRS 233A.090: we study matters affecting the social and economic welfare of all American Indians in Nevada. This has to do with any issues relating to Indian Country, whether federal or state.

So finally, our topic today is higher education. I start with the question, why higher education? That seems like a very straightforward question. It probably

seems like it should have a very succinct answer. I want you to know before I go through this list that this information I am sharing with you today, like all the information that my office gathers, is specifically from the perspective of our tribal leaders. It is from our Indian Education Advisory Committee, which the NRS gives my agency the authority to create. It includes information from our tribal elders. So again, straightforward questions, but these answers are from a Native American perspective.

So why do we want our native learners to graduate from higher education? The first one is straightforward: socio-economic status. There's a clear-cut association with your higher attainment in education to your standard of living, and that is specifically economic driven. That needs to be underscored.

Secondly, civic engagement. Our leadership at the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) tells us that our college students are not only culturally grounded, but they become more engaged in all of the civic education opportunities—and not just within their tribal government, but with mainstream society. Cultural representation is extremely important to our elders and our leaders. What we know, again from the NIEA, is our students learn better when they are taught by people that look like them. They learn better when they are coached by volunteers or school coaches that look like them. And so, we want our people to get those higher education degrees so they can serve in those capacities.

Our tribal leaders want our native learners to attain degrees in higher education to address historic marginalization. They also underscore better health care. Indian health service has hard research—and I think this goes for all of society—the more formal education credentials you have, the better your health outcomes are. And then finally, our elders are really looking towards our native learners to be able to navigate mainstream society. That transpires mostly when they have an experience in higher education.

For high school, my focus is on higher education, but I think this will give you a better glimpse of what we are looking at—the big picture. In the United States, we know that 449,400 native learners are in public high schools in this country. A ballpark estimate is 1 percent of our country. That comes from the NIEA. In our State, through the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), we know that 1 percent of all public school learners, 3,778, identify as native learners. I want to make sure and underscore that these are folks who are self-identified. They

are the boss of them, their parents and their grandparents. When they enroll in public schools in our State, they check the box. They provide additional documentation that says, yep, our student is tribally enrolled. They're connected. They are a direct descendant of a federally-recognized tribe.

I also think that it is very critical for this group to know that 27 percent of all our self-identified Native American learners are studying in Clark County. We have four schools. These are public schools that are on tribal land. You're going to hear from our friends at Duck Valley soon. They fall into this category. Also there is one Bureau of Indian Affairs Education School in Nevada, and that is 60 miles from here at Pyramid Lake.

Getting back to higher education—more data. Our friends at the NIEA tell us that 22 percent of all American Indian and Alaska Native learners graduate from college. This is specific to a four-year degree, 22 percent.

The Nevada Department of Native American Affairs can only absolutely state that in Nevada, we have 486 native learners. That's a pretty ugly number. That's 0.04 percent of the population. I will continue to find good numbers. I want to underscore this is not specific to education. The census income … it is so hard to collect good data in Indian Country. And if you'll invite me back, we can talk about that some other day. But keep in mind the numbers I am sharing with you today only include folks that are self-identified—not only self-identified, but they only identify as Native American.

This information I am sharing comes straight from Chancellor Charlton and NASE. Renee Davis put this together and this is a graph based on your request. So, in July every year, NSHE releases the numbers of Native Americans who are taking advantage of the Native American Fee Waiver. You can see that in the academic year 2021, through all the respective NSHE institutions, we had 140 native learners use the waiver to at least take one class. The 140 includes degree-seeking students. That number also includes those looking for certificates, those in graduate school and those in law school. So, I would just ask you to scroll right across and know that in the last academic year that we have information on, 2023-2024, that number has jumped from 140 learners to 486. And I promise you that number is going to be quite a bit higher this next academic year as well.

Having heard your questions earlier, Dr. Titus, I hope that this clarification on the percentage of Native Americans in our country adequately addresses the questions that you asked earlier. I am happy to answer any questions. I also want to take time because you all do such a great job of archiving all the presentations. Know that the list of organizations and people on this slide have not just contributed to my remarks today, but they are doing the heavy lifting to ensure that our native learners have equal access to higher learning in Nevada. My contact information for future questions is provided in Exhibit D. And again, I am prepared to answer anything that you would like.

SENATOR TITUS:
My question is how many of the schools in our NSHE programs offer your native language classes? Are there any at the high school level? And are we doing better at that? I love Nevada history. I love history in general, especially your native history; preserving that is just instrumental, and part of that is preserving your language.

MS. MONTOOTH:
I will answer your question about native language offerings in colleges through NSHE and also native language in high schools to the best of my ability but know that there are probably better experts in this room to answer that.

I can tell you without a doubt that the University of Nevada currently offers the Paiute language, specifically Northern Paiute language, at two different levels. It continues to grow. Anecdotally, I want you to know I specifically mentioned the fee waiver. The legislation that you all passed and support really focuses on an area that the Chancellor addressed as well. The native language is not just for degree-seeking students. It is not just for 18- to 22-year-olds.

I have an auntie who knew our grandmother went to boarding schools and the Paiute language was beaten out of her. I have an auntie who has a little recollection about Paiute as a young girl. She is now relearning that language at the University of Nevada. So again, I know that UNR offers that, and it now is at two levels.

Regarding high school, I know that we have two public schools. Again, our friends from the Sho-Pai [Shoshone-Paiute] Nation are in the room. At the Owyhee Combined School, I believe for decades, they've been offering Shoshone and perhaps Paiute language classes to their students. I am certain

that in Humboldt County, through McDermitt High School, there are language classes offered as well.

I will say the most talked about program regarding native language in our high schools comes out of Washoe County, just right down the road. So again, I am not the expert, but I know there's one in the room. The NDE created a program some time ago which pairs a licensed classroom teacher with a fluent native language speaker. Not only is that a native language speaker, but the NDE and the Washoe County School District (WCSD) work with the tribal government to identify who the tribal government feels is the appropriate person to partner with that classroom educator. They offer what we call Great Basin Language in four different high schools in the WCSD. And I believe we are talking about Wooster High School, Reed High School, North Valley High School and Spanish Springs High School. Those four schools have probably the highest overall percentage of native learners in those respective districts, with the exception of Pyramid Lake, which again, is a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school. They already have great language programs in place.

I will also share with you, in the last few semesters, the Great Basin languages offered as an elective are some of the elective classes that fill up the fastest. And last I knew, we had just as many non-natives wanting to get into those classes as we do native learners.

SENATOR TITUS:
Thank you for that. It is good to hear that it is climbing.

SENATOR CRUZ-CRAWFORD:
Senator Titus, if you like bilingual education, you are going to love my bill coming up. I just wanted to share one thing for us. I saw the fee waivers jumped from 2022 to the 2023-2024. Last session, tuition waivers were approved for tribes, surrounding Nevada. So that created a huge jump in those tuition waivers. We're tracking about $3 million plus at NSHE this year so far for tuition waivers, and that is cost that the universities have to absorb. I know this is a policy, not a financial, committee, but I do want to let you know that is something that is going to be coming up. So, I appreciate all the work you do.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you for the work, and the passion behind it. This is very important, and it is so great to see it come alive again in our State. With this, we'll go to the NDE Superintendent, Jhone Ebert, and team.

JHONE EBERT (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education):
One of the best things that I have the honor to do in my job is to work with students and with amazing staff. This afternoon, we are going to share with you the wonderful work with the curriculum that we are doing in regard to our American Indian students. You heard from Director Montooth about our partnership, and with that, I am going to introduce the most important person in our room today, Riata Palmer. She is a senior at McDermitt High School, and she will be part of our presentation as well. So with that, team, please proceed.

JULIE BOWERS (Education Programs Director, Office of Inclusive Education, Nevada Department of Education):
I am honored to present the work that our American Indian education team, in partnership with West Ed's Western Educational Equity Assistance Center, has done to develop a five-year plan aimed at improving outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native students (Exhibit E contains copyrighted material. Original is available upon request from the Research Library.). For the rest of the presentation, I will refer to the student population as our native students. With me today is Fredina Drye-Romero, Education Program's Professional, and we are also pleased to have Riata, a senior at McDermitt Combined School, with us today.

To understand the full picture of our work, NDE's partnership with West Ed began with a comprehensive review of existing data. This included national, State and district data sources. We also incorporated valuable insights from the Nevada Indian Education Summit in March of 2024, as well as interviews conducted with our district leaders in the fall of 2024.

The analysis of the data collected led to the establishment of the following key priorities: one, measurably increasing student attendance and engagement; two, measurably increasing high school graduation rates; and three, ensuring the accurate identification of native students.

For priority one, NDE is committed to significantly reducing chronic absenteeism among native students, lowering the current rate of 49.4 percent to 23 percent by 2030. This ambitious goal aims to bring the rate for native students in line with, or potentially lower than, the current national average.

For priority two, graduation rates, the current four-year graduation rate for our native students is currently 65 percent. Our goal is to increase this to 80 percent by 2030. Nevada Department of Education celebrates students graduating in four years and is committed to increasing the number of our four-year graduates. However, we recognize the importance of supporting students who require additional time to complete their studies. Therefore, we plan to raise the five-year graduation rate for native students from 70 percent to 82 percent by 2030.

Our third priority focuses on the accurate identification of native students. To achieve this, NDE will continue to consult with tribal leaders to determine their data needs and priorities regarding student identification. The goal is to develop a clear policy for tribes and districts, as well as the development of tools, templates and resources to assist in this data collection. This five-year plan is currently in its final review phase and will be implemented in the fall of 2025. In addition to the development of this plan, NDE has also been actively engaged in other Indian education initiatives.

FREDINA DRYE-ROMERO (Education Program Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, Nevada Department of Education):
From an idea presented at the Indian Education Summit in 2024, to the NDE Indian Education Program and the Office of Teaching and Learning, we are collaborating with the Great Basin Tribes to create a pathway for student proficiency in native language to earn the Nevada State Seal of Biliteracy. To kick-start this process in Nevada, we met with our tribes and held a workshop in July at the Nevada Museum of Art and focused on the development of student assessments to accurately engage language proficiency. The goal is to provide students with the opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy in Paiute, Western Shoshone and the Washoe Tribe. As you can see from the slide, the project has the full support of the Department of Education Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jhone Ebert, who has emphasized the profound importance of this expansion.

Another project that I want to talk about today is the Native American Curriculum Enhancement Project, representing the indigenous tribes in Nevada. Working collaboratively with the Department of Native American Affairs, the UNLV and the NDE, we will integrate indigenous perspectives into the newly developed lesson plans by working directly with tribal leaders and elders. They will also assist in creating professional learning opportunities for educators and work with both pre-service and in-service teachers to ensure accurate classroom representation of these perspectives.

MS. BOWERS:
The Indian education program is proud of its accomplishments since the last legislative session, including the projects we have already talked about today, but there are a few others. We have also increased our collaboration with districts and tribal leaders through the tribal consultation process. We have secured the Native Youth Community Project (NYCP) Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. And lastly, we are especially grateful to the 2023 legislators for their support in funding to expand our Indian education program staff, adding crucial members to our team.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these accomplishments. The Indian education program is excited to continue this vital work, including implementing this five-year plan, pursuing new initiatives and hosting our annual Education Summit in March of 2025. I will now turn it over to our special guest, Riata, to talk about her personal journey of education and her future aspirations.

RIATA PALMER (Student, McDermitt High School):
How mu? Nu Riata Palmer me' nane'a. Nu Tamudu-wait. E bea Marcy Northrup yaise e nah Dusty Palmer. [How are you? My name is Riata Celise Palmer. I come from the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation. My mother's name is Macy Northrup, my father's name is Dusty Palmer.] (Translation provided by Alberto Quintero, Committee Policy Analyst.)

I am 17 years old and a senior at McDermitt High School. I have committed to the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), and I am going into social work. I am trying to focus on human and family development.

Before I made this commitment, I had a big, big dream of going to UNLV for hospitality. The Native Youth Community Project had granted a lot of our kids at McDermitt the opportunity to tour and experience college life. We were able to

stay in the dorms and meet with different people from different departments. My biggest takeaway from this was the hospitality piece. In my mind, I fell in love with the idea of coming home and owning a casino that would profit my community. I was dead set on this, and that is what my mind was set on.

But of course, when new opportunities come up, I took the chance of further exploring my options. I listened to people talk about generational trauma. I never quite understood what people meant when they discussed this topic. But the more I listened and understood, something in my heart had changed. In my heart, I knew this touched a soft spot for me. I see children in my own community suffering and struggling in school. They're often acting out and troubled. We only see what is on the surface. We do not know what is happening in that child's life. I do not want to work only with these children, but the parents and guardians as well, because these things start in the home.

I had been exposed to multiple universities that had offered amazing programs. Thanks to NYCP, I was able go to these campuses to explore a network with different people. I had applied to KU, Haskell, Portland University and UNR. I had been accepted into all of them. So, I happily thank NYCP. I would have never been exposed to all of these amazing opportunities and never would have found what I have a strong passion for.

I made this decision to stay in Nevada because of NSHE and the Native American Fee Waiver. It is helping me out greatly because I am being raised by a single mother growing up on a reservation, and times are tough nowadays. I am taking any bit of financial help I can get. I have applied for multiple scholarships and have worked to find as many grants to help in any way possible. So, this fee waiver has definitely had a big influence on my choice. I am very excited even to have the opportunity to have a college education as an indigenous student.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
You did an awesome job. Thank you so much. That concludes the presentation. That's the way to end right there.

SENATOR TITUS:
Not a question, but just a really big thank you for being here today. You heard my question earlier. So, you addressed it and I also want you to know, thank you very much. I'm quite impressed, and we are working hard to support your

social work programs in our schools to be continued. Even perhaps some reimbursement for doing that. So, thank you. And again, thank you for staying in Nevada. We need you.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
This is not really a question. I just want to point out that she has been on the girls' basketball team for four years, so she is talented in so many ways. So, we are certainly glad to have you in our State and glad you are going to stay here at home.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I want to thank you as well and tell you we would be happy if you would like to transfer to UNLV at any point.

MS. DRYE-ROMERO:
This is why we do the work—for this student and others. You know the NDE would have been so fortunate to have had this NYCP, to be able to be in the McDermitt Combined School in Humboldt County School District, as well as in the Walker River Paiute Tribe in Lyon County and Mineral County, touching those students there. It is just amazing that it is able to touch all students in our State. You know, if there was more funding, we could do more things with these wonderful students that we get to know every summer during our summer camps with UNLV and UNR.

MS. BOWERS:
If I could just add one more thing. She is also the UNR Powwow Princess, and she did bring her crown today. Since we asked her to bring it, I think she should show it.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I think so too. Please do. And while you do that, Ms. Riata, we have a question.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
Would you explain your necklace that you are wearing and what the significance of what you have on? Because I have seen others around the building, and I would like some explanation.

MS. DRYE-ROMERO:
Riata's great-great-grandmother actually beaded this, my stepmother's mother, the late Berdina Bacon. And when I was her age, I was a dancer and so my grandmothers all beaded the rose medallion for me.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
What a gift. I try to rival Senator Titus at my home in Las Vegas with many Nevada pieces that I have shared with Ms. Montooth as well. So, go ahead, please Riata, we would love to hear from you.

MS. PALMER:
Recently I took a very spontaneous choice to run for this title because a lot of people told me that my speaking would get me a long way, and I did not believe them. I did not think that was considered a talent, but apparently it is. So, I was lucky enough to win because I did run against another smart, young girl. A lot of their talents were different and everybody was saying, unfortunately, I am not gifted like that. But I did write a short story on what it is like to be indigenous from my perspective of being so pale, unfortunately. And I did not realize it, but there are a lot of other indigenous people that do have that issue with their skin color being too light, too dark, or my hair being too light. It's been an issue, but whenever I spoke on it, I realized that I touched so many people. So, it makes me even more proud and happy to represent such a big title.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Thank you so much. Thank you, for sharing that.

SENATOR TITUS:
Thank you for bringing that. I hope that you will consider wearing that when you graduate. We had to actually pass a law here in the Assembly wasn't it?

CHAIR TAYLOR:
It was last session.

SENATOR TITUS:
Yes, so that students could actually wear artifacts of their communities or their identities or whoever they felt they needed to represent at that moment. And so hopefully, you'll consider doing that when you graduate. So, thank you for that. And I have grandchildren that have the same issues as you, they are too light;

their father's black, their mom, my stepdaughter, is very pale. And there's issues there that I did not realize until my own grandchildren expressed that to me. And thank you for sharing that insight also.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
I will say just a couple of things. In the Black community, we have those same issues, unfortunately, and I am sure you are aware of that. But I will say part of what prompted that law that we passed last session was people wanted to wear their eagle feathers, which we know is really important in your community and in your culture. They were getting some pushback and some resistance. So, we had to make sure that that was a big driver for why that law was passed. So, thank you for sharing that part of your culture with us because all the students across the State now will benefit from that.

Last, but certainly not least, we have a presentation from the Shoshone Paiute Tribal Business Council.

BRIAN MASON (Tribal Chairman, Shoshone Paiute Tribes):
I actually have the honor of being the Chairman of the Shoshone Paiute Tribes. I was asked to come to speak just shortly on the bill that was passed in the Assembly, A.B. No. 519 of the 82nd Session. I recognize a lot of faces that participated in that bill and that effort. It was a monumental lift, and it is certainly appreciated.

I am going to go through some things that we discovered. We found that it is not just an issue on Indian reservations, but it is actually rural Nevada. I think one of the hardships was during that session, I remember testifying for former Senator Goicoechea's effort to get a school for Ely, and it was unsuccessful, and it made me that much more grateful that we were [successful].

Assembly Bill No. 519 of the 82nd Session was signed into the law on June 13, 2023, by Governor Joe Lombardo. And that journey took our business council to New York, to the halls of the United Nations. It took us to Washington, D.C., to the halls of the Capitol, and it took us here to the Nevada Legislative Session. It also put us in front of the Elko County School District in Elko County, trying to procure the one-time spending bill to allocate funds for a new school. It was a school that was desperately needed.

We came here in force last time, so I do not want to go through that again because we are limited on time. But it was not—and I have said it before, we actually did a short documentary film on it—just the effort of the business council; it was the effort of the community; and it was participation at all levels. From Head Start students, grade schoolers, seniors in high school, to the educators and the parents: they all came, and they all met with lots of you; and they sat in your offices and testified.

Assembly Bill No. 519 of the 82nd Session has taken many twists and turns. There have been many disappointments, letdowns and highs and joys. And obviously, some lows as there were some setbacks. There are so many people that you want to acknowledge and thank that assisted on this, but it reminds me of a term that we used in the Marine Corps, where I spent many years, and it was "gung-ho", and that just means working together. Because it was not a few people, it was a state effort.

I could thank Ways and Means Chair Daniele Monroe-Moreno. I could thank Senator Ira Hansen who first brought the subject up and Assemblymember Alexis Hansen. There are many people down that chain, you know, Dr. Ken Higbee from the school district and then, of course, our lobbyists from Silver State, Will Adler, who has been there the whole way. But mainly the kids, and I think that is what it was all about.

You know, these last two years have been some of the most rewarding and some of the most disappointing. I made seven deployments while in the Marine Corps—some combat, some humanitarian, some peacekeeping, some operational—and this was definitely the most challenging.

Even today, or yesterday, there is a lawsuit against the bill to remove specifically a county out of the bill and the tax that is related to it. It had nothing to do with the one-time dollar amount that was awarded to build Owyhee High School. But it is just another stumbling block that kind of adds to that difficult layer.

After all the time I spent overseas, I never met any more resilient people in this world than the ones that reside on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. There's nothing like it. Part of the difficulty getting a contractor to come build is we are so remote. I mean, we are two hours from anywhere—two hours to get a McDonald's hamburger. Now there's gotta be something illegal with that. And

on resiliency, the kids struggle just to attend school. I saw an attendance comment, or stats on that, from other high schools, and we suffer from that too. It is not the best place to go to learn. I mean, it is just not. Owyhee was even declared a building that is unsafe, and it has been intergenerational like that.

On the resilience of the people, I have been fortunate in having my communications director here who graduated from that school, then proceeded on to Boise State, graduated from Boise College and after that was selected as a Udall Foundation intern—1 of 12 in the United States. He interned at Senator Catherine Cortez Masto's office this summer; and when he came home, we gave him a job; and he is our communications director right now, kind of assisting the Business Council on navigating some of these issues that we go through on a daily basis. That is the resiliency of the people that have dealt with this school issue.

I hope it gives you solace in the fact that when you voted this law, this bill into the law that you did it for the right reasons and for the right folks, because there's no better folks than the ones that are out there on that reservation. I mean, it is tough. People just do not realize that if you get hurt, you just bought a chopper ride to Boise. That is just the way it is. If you go to the store to buy groceries, you better have gas because there is no gas for two hours. That is the kind of the life we deal with on a daily basis. So, this bill was a gift; and I am sure it is going to improve lives and, at the end of the day, save lives.

Like I said, there's been many ups and downs. Our lobbyist, Will Adler, of Silver State Government Relations has helped us navigate the whole thing. There are many folks that have assisted, and there's unfortunately many folks that have tried to block it. It is unfortunate, but I just wanted to give you some update.

We did get a contractor last week and we got a bid. So, we are building. We have already done lots of stuff, the tribe. We partnered with the National Guard from Idaho. They came in, they did the dirt work in preparation. We had a groundbreaking ceremony. Governor Joe Lombardo came out, some Nevada Senators and Assemblymembers, school district folks, did the grand opening, did all the baseline studies and this was on the Tribe's dime.

I know that the Governor had some ARPA [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021] dollars that he pushed out to the tribes, $740,000. We put that all into the studies, all the baseline studies paid for by the tribes. We know this is a remote build. The Tribes-on-Tribes funds purchased ten tiny homes to establish a man camp. It is a million dollars. We are a non-revenue tribe. In other words, we do not make any money from anywhere. We use grants and BIE funds. So, the amount of stuff that we have done is resilient, like I have mentioned.

I have got a project team that has been working on this. We got U.S. highway federal dollars to get the road in and road out. It has not been done, but we have the funds allocated to it. We've got fiber optic cable to the front door, partnering with the State on wire rural Nevada. It went a different route. For years, we've been trying to get it done and it was going to be $20 million to go through the canyon. They had a great idea. They said let's go around the mountain; it works. It was like $7 million.

Our people have been working on it since that bill passed. We are striving every day to do it. If you have any questions, I would like Will Adler and my communications director to come up because they can speak to stuff more specifically.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:
I just want to thank you for being here because I share, as an educator for 30 years in a classroom, my full support and heart with you. I have been there. I know where you are. I have driven every square inch of this State, and so I know how it is to be out there and not have the support services of towns and emergency services. So, thank you for what you are doing. Thank you for being here today and telling your story, and we are going to keep working on this to make sure you get that school.

MR. MASON:
And the amazing thing that we found while you are going through this episode is that this is not a tribal thing, this is a Nevada thing. This is rural Nevada. I mean, the schools as you drive around the State, they are old, and I do not know what is going to happen. But like I mentioned, White Pine, you know there are many like [us]. We were fortunate. We are the fortunate ones. We got gifted the bill, and we got gifted the monies; and people like this are going to guarantee that it is the right dollar spent.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Well, again, we really appreciate it and are standing with you being so optimistic that the much-needed school will be built for those Nevadans who are such an important part of our State. So, it was an honor to support it. And certainly, Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to have you here.

WILL ADLER (Silver State Government Relations):
Just very briefly, yes: we did get the vote. I just want to say to the chairman's comments and everyone else's, this is a whole Nevada effort to get this school here, and it is a whole Elko effort too, in some ways.

The school district just stepped forward and agreed to the contractor's bid, but that bid did not come together on its own. We have seen the whole community come together, be it the concrete contractor or the framer. They all have actually tried to lower their bids to the point to get it in under that budget we had for the school. There's some overcharges and some cost overruns, and we do not have a football field yet; but we are not going to stop until we have the whole of the school. We are working on every angle we can to achieve that.

MR. MASON:
That is the brick-and-mortar portion of the school. I mean, it is not going to have a parking lot; it is not going to have a bus building, or a bus barn, in the beginning. It is not going to have a football field. But, you know, we are working other avenues. We are going to put in some tribal funding. We're partnering with the state of Idaho as well. We're talking to some in the mining industry, one of the mining companies from Elko, Nevada—Nevada Gold Mines. We are going to a meeting, and they are going to try to help us get a rock crusher so we can crush all of our aggregate, which is going to save about $2.5 million in the trucking of gravel.

Our people in the tribe have just really been doing amazing things for the progression of the school to make sure that it is ready when a contractor gets there because they can't go home. A lot of them bid in the beginning, and no one came in because they were going to try to travel back and forth, and it was millions of dollars in fuel and time wasted—four hours on the road. So, that was the purchase of the tiny homes, to establish that camp to give them a welcome atmosphere so we can get this thing done.

CHAIR TAYLOR:
Now we are down to the last item on our agenda and that is public comment.

JOHN EPPOLITO (Protect Nevada Children):
Experts on the left and right are concerned about how the student data and student profiles created by free EdTech vendors may affect the future of our children. These free vendors are paid with student data. Students could use the free EdTech vendor Edmodo for all their subjects. Plus, there's an embedded social media platform. There are at least 75 million U.S. students using Edmodo, and experts believe they had the most student data and the richest student profiles of any of the free Ed Tech vendors. Parents will never see any of the student data or profiles Edmodo created about their children.

In 2018, Edmodo was sold to the Chinese. We begged WCSD to inform parents; they refused. Instead, they required students to use Edmodo for another year. Most other districts, including Clark County School District (CCSD), used Edmodo for much longer. We do not think any district in our State told parents who bought Edmodo. Four years after China bought Edmodo, they shut it down in 2022.

At a U.S. Congressional hearing titled "How Emerging Technology Affects Student Privacy," law professor Joel Rydberg from Fordham testified, "We are going to see the merger of student data gathered in the classroom to data gathered outside the classroom." I will email you the link.

Did the Chinese merge Edmodo data with TikTok data? In February, 2020, the FBI said, "The Chinese are building a massive database on every American." It is too late to affect many of us, but China's database may affect the future of our children and nation. While our leaders are busy fighting, China is playing chess with the future of our children and nation. You are in a position to help protect the future of Nevada students.

DOUG UNGER (Nevada Faculty Alliance):
Following the December 6, 2023, mass shooting on the UNLV campus that murdered three faculty members, two of whom I knew personally, NSHE followed up with the Chancellor's ad hoc Safety and Security Committee to recommend urgently needed improvements and how to fund them, now made a permanent committee by the Regents.

I served on that committee for more than a year. I learned a lot. I prepared for the American Federation of Teachers a presentation to the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. This nation and our State, incredibly, do not have any set of best practices or even guidelines for higher education or K-12 districts for active assailant responses. Each district, each NSHE campus essentially has it is own plan, some more effective than others. This is not nearly enough to combat the epidemic of gun violence murdering our children, teachers and security officers in our schools. At UNLV, we do not even have doors to classrooms that lock from the inside. That tragic day, shots still firing, teachers had to step out into hallways, like sacrificial targets, swipe marlock cards then step back in and shut doors behind them. Communications were confusing; there is no central site to coordinate first responders; no organized messaging or news to inform our campus or the public. I could go on with examples, but NSHE urgently needs to move faster with the safety improvements and needs the resources in order to do so. For K-12, I ask this Legislature to impanel and fund an interim committee to study and recommend best practices, guidelines, public education and optimum infrastructure to improve school safety from gun violence statewide.

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CHAIR TAYLOR:
Seeing no one else here in Carson City or in Las Vegas, this concludes our meeting. We are adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Sharon McCallen,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Senator Angela D. Taylor, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	**Exhibit Letter**	**Introduced on Minute Report Page No.**	**Witness / Entity**	**Description**
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
	C	2	Patricia Charlton, Nevada System of Higher Education	Presentation: The State of the System: Enrollment and Graduation
	D	24	Stacey Montooth, Nevada Department of Native American Affairs	Presentation: Meeting Our Mission through the Native American Fee Waiver
	E	29	Julie Bowers, Fredina Drye-Romero, Nevada Department of Education	Presentation: Nevada Plan to Improve American Indian and Alaska Native Student Outcomes 2025-2030