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Understanding Nevada's Higher Education Governance for Two-Year Colleges: Challenges and Solutions

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Understanding Nevada's Higher Education Governance for Two-Year Colleges: Challenges and Solutions

BY MAGDALENA MARTINEZ, PH.D.

Abstract

State governance of colleges and universities is an indicator of the state's relationship with key stakeholders, such as business leaders, elected officials, policy makers, and local residents. Accordingly, a state's college governance structure shapes two-year public colleges' institutional priorities and how these vital institutions respond to local workforce needs. Around the country, an important function of two-year colleges is to provide training and skills for regional workforces that align to local business and industry needs. This brief examines the origins of two-year colleges and compares Nevada's college outcomes with those of similar states through the use of federal postsecondary data systems and an analyses of college governance structures.

Key findings in this brief include:

- *Nevada is one of four states to use a single consolidated public postsecondary governance structure for two- and four-year public colleges and universities.*
- *The Nevada Constitution empowers the state's Legislature to determine which public colleges and governance structures should be established and funded.*
- *The U.S. Department of Education, using data collected through the National Center for Education Statistics, identifies one public two-year college in Nevada: Truckee Meadows Community College.*
- *Nevada ranks 50th in the nation with 28.3 percent of adults ages 25 to 44 years old who hold an associates degree or higher.*

Based on the key findings, possible solutions include:

- *Nevada should align its public colleges with the U.S. Department of Education's federal definitions and the Nevada Constitution.*
- *The Nevada Legislature should establish two-year, public colleges in cities with a population over 50,000 residents to meet local residents' and workforce needs.*
- *The Nevada Legislature should create a new, independent college coordinating structure and local college boards to improve workforce alignment, transparency, and economic outcomes in Nevada.*
- *The Nevada Legislature should empower and support local college boards, if established, to access local and federal funding.*

Origins of Two-Year Colleges: Widening College Access for All

The first two-year college can be traced to 1901, with the establishment of Joliet Junior College in Illinois. Initially, two-year colleges focused on general liberal arts studies, however during the Great Depression of the 1930s, colleges began offering job-training programs in response to widespread unemployment. After World War II, the transition from military industries to the production of consumer goods created the demand for a new generation of skilled jobs. The advent of the GI Bill also increased the number of individuals seeking higher education options (Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

In 1947, the publication of *Higher Education for American Democracy* by the President's Commission on Higher Education, popularly known as The Truman Commission Report, called for the establishment of a network of public two-year colleges that would charge little or no tuition, serve as cultural centers, be comprehensive in their program offerings with emphasis on civic responsibilities and workforce training needs, and serve their local areas. The commission popularized the phrase "community college," resulting in hundreds of existing and new public, two-year colleges to include community in their names (Townsend & Twombly).

By the 1960s, baby boomers fueled an explosive student demand for two-year colleges. During this time many communities created local and state level governing boards charged with the responsibility of coordinating new systems of two-year colleges. Depending on the size of the state and the number of public institutions, states designated two-year colleges under local control or statewide control (Richardson & de los Santos, 2001).

Today, there are 934 public, 97 private (not for profit) and 669 private (for profit) two-year colleges. In fall 2011, total enrollment for two-year colleges was approximately 7.5 million or 55 percent of the total

undergraduate student population (IPEDS, 2013). Two-year colleges fulfill three main functions for their students: 1) college credit curriculum for transfer, certificate or associate degree completion; 2) remedial education; and 3) technical training or retraining for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand local workforce occupations (Townsend & Twombly). A colleges' ability to fulfill these main functions is often shaped by the governance structure of their institution which is determined by the state. Indeed, a state's governance of two-year colleges is a reflection of its relationship with key stakeholders and is a delicate balance between state and local needs and priorities. The following sections provide an overview of college governance structures, the impetus for Nevada to examine college governance and the state's study of governance through the years.

College Governance Structures: Finding the Right Balance of State and Local Needs

Originally state-coordinating boards focused on managing institutional growth but beginning in the mid to late 1970s these boards became increasingly responsible for administering legislative interventions and budget cuts (Richardson & de los Santos, 2001). Overall, however, states vary in the way they organize, coordinate, and govern two-year colleges.

There are three general board types of higher education state systems in the U.S.: 1) states with governing boards; 2) states with coordinating boards; and 3) states with planning/regulatory/service agencies (McGuinness, 2003).

States with Governing Boards

States with governing boards are responsible for single-systems or multi-campus systems. These boards are either responsible for all of the state's postsecondary institutions or differentiate by institutional type such as universities, state colleges, and vocational and two-year colleges. Nevada is one of four

states that have single consolidated governing board that governs and oversees all public postsecondary institutions.¹

States with Coordinating Boards

States with coordinating boards vary significantly from state to state in formal authority, informal power and influence. Generally, there is a state level board that coordinates or governs universities, colleges, and two-year colleges. In this case, each university and community college district has its own board that is accountable to a state-coordinating agency. Examples of these include California and Connecticut.

States with Planning/Regulatory/Service Agency

These agencies have limited or non-existent governing or coordinating authority and primarily carry out regulatory and service functions such as student financial aid.

Two-Year, Multi-College or Multi-Campus Governance

Generally, public, two-year colleges are locally or regionally governed and operate within special districts that draw property tax revenue from the local community and augment this with state funding. In these instances, two-year colleges are governed by a board of trustees, typically appointed by the state governor or elected by citizens residing within the college district. In some instances, as with the City Colleges of Chicago, the local government appoints the board of trustees.

Depending on the state system, the board of trustees may directly govern the college or do so through a system-level office. The board may or may not be subject to control by a state agency that supervises all two-year college districts or all higher education institutions within the state. In some states, two-year college governance is further differentiated through multi-college or multi-campus college districts.

Multi-college, two-year college districts include several individually accredited colleges within one district. Each college is independent with distinct local administration, but they share a single board of trustees and report to a non-instructional central administrative office. The Contra Costa Community College District in California is an example of one of the largest multi-college community college districts. The structure of Arizona's community college districts is another example.

Larger community colleges may have a multi-campus system and generally share a single accreditation. Local governance may vary with extension campuses reporting to the main campus administration or a central administrative office. An example of this is College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, which has six satellite campuses within a ten-mile area, in addition to its main campus.

Today, with the exception of Michigan, every state has a statewide entity that acts as a governing or coordinating board responsible for shaping and implementing higher education policy. In essence, across the country two-year colleges, through their governance structures, aim to find a balance between meeting the state and local economic needs.

In Nevada, the state's eight public postsecondary colleges and universities are governed through the single consolidated statewide Board of Regents of the University of Nevada, thus making it difficult at times to find the right balance.

Nevada College Governance: A Unique Opportunity to be Creative and Responsive to Regional and Local Needs

By 2020, 58 percent of Nevada jobs will require some form of meaningful postsecondary certificate or degree. Presently, just 28 percent of Nevadans have obtained an associate's degree or higher (Complete College America, 2011). While many states have a skills gap, Nevada's gap is

exacerbated in the southern region of the state given the historical neglect of public postsecondary funding and misalignment of college programs and regional workforce needs.

In 2010 the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) commissioned an external task force to examine the mission and regional alignment of Nevada's colleges (James, 2011). The task force, *Fresh Look at Nevada Community Colleges*, primarily composed of industry and business stakeholders, developed and forwarded ten recommendations to the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada that focused on improving Nevada's public two-year colleges' abilities to meet the state's growing workforce training needs. One important recommendation was to "move governance to the source" so that colleges could be more responsive to business and industry workforce training needs. Another report to the Nevada Legislature's Committee to Study Higher Education Funding by SRI International (2012) found the current governance structure for two-year colleges was poorly adapted to achieve local and regional workforce alignments recommended in the previously mentioned report. Although two-year colleges are meant to reflect the unique characteristics of the communities they serve, provide timely and relevant services to its residents, and be seamlessly integrated with the regional economy, these reports have found that is not the case, particularly for Southern Nevada.

Local government leaders have also been vocal about restructuring public college governance in order to ensure curriculum and program alignment with local workforce training needs (Doughman, 2013). Regional and national reports (Muro, 2011; Rothwell, 2013) reflect local sentiments, emphasizing the need for significantly more graduates with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) certificates and degrees, once again placing public colleges center stage and underscoring the need to rethink their role in localities and their governance structure. During the 77th Nevada legislative session, policymakers passed Senate Bill 391 to once

again study the governance and funding of Nevada's public colleges. Because Nevada's higher education governance has remained mostly unchanged in its 149-year history, it is hardly surprising that policymakers and business and industry leaders are engaged in a discussion about the role of public colleges in the state. Indeed, as the state moves to diversify its economic sectors and re-invent itself in a post-recession environment, Nevada's public colleges are front and center in this conversation.

Historic Overview of Nevada's Study of College Governance: Have we been here before?

Since the establishment of the first Nevada two-year college, various regional and national reports, legal analyses and master plans have suggested that two-year college governance should be distinguishable from the governance of research or comprehensive colleges and universities.²

Indeed, when first established, the Elko two-year college (now Great Basin College) was governed by the Elko School District Board of Trustees. Soon after, a governance study was commissioned (Arthur Little Company, 1968). A key recommendation was that the state create a separate board for two-year colleges. Most notably, the report found that the educational issues and functions of two-year colleges are sufficiently complex to justify a separate governance board. The recommendation was not adopted, and instead, in 1968 Governor Laxalt proposed the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada assume the responsibility of the state's two-year college.³

Following the change to the Board of Regents, in 1971, the University of Nevada Regents adopted a State Plan for Nevada Community Colleges and among its key recommendations was to maintain continuous contact with regional business and industry sectors. Additional priorities adopted and worth highlighting include:

- The maximum size of two-year colleges should be 5,000 FTE students;
- Sixty percent of students should be enrolled in vocational programs; and
- Two-year colleges shall not become four-year colleges.

Less than seven years later, the Community College Division was eliminated and instead the Board of Regents appointed campus presidents. This move resulted in a bill to conduct yet another study of the governance of two-year colleges (Legislative Council Bureau, 1978). For the second time, first being in 1967, the LCB affirmed that the legal basis exists to statutorily separate the two-year college division from the University of Nevada System and create a separate governance structure.

The Board of Regents of the University of Nevada has also commissioned numerous studies that have recommended restructuring college governance. For instance, a 2002 RAND report suggested the Board of Regents provide greater autonomy to campuses through independent governance boards (Benjamin, Haupman, Hersh, & Lempert, 2002). Almost a decade later a task force appointed by the Nevada Chancellor similarly recommended local governance for two-year colleges (James, 2011). More recently, the Brookings Institution (Muro, Lang and Yeung, 2011) and SRI International (Stephen, 2012) underscored the critical role of two-year colleges in diversifying the state's economy and recommended that alignment to workforce needs should be encouraged through the establishment of a separate governance structure and funding.

To be sure, the Nevada Constitution authorizes the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada to govern the University of Nevada. Further, as once more affirmed by the LCB, the Legislature has the authority to create additional institutions and separate governance structures, as they deem necessary. In a March 11, 2014 letter to Senator Debbie Smith, Chair of the Subcommittee on Governance and Funding of the SB 391 Committee, the LCB's Chief

Litigation Counsel, Kevin Powers, stated that "a constitutionally established Board of Regents does not occupy a separate branch of state government," and that, "it is the opinion of this office that the Nevada Constitution does not require the Legislature to place community colleges under the governance and control of the Board of Regents and that the Legislature has the discretion to place community colleges under the governance and control of state, regional or local governmental entities." Furthermore, "An opinion of the Legislative Counsel is entitled to the same pervasive weight as an opinion of the Attorney General," and "Based upon our research and analysis, we believe the 1968 opinion of the Attorney General fails to apply the correct rules of constitutional construction to the Education Article." Independent legal scholars have also found this to be the case. In his analysis of the Nevada Constitution, McAfee (2014) finds "that the state's legislature holds the power to establish additional schools of higher education in the state, as well as the authority to establish and set forth how such schools will be governed."

Despite the public resources and thoughtfulness invested in these reports, the state's postsecondary governance has remained mostly unchanged. Furthermore, these in-depth reports provide evidence that Nevada policymakers must re-examine the current public higher education structure if the state is to meet its workforce training and economic diversification goals. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that a close alignment to local and regional workforce needs results in stronger two-year college outcomes as well as greater investments and returns in colleges.⁴

A discussion on governance should also include an understanding of key measures and outcomes. To this end, the following section provides a comparative analysis of Nevada outcomes. Before highlighting these measures, it is important to note that federal data on colleges allows state-to-state comparisons and provides the federal government and its agencies with critical

information about the states' colleges and universities.

Who cares about IPEDS? Why Nevada Needs to Care about Federal Data

Since the beginning of public colleges and universities, the U.S. federal government and its agencies have played an active role in funding and prioritizing the focus of public postsecondary institutions. For instance, the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 provided significant resources to states. More recently, the U.S. Department of Labor committed \$2 billion to states over a four-year period to fund competitive grants through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant (TAACCCT). This innovative program encourages two-year colleges to collaborate within and across state lines in ways that connect grant programs to the needs of the local communities.

Federal agencies rely on this public data when planning for formula-based and competitive grants for states, such as TAACCCT. More importantly, the majority of colleges participate in federal financial assistance programs for students and are required to submit data about their colleges in order to qualify for these programs. It is essential for institutions to provide accurate data; consider, for instance, in fiscal year 2011 these federal financial aid programs accounted for approximately 23.6 percent of two-year colleges' total revenues (Dowd & Shieh, 2013).

Through financial aid programs and various grants each year, the federal government makes significant investments in colleges and universities. For this reason, the U.S. Department of Education collects and reports state and national data for purposes of funding and planning U.S. higher education.⁵ The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is the primary education data collection program for higher education.⁶

IPEDS statistics are used by and for a number of purposes including, but not limited to:

- Congress uses them to plan federal education programs, to appropriate federal funds among the states, and to serve the needs of constituents.
- Federal agencies, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Commerce and the National Science Foundation, are concerned with the supply of trained manpower produced by schools and colleges.
- Educational organizations, such as the American Council on Education and the National Education Association, use the data for planning and research purposes.
- The media use these college statistics to inform the public about matters such as school and college enrollment and expenditures per student.
- Business organizations use trend data on enrollments and expenditures to forecast the demand for their products.⁷

Clearly, college data reported to the federal government by a state influence how federal agencies see and understand a state's needs and priorities. For Nevada, the U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS data⁸ identifies a single two-year college in the state: Truckee Meadows Community College (Table 1). The Board of Regents of the University of Nevada recognizes four public, two-year colleges: Truckee Meadows Community College, College of Southern Nevada, Great Basin College and Western Nevada College. This misalignment of data has implications on how the federal government and its agencies interact with the state as well as how researchers conduct analysis on two-year public colleges in Nevada.⁹

Interestingly, in the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada, *Master Plan for Higher Education in Nevada* (2002), neither community colleges nor two-year institutions are explicitly identified in the six master plan goals. Additionally, in a 2011 follow-up document, *Strategic Directions for the Nevada System of Higher Education*, meant to "sharpen the focus of its current master plan" there is one mention of the two-year college

task force (James, 2011) under the category of continuous review and revision of programs to support innovation and responsiveness.

Based on IPEDS federal data and state planning documents, Nevada two-year colleges under the current governance structure are overshadowed by the other public higher education institutions in the state. Researchers have warned that two-year colleges under an undifferentiated consolidated governance structure run the risk of being minimized and losing its focus to serve community and workforce needs (Richardson & de los Santos, 2001).

Nevada Measures: Priorities for a New College Structure

In 2013, Nevada's population was nearly 2.8 million (U.S. Census). Six other states - Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kansas, Utah and New Mexico - had comparable population sizes to Nevada. An examination of these states reveals that Nevada is an outlier on a number of measures, including the number of public two-year colleges in the state.

Consider for instance, there are 16 public two-year colleges in Iowa, 22 in Arkansas, 15 in Mississippi, 25 in Kansas, seven in Utah and 19 in New Mexico (Table 2). Per capita for public two-year colleges range from one college for every 105,263 residents in New Mexico to 400,000 in Utah.

For Nevada, using IPEDS data there is one public two-year college for 2.7 million residents. Even with four colleges the per capita is 675,000 per college - the highest among the states in the table.

Another important measure is the percent of adults ages 25 to 44 years old with an associate's degree or higher. As reported in the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the percent of adults with an associate's degree or higher is 45.8 percent in Iowa with 16 public, two-year colleges; 42.6 percent in Kansas with 22 colleges; and 41 percent in Utah with 7

colleges. Nevada is ranked 50th in the nation with only 28.2 percent of this population that has an associate's degree or higher. The national average is 40.4 percent (Table 3). A number of factors contribute to college attainment, however, it is clear there is a correlation between the number of colleges per capita to the percent of adults with associates degrees or higher in these states.

A measure often used by policy makers to gauge higher education productivity in the state is credentials and degrees awarded per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students and 1,000 residents. As outlined in Table 4, Nevada was ranked 49th nationally for certificate and degree production awarded per 100 FTE and for credential and degree awarded per 1,000 residents, according to the most recent NCHEMS data.

Clearly, Nevada's K-12 pipeline is a factor in college attendance and outcomes. Unfortunately, Nevada's 9th grader's chance of attending college by age 19 is 28.42 percent (ranked 50th). Further, among students who successfully graduate from high school in Nevada, some 51 percent pursue a postsecondary education immediately after graduation (ranked 45th). For students who enroll in a two-year college immediately after high school graduation, few enroll full-time (13%) and only 16.7 percent graduate within 3 years (NCHEMS, 2010).

For the same year, 2010, NSHE reports a 13.2 percent graduation rate for the same full-time cohort attending two-year colleges (NSHE, 2010). The inconsistency of these graduation rates underscores the necessity to have a clear definition of Nevada public colleges, in particular when it comes to how the federal government defines Nevada's institutions.

A common assumption is that greater state investment in public postsecondary institutions will lead to higher postsecondary attainment and completion outcomes.

In 2011, Nevada ranked 11th (\$7,081) in state support for public higher education per full-time equivalent student, whereas the

Table 1: Nevada Public Postsecondary Institutions by Sector

College	Sector
Truckee Meadows Community College	Public, 2-year
College of Southern Nevada	Public, 4-year or above
Western Nevada College	Public, 4-year or above
Great Basin College	Public, 4-year or above
Nevada State Colleges	Public, 4-year or above
University of Nevada, Reno	Public, 4-year or above
University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Public, 4-year or above

Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS, 2014.

Table 2: Population, Number of Public Two-Year Colleges, College per Capita for Select States

State	Population in millions (2012)	Public Two-Year Colleges in State	Public Two-Year College per Capita
Iowa	3	16	187,500
Arkansas	2.9	22	131,818
Mississippi	2.9	15	193,333
Kansas	2.8	25	112,000
Utah	2.8	7	400,000
Nevada	2.7	1	2.7 million
New Mexico	2	19	105,263

Source: US Census Bureau, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS, 2014.

Table 3: Percent of Adults 25 to 44 with Associates Degree or Higher for Select States

	Percent Estimate, Associates Degree or Higher	Rank
Iowa	45.8	12
Kansas	42.6	19
Utah	41	41
<i>Nation</i>	<i>40.4</i>	
New Mexico	32.1	45
Mississippi	31.8	47
Arkansas	30.2	49
Nevada	28.2	50

Source: NCHEMS, Educational Attainment by Degree-Level and Age-Group, 2011.

Table 4: Credentials and Degrees Awarded per 100 FTE and 1,000 Residents

	100 Full-Time Equivalent Students	1,000 Residents	Rank
Nevada	9.3	15.4	49
Nation	14.5	33.9	

Source: NCHEMS, Certificate and Degree Production, 2009.

Table 5: State and Local Public Higher Education Support per Full-Time Equivalent Student for Select States

State	State and Local Support per Full-Time Student (\$)	Rank
New Mexico	7791	7
Nevada	7081	11
Nation	6290	
Arkansas	5810	27
Kansas	5531	30
Mississippi	5525	31
Utah	5338	33
Iowa	4884	40

Source: NCHEMS, Revenues and Support, 2011.

Table 6: Two-Year College Governance Structures and Local Funding for Select States

State	State-level Governance or Coordination Structure	Separate Two-Year Governance or Coordinating Structure	Local funding, % from local sources
Iowa	State-level coordination	Yes	24.2
Arkansas	State-level coordination	Yes	9.8
Mississippi	State-level coordination	Yes	15.8
Kansas	State-level coordination	Yes	44.1
Utah	State-level governance	No	0
Nevada	State-level governance	No	0
New Mexico	State-level coordination	Yes	36.1

Source: Education Commission of the States; McGuinness, 2014.

comparable state of Iowa ranked 40th (\$4,884). The national average for state support for higher education was \$6,290 per FTE student (Table 5). Moreover, as Table 5 makes clear, among states with populations similar to Nevada, only New Mexico ranks ahead of Nevada. It is worth noting that Nevada uses the same funding formula for its two-year college, state colleges, and universities; a method that fails to recognize the varying missions that these different institutions are expected to fulfill.¹⁰

Other distinctions among similar populated states are the matter in which their public colleges are governed and funded (Table 6). Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kansas, and New Mexico have state-level coordination for their two-year public institutions,¹¹ while Nevada and Utah have a combined or consolidated state-level governance structure for their 2- and 4-year public colleges and research universities. Although Utah has a somewhat similar state-level governance structure to Nevada, it also has eight vocational colleges that primarily award certificates; the Utah College of Applied Technology has its own board of trustees and additional boards on each campus composed primarily of local business and industry leaders. In addition, Utah has eight private, non-profit institutions to serve its residents.

Many states with separate two-year governance structures also receive some form of local funding. Of the states compared in this brief, Kansas received the highest funding amount (44%) from local sources followed by New Mexico (36%), Iowa (24%), Mississippi (16%), and Arkansas (10%). In 2011 public, two-year colleges received approximately \$14.4 billion or 24 percent of their total revenues from state appropriations.

In states where local funding existed, local governments invested slightly over \$9.66 billion or 22.3 percent of two-year college revenues (Dowd & Shieh, 2013). In light of these measures and previous studies on college governance, Nevada policy makers are uniquely positioned to establish a new structure in order to yield different outcomes.

It is conceivable that a new college governance structure that prioritizes local needs and is intentional about measures meaningful to specific regions or communities and their workforce requirements will result in different outcomes. As it stands now, Nevada ranks last or near the bottom on most national measures; as such the prospect of meaningful change for two-year colleges under the current governance structure is doubtful due to the inability to truly align local needs with the mission and work of surrounding public colleges.

Possible Solutions: Where do we go from here?

There is clear evidence that Nevada policy makers need to restructure higher education governance in the state. The Legislative Counsel Bureau (Powers, 2014) has reaffirmed three times in 1967, 1978, and 2014 that the state's constitution delegates the governance of state universities to the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada and that the Legislature has the authority to establish colleges and governance structures separation within the state. Any proposed governance structure must be one that is aligned with the local and state workforce needs of business and industry and that will improve student and productivity outcomes.

First, the Nevada Legislature should align the state's public colleges with the U.S. Department of Education federal definitions and the Nevada Constitution. As mentioned previously, according to the U.S. Department of Education, Nevada has one public, two-year college: Truckee Meadows Community College. Based on data available for similar populated states and current student outcomes, Nevada needs additional two-year colleges to meet the postsecondary needs of its residents and workforce. One approach is to establish two-year colleges in Nevada cities or regions with a population of at least 50,000. As demonstrated in this brief, there is strong evidence to suggest that additional two-year colleges will increase the number of

adults with a college certificate or two-year degree.

Further, the service areas for public colleges should be determined using an analytic framework such as the Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs). The U.S. Office of Budget and Management define CSAs based on social and economic ties as calculated by commuting patterns between adjacent metropolitan areas.

Second, create a statewide coordinating structure that has oversight for local college governing boards in order to improve workforce alignment, transparency, and outcomes in Nevada. Numerous reports commissioned by various state agencies find and agree that Nevada's current college governance structure does not align well with the regional and state workforce needs (Muro, 2011; James, 2011; SRI International, 2012). Policymakers, elected officials, business leaders, and the general public currently rely on a single, consolidated governance and administrative structure, which complicates access to and transparency of data on students, budgeting, resource allocations, and institutional outcomes.

Local governing boards will ensure regional industry and business representation. Further, the Governor's economic development and diversification plan can be used as a framework to strategically identify industries that should be represented on local boards. In addition, local boards can increase the likelihood of racial and gender diversity that is reflective of regions.

Alternatively, another option is to empower a current state agency, such as the Nevada Department of Education or the Commission on Postsecondary Education, to serve as the coordinating structure for local boards.

Finally, local governing boards should have the autonomy to access local and federal funding. According to a report by McGuinness (2014), Nevada is one of 18 states that does not receive some form of local funding. Establishing governing boards that are local can provide an incentive for residents and local governments to invest in their two-year colleges. As previously stated, in states where local funding for two-year colleges exist, these governments invested slightly over \$9.66 billion or 22.3 percent of college revenues (Dowd & Shieh, 2013).

Local college boards can also be more intentional and deliberate about their college's master plan goals and objectives based on their community needs, thus positioning colleges to pursue and secure competitive workforce grants from agencies such as the Department of Labor and the Department of Education. Studies have found that Nevada's K-20 education system does not secure their share of federal grants for purposes of workforce development and improved student outcomes.

In conclusion, as highlighted in recent legal analyses (Powers, 2014; McAfee, 2014), the Nevada System of Higher Education acts as a state agency to provide administrative support for the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada who has constitutional oversight for the state universities. As such, the Nevada Constitution provides the Nevada Legislature with the authority to create additional public colleges and governance structures, as legislators deem necessary and appropriate in order to meet the state's education and workforce needs. Without a new and improved governance structure for colleges, Nevada will continue to miss out on attracting new sectors and industries that can provide competitive wages, diversify its economy, and improve the quality of life for its residents.

End Notes

¹ Other states with single consolidated higher education governance structures most similar to Nevada's structure are Alaska, Hawaii and North Dakota. Although these states have single governing boards and are almost exclusively state funded and centrally administered, Alaska receives local funding for one community college. Additional states often compared to Nevada's structure are Utah, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Rhode Island, and South Dakota, however these states differ in significant ways. For instance, Utah has a separate structure for technical colleges; Idaho, Kansas, and Montana have local funding streams for their community colleges. Kansas community colleges are under individual governing boards and are supervised by the State Board of Education; in Idaho and Rhode Island, the Board of Education oversees both K-12 and higher education. For an in-depth discussion about states' higher education governance structure, see Friedel, J.N., Killackey, J., Miller, E., & Katsinas, S. (2014).

² For a complete chronology of all Nevada studies and reports see <http://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/24/LincyInstitute-CommunityCollegeGovernanceTimeline.pdf>

³ In September and December 1967, the Legislative Counsel issued opinions that identified the State Legislature as the entity designated to "authorize, or empower the State Board of Education to authorize, the community colleges to grant 'associate degrees' under appropriate conditions so long as the associate degrees...were designed to preclude confusion with the degrees or diplomas issued under the authority of the Board of Regents." In January of 1968, the Attorney General disagreed with this opinion and issued an opinion that such action "would be an unconstitutional legislative invasion and usurpation of the authority of the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada." In February 1968, during a special session, the Legislature enacted AB 22, creating Elko Community College and designated it as "a function of the Elko County school district and as a pilot project to assist in determining the feasibility of establishing community colleges generally throughout the state." The Legislature repealed this bill in 1969 and directed the Elko County school district to direct all related funds to the "Board of Regents of the University of Nevada."

⁴ For an annotated bibliography on two-year colleges and workforce and economic outcomes See <http://www.unlv.edu/lincyinstitute/community-colleges/outcomes>

⁵Specifically, the federal government collects education data from its states through the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

⁶Established in 1992, IPEDS consists of nine interrelated survey components that are collected over three collection periods (Fall, Winter, and Spring) each year. The completion of all IPEDS surveys is mandatory for all institutions that participate in or are applicants for participation in any federal financial assistance program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

⁷ Additional consumers of IPEDS data include: state education agencies are both users and suppliers of NCES data; the general public uses education statistics to become more informed and to make intelligent decisions concerning educational issues; and state and local officials concerned with problems of staffing and financing public education.

⁸ Under sector type, which is defined by IPEDS as "one of nine institutional categories resulting from dividing the universe according to control and level. Control categories are public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit. Level categories are 4-year and higher (4 year), 2-but-less-than 4-year (2 year), and less than 2-year. For example: Public, 4-year is one of the institution sectors."

⁹ The following are a sample of research organizations that use IPEDS: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems; The Chronicle of Higher Education, Almanac; The Delta Cost Project; Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce; and the University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership. Most notably, policy makers commonly use IPEDS to identify areas for higher education investments.

¹⁰ The only exceptions to this are carve-outs to assist with UNR and UNLV's research missions and small institution and mitigation funding for Great Basin College and Western Nevada College totaling \$17 million for the biennium. See <http://system.nevada.edu/tasks/sites/Nshe/assets/File/Initiatives/fundingformula/SB%20391%20Committee-Responses-final.pdf>

¹¹ Arkansas' Department of Higher Education, under the direction of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board, is responsible for coordinating the activities of all state two-year and four-year universities; in Iowa the State Board of Education and the Iowa Department of Education are responsible for regulation and coordination of colleges; in Kansas, the Board of Regents are responsible for supervision and coordination; in Mississippi the Community College Board serves as the coordinating agency; and the New Mexico Higher Education Department is the coordinating agency for all higher education in the state (Friedel, et.al., 2014).

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