

Nevada System of Higher Education
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Governor Jim Gibbons
VIA FACSIMILE: (775) 684-5683

June 3, 2008

Dear Governor Gibbons:

Recently the Department of Administration asked all State agencies, K-12 and higher education, to prepare "what if" budget scenarios that assumed budget reductions for the upcoming biennium of 14.12% from the legislatively approved level for fiscal 2008-2009.

As I am sure you know, I recently sent a memo to the Board of Regents trying to focus them and others on the magnitude of this reduction. The memorandum has received a lot of media coverage since I sent it to the Board. The reaction, by those who have contacted me, is mortification over the destruction of the entire K-16 Nevada education system. The detractors and those in denial generally try to make me the story, rather than the underlying facts the story. While my rhetoric is passionate, the facts which I itemize are all rock solid and taken straight from our state budget. Cuts of this magnitude will be devastating.

Unlike some other agencies, public education at all levels is unable to quickly adjust its budget to severe drops in what you as Governor, and legislators in the Legislature, provide to education. Contractual notices must be given and students cannot simply be told to go home because their classes have been cancelled. The mere discussion of reduction causes immeasurable injury to our colleges and universities. We work for years to recruit and retain the best faculty to teach Nevadans and to build quality in programs. The best faculty always have options. If they perceive a System is on the wane, they will certainly go elsewhere. The same story is true of our best and brightest students. If they leave, they will not return. When the economy rebounds, as it certainly will, programs, faculty, and students will not immediately return as though nothing had happened. Once you, as Governor, change the course of education, you will be able to do nothing to change it back.

I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you to personally discuss the implications of these cuts. I have asked my partners in education, Superintendents Paul Dugan from Washoe County and Walt Rulffes from Clark County, to participate in a meeting with you. They have agreed to do so.

We understand that with declining revenues you are in a difficult position. However, we believe there are multiple choices of successful remedies, each of which will not only

cure the short-term shortfall, but will, if implemented, make a major impact on saving education for generations to follow. I will be happy to meet with you and your staff. I believe the key to the success of these meetings is not playing the numbers game, but rather developing new and better financial philosophies for funding of all public education (K-16) in Nevada. You, as our Governor, have the power to save education. On the other hand, you have the power to prevent all of us from rescuing education if you really choose to sit on the sideline, doing nothing, while Nevada education dies of starvation.

I will have my office contact yours for a convenient time to meet. I will keep my schedule totally flexible to meet yours. We look forward to our meeting.

Sincerely,

James E. Rogers,
Chancellor