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March 5, 2009

Sense of the University of Nevada, Reno Faculty Senate Regarding Health Care Policy

On January 20, 2009, the Faculty Senate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, passed a "Sense of the Senate" resolution on health care benefits. Soon thereafter the NSHE System Administration Faculty Senate also proposed a Resolution on Health Care Benefits. These resolutions called upon the Legislature to reject the Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission recommendations, and pointed out a number of possible negative consequences of these proposals. The UNLV Faculty Senate argued that some of these consequences would also result from the proposals of the Public Employee Benefit Plan (PEBP) Board proposals, even though these latter proposals were much more deliberate in approach and reasonable in scope.

The UNR Faculty Senate recognizes that current and past employees entered into an employment agreement with NSHE with a reasonable understanding that the extant health care plan was a fair representation of what could be expected now and into retirement. Given that a significant change in one's health cannot reasonably be budgeted, predictable health benefits are fundamentally important to someone making an employment decision.

In light of the emerging national conversation about health care funding, at this time the *UNR Faculty Senate opposes any changes in employee health care plans* in response to a short-run revenue shortfall. The rising cost of health care, the past promises of the state to its employees, and the new Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) rules requiring these obligations to be made explicit are problems shared by all states. A nationwide dialogue needs to take place in which Nevada participates, but unilateral and precipitous action in the absence of a nationwide strategy will unfairly shift risk towards those unprepared to bear it, leave retirees without alternatives, and impair our ability to retain our best faculty, professionals and staff and compromise our ability to recruit the best new employees to replace those who retire.

William Follette, Chair
2008-09 Faculty Senate