

Hitting the Target 2010 bull's-eye

Economic development experts recently sought the opinions of Nevadans to make citizen input part of Target2010, an economic development initiative.

Residents should care, says Chuck Alvey, president and chief executive officer of the Economic Development Agency of Western Nevada, because there's no such thing as a completely stable economy. "If the economy isn't growing and creating opportunities it's probably going the other direction. When that happens, property values drop, job opportunities evaporate, and if Joe Citizen is older, there's no one to care for that person. That's why the average citizen needs to care if the economy is vibrant."

So northern Nevada needs to grow its economy, but in a way that is sustainable and beneficial to the region. Whereas once industries and prospective businesses were looking for sunsets, symphonies and school kids, today's business planners also want to

know what a region can offer in terms of employees, training and research in the very industries in which they are working. Attracting companies that can bring high-wage, knowledge-based jobs to the region means having a workforce prepared to work with them.

That's some of what EDAWN took into account when it hired AngelouEconomics to design an economic development roadmap for northern Nevada.

"Target2010 was a compre-



Photo by Jean Dixon

Northern Nevada is a recognized logistics center, thanks to businesses like ITS Logistics, founded by Darryl Bader '92 (logistics management) shown here with employee Kasia Banasiak '01 (management), '02MBA.

hensive economic development planning initiative that was ultimately driven by the voice of the community," says Ben Loftsgaarden, AngelouEconomics project manager.

As a result of Target2010, future economic recruitment will focus on industries that already have a foothold in Nevada and can benefit from land availability, easy distribution and academic and research programs at the University.

"The University is, without a doubt, one of the top assets to spur economic development in not just Reno, but throughout the region," says Loftsgaarden. "The more closely the University is connected to the community in which it operates, and conversely, the more the community connects to and touts the University, the greater the benefit for both groups."

Regional ambassadors. Target2010 identified six industries already in Nevada that can thrive with what the region has to offer: advanced logistics, advanced

manufacturing, business and financial services, clean energy, life sciences, and software and computer engineering.

Then EDAWN created lead generation teams as a way to let those industries know northern Nevada is open for business. The six individuals heading those teams have a connection to higher education: four from the University, one from Truckee Meadows Community College and one a member of the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents. Team members are current in their fields, have access to the up-and-coming workforce and attend and present at industry conferences nationally and internationally where they meet people in those fields.

"The job of professor is different than it used to be," says Dale Rogers, a lead generator and University Foundation Professor for logistics and supply chain management. "People think we're just sitting in our offices reading books. Typically I travel a great

deal because ideas that we have are in a fair amount of demand. There's a lot of weeks I'm here to teach my classes, but there's a lot of weeks I'm not here most of the week, so being a lead generator for me is talking to people where they are, as opposed to being here and waiting for them to come to us. When Chuck [Alvey] asked me about doing this I said 'But I'm hardly ever here' and he said, 'That's exactly why we want you to do it: because you're out talking to people.'"

Targeted workforce. There's a perceived problem with Nevada's workforce, which boils down to too much of a good thing. With unemployment around 3.6 percent, businesses wanting to relocate aren't sure they will find enough employees. A long-term solution, says Alvey, is to create a workforce and this is the basis for a key northern Nevada selling point: businesses can partner with the University to develop capstone courses or new programs to help build their workforce.

Computer game engineering and renewable energy are two examples.

In the wake of the dot-com bust and outsourcing jobs, University enrollment in computer sciences engineering dropped 50 percent since 2000. Demand for employees with this expertise, however, keeps increasing. Software companies are attractive because they have what is called a "small footprint." they don't use much water and don't pollute, and they offer knowledge-based, high-wage jobs. To lure them to northern Nevada requires both a strong

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workforce and a strong engineering program, says Ted Batchman, dean of the College of Engineering and lead generator for software and computer engineering.

Like about 120 other Nevada grads, Ali Saffari '82 (accounting), '86 (electrical engineering) put his degree to work at International Game Technology (IGT), where he is vice president of game engineering. However, at any one point IGT may have 75 open engineering positions.

Maintaining full employment for the current industry as the region seeks to simultaneously grow the industry means more engineers must be educated and prepared. Toward that end, IGT partnered with the College of Engineering, donating \$500,000 to launch the game engineering program.

Alternative energy is a hot topic, and as a result of a \$500,000 gift from Sierra Pacific Power Company and \$200,000 from Ormat Technologies, Inc., Nevada's College of Engineering is creating one of the few renewable energy degree programs in the country. The program will utilize the University's Redfield Campus, located in the Galena area near Ormat's geothermal plant, giving students hands-on experience.

According to Jason Geddes '90 (biochemistry), '95MS, government affairs manager for EDAWN, Nevada is already top-ranked for geothermal potential in the country. Geddes, also a member

of the NSHE Board of Regents and lead generator for clean energy, says Nevada is ranked first in solar power and third in wind, and the state has ample open public land that makes finding sites and accessing resources relatively simple. Where other states would like to pursue renewable energy, it's already happening in Nevada. Building a future workforce will fuel this industry.

Logistically speaking. Dale Rogers describes logistics as the guts of a business: sourcing products, purchasing services, transforming raw materials into consumer goods and getting them to consumers. Northern Nevada is recognized as the distribution hub of the 11 Western states. Add one of the top-rated university logistics and supply chain management programs in the country and the region is fast becoming a logistics center.

Russ Romine '76 (civil engineering), president of Griffin Transport Services and member of EDAWN's board of directors, expects logistics to bloom in northern Nevada as companies look to the west for support for products heading to Asia. "As that develops I think we'll see a higher skill set, competence, education and technology that come into play in this market," he says. 



A "brand" makes a promise, and this spring the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada unveiled a new regional brand for northern Nevada economic development. The corresponding "can do" logo now identifies northern Nevada as Greater Reno-Tahoe, a place that can and will take care of business.

BOOM INDUSTRY



Photo by Jean Dixon

Ann Louhela and Rick Lattin at a farmers' market in Reno.

What: Farmers' markets

Who: NevadaGrown is a cooperative effort of the Nevada Certified Farmers Market Association and the state's Nevada Certified Organic Program. The organizations bring communities and people together to support the growth and use of local products. NevadaGrown includes 15 market managers, 60 farmers, 200 businesses and 75 nonprofit organizations.

Market Diversity, 1992: One offering; the Sparks Hometowne Farmer's Market

Market Diversity, now: Approximately 20 statewide markets (15 affiliated with the association)

Estimated economic impact on Nevada, 1992: \$100,000

Estimated economic impact on Nevada, 2008: \$6 million. "These numbers reflect the farmer/vendor income only," says Ann Louhela, association president. "There is also a positive economic impact on surrounding businesses where farmers markets are located."

Why the boom: "Mainly because consumers are increasingly concerned about the safety of our food and where it comes from," says Louhela. "Buying locally allows us to know who is growing our food. Other major reasons are that the food is fresher, of higher quality and more nutritious. Local food is more environmentally friendly, and buying local has a more positive local economic impact."

Best place for farmers to get advice: Fifth-generation farmer Rick Lattin '83MA of Lattin Farms in Fallon — renowned for its several-acre-large Nevada Maze cut out of a cornfield — is a part-time management consultant with the University's Nevada Small Business Development Center in Fallon. Lattin recently coordinated development of the farmers' entrepreneurial workshops. Learn more at <http://www.nsbdc.org>.

Surprise! Nevada is one of the largest onion producers in the world and the state's farmers grow greens, broccoli, carrots, asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, garlic, potatoes, cut flowers, herbs and lots of varieties of melons. State farmers also produce beef and honey for market. "We currently have grass-fed beef in the markets and are seeing a huge increase in consumer demand for it," says Louhela. "We have a farmer in the process of bringing free-range chickens to market, too."

Sobering fact: Corporate agribusiness profits increased 98 percent during the 1990s. In 2002, however, farmers earned their lowest real net cash income since 1940.

— Sue Putnam