

Letter from the President - Campus Town Hall February 12 at 1:00 p.m.

Dear Colleagues,

I wanted to update you on Tuesday's events at the Nevada State Legislature in Carson City. Yesterday was the pre-session hearing for higher education before the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee.

As you may have heard, some 400 students and the University of Nevada, Reno marching band were at the capital prior to the hearing. They were noteworthy for their enthusiasm, commitment and civility. Numerous legislators commented to me how impressive our students were; indeed, our students even cleaned up the site after their demonstration was over.

I smiled with great pride this morning when I read comments in the Reno Gazette-Journal regarding the deportment of our students. Robert Milby, the chief of the legislative police, was quoted in the article as saying that our students had "done a great job of representing the University of Nevada, Reno." Chief Milby further noted that our students were "expressing what their concerns are, what their needs are, and that's what the process is all about."

I could not agree more.

I would urge all of you to read the latest issue of our campus' student newspaper, The Nevada Sagebrush. In it, you will find op-ed pieces from ASUN President Eli Reilly, GSA President Brithany Thomson and a timely editorial from the Sagebrush's editor and editorial board. I believe these columns are good reminders of how fortunate we are to have the quality of student leadership that exists on our campus.

During yesterday's hearings, the chancellor and executive vice chancellor made introductory presentations which laid out a very strong case for higher education. They were followed by presentations from presidents of the various member institutions of the Nevada System of Higher Education, including myself. It was very reassuring to hear legislators from both sides of the aisle state strongly and categorically that they were committed to ensuring the long-term health of higher education in Nevada. Indeed, there were no naysayers who spoke during the hearing.

As you are aware, this is the first step in a long process. It appears that there will be some money from the President Obama's stimulus package to offset reductions and there will be discussions of additional revenues once the session begins.

Legislators are looking for input and each of you is an important ambassador in this process. Yesterday, it was clear that the voice of our students had helped in this effort immeasurably. One of the State Senate's most respected figures, Sen. Bernice Mathews of Reno, noted that she and her colleagues "will work very hard on your behalf to make sure that (students) are educated and the classes you need are kept in place. Your power will be felt as the session goes forth."

It is critically important to remember that the greatest power we have on our campus lies with all of you. Engagement in the days, weeks and months ahead is essential. Please join me for a town hall discussion at 1:00 p.m., Thursday, February 12 in the Ballroom of the Joe Crowley Student Union.

From your thoughtful patience to your peaceful participation, I appreciate all that you do as we work through these difficult times.

Best regards,

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