ASHE
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

AN ASHE INSTITUTE WITH SOUTHERN NEVADA HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS

Postsecondary Student Access and Success in Nevada

Edited by Juanita K. Hinojosa, Jason P. Guilbeau, and Vanessa A. Sansone

Presented by
Ascendium
Elevating opportunity

Land Acknowledgement

As we gathered for the 2022 ASHE Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, all attendees were invited to take time to learn, reflect, and acknowledge that the land and resources used to sustain ourselves rightfully belong to Indigenous Peoples who continue to live and thrive all around the Southern Nevada area. We gathered upon the sacred ancestral land of the Nuwu (or Southern Paiute), Wa She Shu (or Washoe), Numu (or Northern Paiute), Nuwe (or Western Shoshone), Hualapai, and Chemehuevi.

The Las Vegas Paiute Tribe is descended from the Tudinu or "Desert People," ancestors of most of the tribes of Southern Paiutes whose traditional territory is the lower Colorado River Valley as well as the mountains and arroyos of the Mojave Desert in Nevada, California, and Utah. Petroglyphs dating back thousands of years can be found in Red Rock, Valley of Fire, Sloan Canyon, and other locations throughout Southern Nevada.

Today, the Nuwu continue to traverse and steward the land of the greater Nevada area with other Indigenous communities, such as the Wa She Shu (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), and the Newe (Western Shoshone). In addition, the Las Vegas Valley is home to many urban Indigenous community members who consistently fight for Indigenous representation and sovereignty.

We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and settler colonialism that continues to impact Native and Indigenous communities today, and we honor the past, present, and future stewards of this land. We offer gratitude for the land, for those who have stewarded it for generations, and for the opportunity to study, learn, work, and be in community with this land.

ASHE
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

An ASHE Institute with Southern Nevada Higher Education Leaders

Postsecondary Student Access and Success in Nevada

Edited by Juanita K. Hinojosa, Jason P. Guilbeau, and Vanessa A. Sansone

August 2023

Presented by

Ascendium
Elevating opportunity

The project was led by Project Chair Vanessa A. Sansone (University of Texas at San Antonio), Project Coordinator Juanita K. Hinojosa (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), and ASHE Executive Director Jason P. Guilbeau.

About the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) is a scholarly society with 2,000 members dedicated to higher education as a field of study. It is committed to diversity in its programs and membership and has enjoyed extraordinary success in involving graduate students in Association activities.

ASHE promotes collaboration among its members and others engaged in the study of higher education through research, conferences, and publications, including its highly regarded journal, *The Review of Higher Education*. ASHE values rigorous scholarly approaches to the study of higher education and practical applications of systemic inquiry.

Through its peer-reviewed publications, annual conference sessions, presidential invited sessions, and other intellectual and professional fora, the Association for the Study of Higher Education promotes scholarly discourse and debate about important issues and ideas, questions, problems, and possibilities in the study of higher education. Learn more about ASHE at www.ashe.ws.

About the ASHE Institute with Southern Nevada Higher Education Leaders

The ASHE Nevada Institute with Southern Nevada Higher Education leaders was held in November 2022, prior to the 47th Annual Conference for the Association for the Study of Higher Education. The Nevada Institute included a daylong program attended by college and university leaders, nonprofit organization representatives, and local students representing multiple Southern Nevada institutions. In alignment with the theme of the 2022 Annual ASHE Conference, "Humanizing Higher Education," the Institute encouraged participants to consider possibilities that humanize higher education in practice, policies, and scholarship to expand student access and success in Southern Nevada.

Suggested Citation

Hinojosa, J. K., Guilbeau, J. P., & Sansone, V. A. (Eds.). (2023). *Postsecondary student access and success in Nevada: An ASHE institute with southern Nevada higher education leaders*. Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Juanita K. Hinojosa and Vanessa A. Sansone

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) held its 47th Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, during November 2022. In preparation for the annual conference, and building upon the success of the **2021 Institute in Puerto Rico**, ASHE, with the support of Ascendium, invited association members to apply and join research teams centered on each of the 2022 Institute's focus areas. For several months, Ascendium fellows conducted initial research in a report that summarized existing research.

ASHE invited association members and local community leaders to engage in critical conversations on the local higher education context during the 2022 Nevada Institute. The Nevada Institute focused on three areas:

1. **Removing Structural Barriers to Success**—engaging with practices and policies that impact student access to higher education;
2. **Streamlining Key Learner Transitions**—engaging with Southern Nevada's connection to the hospitality and tourism industry and other related industries; and
3. **Supporting Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training**—engaging with regions outside of the urban areas of Clark County, Washoe County, and Carson City (Nevada's state capital), as the remainder of Nevada is considered rural.

During the Nevada Institute, Ascendium Fellows presented their initial findings to an audience of invited Southern Nevada higher education leaders. Throughout the day, Nevada Institute attendees engaged in conversation to better understand and expand upon Nevada's unique higher education practice, policy, and scholarship. Feedback from local Southern Nevada leaders provided the opportunity to include locally relevant and student-conscious strategies to facilitate expanded student success. This collective dialogue allowed for a deeper understanding of the Southern Nevada higher education context.

THE STATE OF NEVADA

Nevada, located in the western region of the United States, is home to more than 3 million people. Nevada is the seventh largest state in the country, yet much of its land is desert. In fact, 14 of the 17 counties in Nevada "comprise approximately 87 percent of Nevada's land mass with an average population of 2.5 persons per square mile" (Nevada Aging and Disability Services, n.d., p. 3).

Nevada's statewide demographics are very diverse. The overall state population is 46.6% White, 29.9% Latinx/a/os, 10.6% Black, 9.1 % Asian American, 4.9% Multiracial, 1.7% Native American and Alaska Native, and 0.9% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Nevada is also home to one of the largest K-12 school districts in the nation. The Clark County School District, located in Southern Nevada, is the fifth largest school district in the country (Las Vegas Sun, n.d.). Understanding the makeup of Nevada's state and youth population provides a unique opportunity, and timely demand, to bridge our connections across education. For example, the diversity in PreK-20 has fluctuated significantly between 2000 and 2020 (**Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.**). During this

time, Asian American, Black, Latinx/a/o, and Multiracial children populations increased notably. By 2021, Nevada's child population was 41% Latinx/a/o, 33% White, 11% Black, 7% Multiracial, 6% Asian American, 1% Native American and Alaskan Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Particularly as communities of color grow to encompass a majority of the state population, the state thus continues to reflect the projected national population growth (Krogstad, 2019; Krogstad & Fry, 2014).

HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEVADA

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) oversees the higher education institutions in the state. NSHE consists of two doctoral-granting universities, a state college, four comprehensive community colleges, and one environmental research institute. The eight postsecondary institutions in Nevada include the College of Southern Nevada; Desert Research Institute; Great Basin College; Nevada State College; Truckee Meadows Community College; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; University of Nevada, Reno; and Western Nevada College. NSHE institutions are governed by the Nevada Board of Regents, which oversees and approves the statewide budget and policies.

The state's diversity is reflected in its higher education institutions. Nevada is currently home to five institutions with the federal designation of being Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), including three that also hold a dual-designation as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) (Cota, 2022). The University of Nevada, Reno and Great Basin College are considered emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (eHSIs) and are close to reaching the enrollment threshold of having at least 25% of their student population who identify as Latinx/a/os for the federal designation.

67%

of Nevada children identify as Latinx/a/o, Black, Multiracial, Asian American, Native American and Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (as of 2021)

THIS REPORT

With this in mind, the following report seeks to expand our collective understanding of access to higher education and college students' success in Nevada. Furthermore, this report explores context and relevant research, highlights successes, and offers recommendations for policy and practice.

ASHE would like to thank the Southern Nevada higher education leaders, nonprofit organization representatives, and especially the students who shared their knowledge and experiences during the Nevada Institute to help learn from and address the local successes and challenges around the three key areas of this report.

EIGHT NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION (NSHE) POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

- College of Southern Nevada
- Desert Research Institute
- Great Basin College
- Nevada State College
- Truckee Meadows Community College
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- University of Nevada, Reno
- Western Nevada College

Removing Structural Barriers to Success in Southern Nevada

JORGE BURMICKY (TEAM LEADER)
Howard University

ANDREW MARX (TEAM COORDINATOR)
University of Massachusetts Boston

CRISTINA NADER
Texas A&M University

JESSICA RIVERA
Ohio State University

JUDE PAUL DIZON
Rutgers University

ROBERTO C. OROZCO
University of Minnesota

PART I: THE CURRENT STATE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

Like many regions across the country, postsecondary enrollment in Nevada has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) highlight that enrollment has declined across most community colleges and bachelor's degree-granting institutions since 2020 (NSHE, n.d.). The Southern Nevada economic outlook, particularly the fluctuating unemployment rates that rose as high as 33.5% in April 2020 and receded to 8% in August 2021 (Allen, 2021), is part of the regional conditions that affect postsecondary education in Southern Nevada. The goals of this section are to define student success in the sociopolitical, economic and financial, and legal and policy dimensions that create and sustain barriers to access; and to celebrate the pathways that already existed as well as those that were created in pandemic conditions. With these dimensions in mind, our team applied a servingness framework as a point of reference for gathering data on student success. A servingess framework (Garcia et al., 2019) allowed our team to not only examine academic outcomes (i.e., graduation rates) and nonacademic outcomes (i.e., sense of belonging) but also the structural components (i.e., equity-minded efforts) at higher education institutions that contribute to student success.

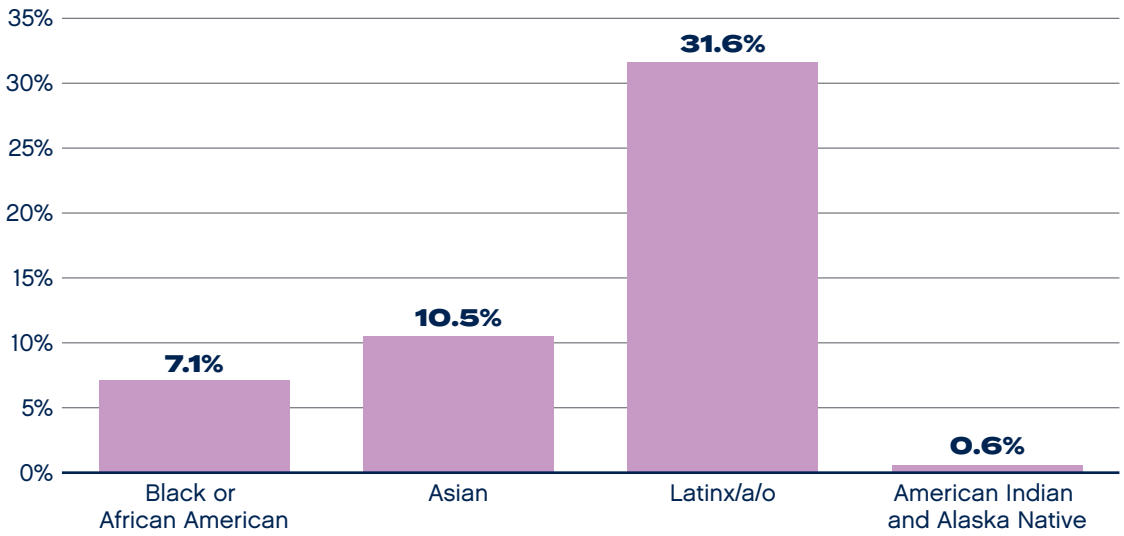
When compared to other states, Nevada falls among the lowest in educational outcomes nationally. In one study it ranked 43rd for educational attainment—highest level of degree awarded—and quality of education (McCann, 2022). A report by the Lumina Foundation (n.d.), noted Nevada's current state postsecondary attainment rate is 37.9%, which is below NSHE's goal of a 60% attainment rate by 2020. Although Nevada is not alone in terms of falling short of achieving highly ambitious statewide goals, it is important to understand statewide educational data to set more clearly defined policy agendas that serve the state.

Understanding that postsecondary enrollment trends in Nevada fluctuated in fall 2020 and fall 2021 (NSHE, n.d.), we also consider it important to examine enrollment data in the context of historically marginalized student populations, as provided in Figure 1. In terms of statewide undergraduate enrollment data by race and ethnicity, Latinx/a/o[1] students returned to pre-pandemic levels in fall 2021, with Latinx/a/o students making up 31.6% of enrollment across all NSHE institutions. Black or African American students represented 7.1% of total enrollment in fall 2021 similar to 7% in fall 2019. Asian students represented 10.5% of the total enrollment in fall 2021, likewise similar to 10.3% in fall 2019. Native American and Alaska Native enrollment remained remarkably low, making up 0.6% enrollment for both fall 2021 and fall 2019 (NSHE, n.d.).

In the last ten years, the shifts in student racial and ethnic demographics of Southern Nevada higher education institutions have highlighted challenges and opportunities to support and meet the needs of these students.

1 Statewide data reports by the Nevada System of Higher Education use the term "Hispanic" to refer to Latin American and Caribbean descent students in the United States. For the purpose of this report, we use "Latinx/a/o" instead of "Hispanic" to also be inclusive of student groups under this term that are often ignored by the literature, such as AfroLatinx students, LGBTQ+ students, and undocu/DACAmented students (Ryu et al., 2021).

FIGURE 1.
Historically Marginalized Student Populations



Historically marginalized student populations percentage of total enrollment in Southern Nevada in the Fall 2021

Institutions have seen a steady growth in Latinx/a/o student enrollment, while Black, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Native American and Alaska Native student enrollment numbers have remained consistent (NSHE, 2022). Much of this demographic shift can be attributed to the broader historical demographic shifts of Southern Nevada communities. College-going rates for some of these populations, specifically Black, Latinx/a/o, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and Native American and Alaska Native populations, reveal that students are entering college after high school at lower numbers than White and Asian students (Nevada Department of Education [SNDE], n.d.). As a result, as they work to better support racially diverse students, Southern Nevada institutions face several sociopolitical issues: increased racial diversity among the student body; growth of minority-serving institutions (MSIs) in the region, namely Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) and Asian American and Native American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI); the history of racial tensions on their campuses; and the intersectional struggles that many students in Southern Nevada face on and off campus.

As racially minoritized student enrollment has grown in Southern Nevada, so have MSIs. The MSI designation was a response to a history of inequity and lack of underrepresented students' access to majority institutions (Palmer et al., 2017). The term MSI was first defined in the Higher Education Act of 1965 (United States Code, 2011). MSIs

have a significant role in society because they serve a large number of first-generation, low-income students and students of color (Miller et al., 2021). A designation of AANAPISI indicates at least 10% of total enrollment is made up of Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, and, importantly, that the institutions receive federal funding to support activities, facilities, and programs that specifically serve AANAPISI students (Center for Minority Serving Institutions [CMSI], 2022). Similarly, HSI indicates 25% of the institution's undergraduate enrollment is Hispanic, and federal funds support activities, facilities, and programs for Latinx/a/o students (CMSI, 2022). In 2022, Southern Nevada had three public bachelor's degree-granting institutions designated as both HSIs and AANAPISIs: College of Southern Nevada (CSN), Nevada State College (NSC), and University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) (CMSI, 2022).

The Higher Ed Immigration Portal (2022) reported that first-generation and second-generation immigrant students make up approximately 55% of all postsecondary students in Nevada. Further, undocumented students make up approximately 3.7% of all postsecondary students in Nevada (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.). There is also a growing population of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)-eligible residents in the state, who constitute approximately 3% of the total immigrant-origin population in Nevada. That said, given the challenges that immigrant-origin students experience navigating higher education, especially barriers with financial aid and filing state and federal documentation, acquiring postsecondary data on undocumented and DACAmented students becomes an increasing challenge.

Populations that are historically underrepresented in Nevada's higher education system are also disproportionately impacted by exclusionary school discipline. There has been a consistent pattern of racial inequalities in school discipline within the Clark County School District (CCSD) in Southern Nevada, the largest district in the state and the fifth largest in the United States. Black and Latinx/a/o students have historically made up the majority of disciplinary referrals in the district (CCSD, 2013; **Lane, 2022**; **Solis, 2020**). Black students specifically are over-represented in discipline compared to their share of enrollment. In 2017–2018, Black students made up 41% of expulsion referrals, far above the 13% share of enrollment (CCSD, 2018). The percentage of disciplinary referrals among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students (0%) came close to the share of enrollment (2%). Disciplinary referrals for suspension and expulsion mean reduced time in the classroom and a negative impact on academic achievement, including college eligibility (Leverett et al., 2021). Moreover, research suggests that school discipline may initiate a process that leads students to juvenile justice system involvement (Skiba et al., 2014).

In addition to racial inequalities in school discipline, system-impacted students (students affected by the criminal-legal system) are likely to be Black, Latinx/a/o, Native, Pacific Islander, and Asian American. In Nevada, these communities make up more of the arrest population (61%) than the White community (39%; Police Scorecard, n.d.). Arrests open the pathway to incarceration. In particular, Clark County has the highest incarceration rate in the state, with the city of Las Vegas incarcerating the most people. Black, Latinx/a/o, and Native populations are the majority of the Nevada incarcerated population (Prison Policy Initiative, n.d.). For these populations, there are few postsecondary education options in the state prison system. In addition, formerly incarcerated individuals encounter a lack of services to access and complete postsecondary education. Through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act, Congress restored access to the Pell Grant for incarcerated students in December 2020; the policy was

implemented on July 1, 2023 (Martinez-Hill, 2021). Pell Grant restoration partially addresses financial barriers for those who will be eligible among the 23,000 incarcerated in Nevada (Prison Policy Initiative, n.d.), a number that almost equals the current undergraduate population at UNLV (30,679 students as of fall 2021) (NSHE, 2022). Until the FAFSA Simplification Act is fully enacted, higher education continues to be inaccessible to Nevada's incarcerated population.

Given this background, our research team sought to place in context historical and contemporary conditions, as well as provide research-informed recommendations, to continue removing structural barriers to success in Southern Nevada. We define "success" as postsecondary policies and practices geared toward ensuring access throughout the Southern Nevada educational pathway. For the purposes of drafting stronger recommendations and honoring conversations with members of the Southern Nevada community and their perspectives, we are highlighting two populations that have been systematically excluded by inequitable policies and practices. Our focus in this report is on two historically marginalized student populations: immigrant-origin students (e.g., undocu/DACAmented, first-generation immigrant students), and system-impacted students.

We recognize that research cannot be disconnected from the communities of Southern Nevada and, in our research and drafting of this report, consider the ways in which community involvement has influenced the direction of this report. This report provides an overview of the structural barriers to success in Southern Nevada, defines servingness in action as a framework for discussing existing and proposed solutions, and concludes with recommendations for using this report as a springboard for future action.

PART II: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND EFFORTS TO ADDRESS STUDENT SUCCESS IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

This section discusses how federal, state, and institutional priorities and policies affect college affordability and play a direct role in access to postsecondary education and student success once enrolled. Economic and financial barriers to success, and practices to address those barriers, are intertwined with sociopolitical and legal and policy frameworks. This is particularly important in the current context of the pandemic, which compounds existing systems of educational marginalization for Southern Nevada's racially minoritized students, first-generation students, and DACA-recipients or undocumented residents. The pandemic has had a disproportionate financial impact on low-income communities of color across the country (Sáenz & Sparks, 2020). Working class families of color continue to struggle to keep up with inflation and the rising costs of housing, food, and other basic needs, prioritizing survival over education.

Southern Nevada, particularly the Las Vegas metropolitan region, is no exception. Overall, around 28% of the workforce in Las Vegas pre-pandemic was employed in hospitality and tourism roles (Klein & Smith, 2021). Latinx/a/o employees were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic's effect on hospitality and tourism, and along with Black workers, almost twice as likely to be unemployed between April 2020 and December 2020 (Klein & Smith, 2021). Although many areas of the United States have been able to rebound to pre-pandemic unemployment levels, Nevada's current rate remains higher than the U.S. average. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that as of August 2022, the unemployment rate for Nevada is 4.4% (as compared to 3.7% for the United States), and the unemployment rate for the Las Vegas region is 5.7% (Reeves et al., 2021).

Federally funded programs that can improve access to postsecondary education include Department of Education initiatives such as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate

Programs (GEAR UP) and TRIO Programs (e.g., Student Support Services, Upward Bound, and Talent Search). Nevada has multiple federally funded grants designed to increase the number of underrepresented students entering postsecondary education (Nevada State GEAR UP, 2020; Office of Postsecondary Education, 2022a). For example, the Nevada GEAR UP program serves more than 18 middle schools, benefiting more than 5,000 students (Nevada State GEAR UP, 2020). Southern Nevada institutions, including UNLV and NSC, also have other federal grants like the TRIO Programs.

TRIO are outreach and support programs to identify and provide services for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete high school and enroll in and complete their postsecondary education (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2022a). Students served include first-generation individuals, low-income college students, and individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a).

TRIO Programs such as Talent Search and Upward Bound provide examples of federal initiatives serving students in Southern Nevada. These programs follow federal guidelines and at least "two-thirds of the participants must be students who are low-income and potential first-generation college students" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.c), in addition to other program specific requirements. For example, Upward Bound eligibility also includes students who have completed eighth grade and are between the ages of 13 and 19 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2021).

8.9%

of Nevada residents aged 25 to 64 hold an associate degree as of 2019.

(SOURCE: LUMINA FOUNDATION)

Upward Bound also has a science component specifically for students interested in STEM careers: Upward Bound Math and Science Program. Both Talent Search and Upward Bound provide various services to students—including academic, career, and financial counseling—encouraging them to graduate from high school and complete their postsecondary education. UNLV has the most TRIO college access programs in the state. With a total funding of $1.6 million, the university operates five Talent Search programs that serve more than 2,700 high school students. And with a total funding of more than $2.5 million, the UNLV manages eight Upward Bound programs that serve more than 450 high school students. NSC has one Upward Bound program with total annual funding of $312,480 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2021).

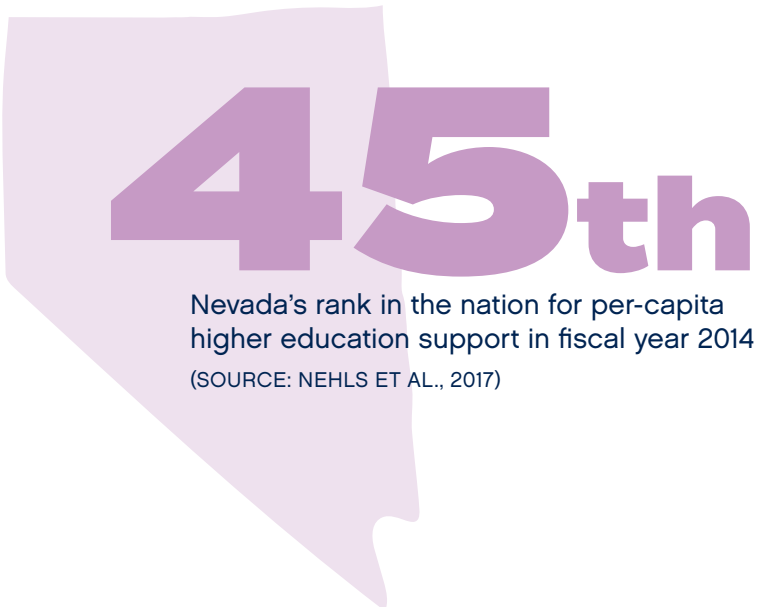
Successes are often balanced with challenges, reflecting a shifting landscape of priorities at the federal, state, and institutional level. A few examples affecting Southern Nevada institutions follow. For instance, failed legislation that would have offered free community college was one of the setbacks for the Biden administration's Build Back Better Agenda. As of 2019, among Nevada residents aged 25 to 64, only 8.9% held an associate degree and 8.4% possessed a postsecondary certification/certification (Lumina Foundation, n.d.). At the College of Southern Nevada, the only community college in the region, the retention rate from the first to second year for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-students was 65% (fall 2020 to fall 2021); the rate was 46% for part-time students in the same period. Only 16% of students

who entered as first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students ultimately graduated (CSN, n.d.).

Federal policy also restricts minority-serving institution grant eligibility for institutions that meet multiple MSI designations (Herder, 2022). Institutions can only apply to one Title III Part A MSI grant, which means HSI and AANAPISI designations for UNLV, NSC, and CSN compel institutions to choose to apply for either an AANAPISI or HSI Title III grant. This may force institutions to decide between prioritizing Latinx/a/o or Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, affecting not only existing student-support programs and activities, but also the ways in which institutions recruit students.

At the state level, in FY 2014, Nevada ranked 45th in the nation for per-capita higher education support (Nehls et al., 2017). From 2010 to 2015, student higher education appropriations in Nevada decreased by 34.5%, which corresponded with an increase in tuition and fees at all public higher education institutions (Nehls et al., 2017). In addition to the lack of overall support for students to be able to afford college, Nevada has lagged on providing accessible higher education for incarcerated and undocumented students. These priorities were compounded during the pandemic. While Clark County elected to receive a direct payment of $295 million and the city of Las Vegas received $118 million, most of this money was allocated to address immediate needs, such as food relief, rental assistance, unemployment, and health care and medical needs (Nevada Cares Act Overview, 2020). Only approximately $117 million was provided to fund education, delivered to local educational agencies throughout the state to support remote learning (Nevada Cares Act Overview, 2020). An additional $33 million was provided to K-12 schools for the purpose of testing, contact tracing, and PPE (Nevada Cares Act Overview, 2020).

Institutions, too, contribute to marginalizing structures through their priorities for funding. In January 2022, UNLV created Rebels Rebound, a student affairs-based retention program for system-impacted students. Institutional funding for the sole coordinator running the program was not made available beyond the end of AY 2022–2023. Similarly, the state's Prison Higher Education Program, for which the College of Southern Nevada provides education, relies on one program manager to coordinate services for students incarcerated and to facilitate degree completion for students once they leave the prison system. Statewide, the legislature has allocated funding for two positions and associated costs across CSN, Truckee Meadows Community College, and Western Nevada College (NSHE, 2023). Although institutional and state support exists, the funding levels are insufficient and unstable, which means many students are not served. Institutional policies and



resources need to be committed at adequate levels to serve long-neglected student populations and to establish a sustainable form of support for the long-term.

PART III: IMPLICATIONS FOR MISALIGNED POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO STUDENT ACCESS

In Part III, we focus on key areas for additional exploration in terms of research, policies, and practices for removing structural barriers to success in Southern Nevada. In particular, we highlight key recommendations for researchers and policy actors/administrators to consider. Although our focus was on immigrant-origin college students and system-impacted college students, we provide additional areas of research, practice, and policy to support student success of other marginalized communities. We also provide some examples of current initiatives being led by staff, faculty, administrators, community members, and policymakers to support these multiple student communities in Southern Nevada.

Research

We recognized that research is limited in terms of understanding structural barriers for success for immigrant-origin students and system-impacted students. As noted in our report, immigrant-origin students comprised a significant percentage of postsecondary students in Nevada, as well as students in the K-12 pathway. There is a need for understanding the barriers that inhibit these students from enrolling in higher education while considering the specific context of Southern Nevada, namely how industries such as leisure and hospitality impact or shape the college going culture of the region. In terms of system-impacted students, it is important to focus additional efforts to understand educational opportunity (or lack thereof) in Southern Nevada, especially the city of Las Vegas, as these areas have the highest incarceration rates in the state.

Several scholars have traced the history of activism in Southern Nevada with a particular focus on immigrant rights movements and activists. In this realm, we urge scholars to build on the efforts of those who have worked alongside organizers and activists in Southern Nevada. Tijerina Revilla and Rangel-Medina (2011) provide a "multidimensional consciousness analysis" of the Las Vegas Muxerista Crew, a group of queer and feminist immigrant rights youth activists in Southern Nevada. Furthermore, Hernandez-Toledo (2020) provides an analysis of immigration, activism, and geography by examining immigrant rights activism and spatial resistance within the landscape of Las Vegas and its historical ties to labor rights. More specifically tied to higher education, Orozco (2022) provides a critical understanding of identity and socio-political consciousness development of queer Latinx/a/o college student activists in Southern Nevada with a focus on the activism that manifested and informed policies and practices at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These scholars provide a framework from which to examine the continuing immigrant rights movements by youth activists and their connections to higher education institutions as they work to better serve immigrant-origin college students. Other areas of further research include examining the alignment of higher education practitioners and administrators to serving immigrant-origin college students within Nevada's social, political, and economic landscape.

Policy and Administration

Our report asserted several opportunities to engage in policy discussion regarding Southern Nevada. In what follows, we provide specific recommendations for policymakers and higher education administrators in Southern Nevada to consider:

1. Given the precarity of the local and state political landscape, it is important that higher education institutions build

partnerships that alleviate the dependency on fluctuating priorities, specifically financial resources toward the success of immigrant-origin college students. One example of this is the partnerships that exist between some Southern Nevada institutions and national nonprofit organizations, in this instance TheDream.US. This partnership provides a full-tuition scholarship to any Nevada State College student—first-year, transfer, or current—who qualifies as a DACA, DREAMer, undocumented, or Temporary Protected Status (TPS) student.

2. At the state level, higher education institutions are part of the NSHE All Access Committee to better support immigrant-origin college students and "build a comprehensive, state-wide support system for immigrant students." This committee is composed of representatives from several higher education institutions across the state, and it includes all three of the public institutions in Southern Nevada. The committee is tasked with streamlining support processes with respect to social, financial, legal, and academic resources to better support immigrant-origin college students in Nevada. One successful example of an institutionalized program to support immigrant-origin college students is the Nevada State College Undocumented Student Program. This program provides holistic support to undocumented and DACAmented current and future Nevada State College students. The program is designed to address the barriers that undocumented and DACAmented students face when applying and enrolling in higher education in addition to the support (e.g., social, financial, legal, and academic) needed to matriculate through the collegiate experience. The program provides students with the financial resources to alleviate the burden of costs associated with attending college. These financial resources come from institution, state, and national initiatives that are not attached to any limiting federal funding source that often requires students to have access to a social security number due to federal legislation.
3. Regarding MSIs in the region, it is important to review how institutional practices, policies, and use of federal funding adequately serve the needs of AAPI and Latinx students, especially as MSIs dedicated to serve—and not just enroll—these students. For HSIs, which serve one of the largest ethnic groups in the state, this means enacting an HSI Servingness framework that works to intentionally evaluate and adjust policies and practices in order to support the unique needs of students (Garcia et al., 2019). This might include examining how training of staff, faculty, and administrators addresses awareness of the needs of minoritized students, and how to adjust practices, services, and policies to be more inclusive of these students. Because institutional buy-in is important, senior institutional leaders need to advocate for and work with state and federal governments to remove structural barriers to success in Southern Nevada and the state.

In addition to providing current initiatives and areas of opportunity for research, practice, and policy, we end this report by offering some reflection questions that pertain to removing structural barriers to success for college students in Southern Nevada.

1. What stake does your institution carry in supporting undocumented student success?
2. In what ways can you or are you challenging the assumption of il(legality) as a structural barrier for undocumented student success?
3. What measures of protection does the institution and its leadership provide (or can they provide) for those whose positions are tied to the politics of the state and nation?

  - In what ways do you understand the risks that staff, faculty, and students must take in removing structural barriers (i.e., sociopolitical, legal, and financial) for undocumented student success?
4. How might your institution be reinforcing the criminalization of system-impacted students through
   - policies?
   - practices?
   - campus climate?
5. What tangible resources exist to increase access and retention for system-impacted students?
6. How are system-impacted students' voices informing (or how can they inform) leadership, policy, pedagogy, and student services?
7. What ethical responsibility do higher education institutions have to promote student success for all student populations?
8. How can we create a culture of shared responsibility within our institutions when serving different student populations?

Authors (from left to right): Jessica Rivera, Andrew Marx (Team Coordinator), Roberto C. Orozco, Cristina Nader, Jorge Burmicky (Team Leader), and Jude Paul Dizon

Streamlining Key Learner Transitions

FEDERICK NGO (CO-TEAM LEADER)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

LISA M. RUBIN (CO-TEAM LEADER)
Kansas State University

AMANDA DAVIS SIMPFENDERFER
William & Mary

BENJAMIN PINCUS
Seton Hall University

JOSÉ DEL REAL VIRAMONTES
University of California, Riverside

This section explores the connections between the hospitality and tourism industries and institutions of higher education in Southern Nevada. We provide research-informed recommendations for improving both transitions to the workforce and college attainment. We focus on two areas: transitioning graduates of college programs to the industry and transitioning industry professionals into educational opportunities (e.g., professional development, courses, certificates, degree programs). We first provide a description of the Nevada tourism and hospitality industries and higher education, and then we provide research-informed recommendations for streamlining key learner transitions between the two sectors.

We focus on the nexus between the tourism and hospitality industries and higher education for several reasons.

1. These industries are the largest in the state of Nevada and have consistently employed over one quarter of all workers in the state, with the majority (58%) being people of color (La Rue, 2019; Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development, 2022).
2. Current economic reports indicate the growth in industry jobs will be mostly at entry-level, but higher salaries will require a four-year degree (Gilbertson, 2022).
3. While there is a pathway upwards from entry-level positions towards management in some career clusters, these pathways are fewer in hospitality and tourism.
4. Our scan of workforce development programs in Nevada (e.g., WINN, LEAP) revealed they were mostly outside the hospitality industry. Although this likely reflects Nevada's interest in diversifying its economy, this leaves Nevada workers employed in the tourism and hospitality industries with insufficient and unclear postsecondary opportunities.

Investing in Nevada's future workforce through increased educational opportunities is also critical for the state. Although places such as Clark County expect population growth of 30% by 2035, this is mostly in older populations near retirement age (University of Nevada, Las Vegas [UNLV] Center for Business and Economic Research, 2021), and the state will rely on residents aged 25 to 44 to build up the workforce (Liu et al., 2020). Gen Z employees (born between 1995 and 2005), especially, are a more transient workforce than previous generations and value healthy trajectories and career ladders when selecting a job (Goh & Okumus, 2020). It is therefore imperative for the hospitality industry to either provide, or partner with educational institutions to provide, employees with access to the training and development needed to move up the company ladder or they will continue to see high attrition from this generation.

PART I: THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

Hospitality and tourism is the largest industry in the state of Nevada. As of September 2022, the industry employed 279,600 workers, representing an 8.6% increase from the previous year as it continues to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the industry, especially in Southern Nevada, which experienced a 55% drop in visitors and the lowest level of convention attendance in 21 years (Applied Analytics, 2021). As the pandemic wanes and visitors return, the state expects to add nearly 54,000 jobs in hospitality and tourism by 2028

(Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation [GOWINN], 2022).

Nevada's hospitality and tourism industry is composed of a predominantly young, contingent workforce (40% under the age of 34, and 60% under the age of 44), with a majority of employment in operational and customer-service oriented roles (Golubovskaya et al., 2019; Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development, 2022). Although employees in the hospitality and tourism industry have a positive view of their roles, expressing a high level of satisfaction with their career choice and noting they would recommend careers in hospitality to those closest to them (Tesone & Ricci, 2005), hospitality and tourism is also a transient, high-turnover industry due to factors that include unusual work schedules and low pay (Goh & Okumus, 2020; Scerri et al., 2020). The BLS reports an 85% employee turnover rate in 2021 (BLS, 2021).

Investing in educational opportunities, training, and development for employees has the dual benefit of increasing retention and of improving levels of service, customer service, and overall organizational success (Heskett et al., 2008; Golubovskaya et al., 2019). However, only 28% of hospitality workers receive even short-term training, let alone more robust professional development (Pew Research Center, 2016). Further, the majority of entry-level positions in the hospitality and tourism industries do not require a college education (Gilbertson, 2022). Yet college degrees appear to hold value for industry employees: 74% of casino games dealers hold an associate degree or higher, corresponding to over 10% higher yearly earnings than those with no higher education credentials (Zippia, 2022). Industry leaders recognize that higher education gives prospective hospitality and tourism employees exposure to classroom knowledge, faculty expertise in industry, technical research in problem resolution, and the ability to look at issues with different perspectives to be able to solve problems (A. Miller, personal communication, September 13, 2022). It also can help to develop skills (e.g., understanding financial statements) that can facilitate career mobility from front line team members to managerial roles. Higher education is also valued in the field because it can help employees expand beyond one frame of reference (e.g., a particular brand or organization) and help them cultivate innovative ideas for the industry (A. Miller, personal communication, September 13, 2022).

Academic Pathways to the Hospitality Industry in Nevada

To examine education and training opportunities for the hospitality and tourism industries, we took stock of academic programs in Nevada, focusing on the Las Vegas metropolitan area. Here we describe key academic pathways to the hospitality and tourism industries and how they prepare students for employment and careers in the field.

High School Magnet Programs

Clark County School District (CCSD) is the fifth largest school district in the United States and offers magnet programs at 18 schools including career and technical academies (CCSD, n.d.a, n.d.b). Five magnet programs offer a focus on culinary arts, hospitality, and/or tourism. For example, the long-running and highly respected Academy of Hospitality and Tourism at Valley High School has offered a pathway to industry and higher education since 1994. Initially founded in partnership between the school and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority with a focus on tourism and travel, the program has evolved to encompass hospitality more broadly as a member of the National Academy Foundation (NAF). The NAF (2022) is a network of 619 academies at schools in 34 states that focuses on expanding industries including hospitality and tourism, health sciences, and IT. The NAF model couples curriculum with programming (job shadowing, industry involvement); students enroll in core courses along with one hospitality course

each semester (K. Jones, personal communication, September 28, 2022). Students who complete NAF courses, demonstrate employability skills in 11th grade, and pass a 100-item assessment related to hospitality and tourism in 12th grade can earn six college credits from the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) (K. Jones, personal communication, September 28, 2022). Students who complete the NAF requirements, a paid internship, and graduate with a diploma become NAF Certified.

Community College Programs

The College of Southern Nevada offers degree and certificate programs in Casino Management; Culinary Arts; Food and Beverage Management; Hotel Management; and Tourism, Convention, and Event Planning (CSN, 2022a). In addition, CSN's Associate of Arts program in Hospitality Management is comprised of 60 credits and directly transfers to UNLV's Hospitality Management bachelor's program (CSN, 2022b). The department's mission statement is "to develop a knowledgeable, progressive, diverse workforce of Hospitality professionals, able to lead and manage the ever-changing global hospitality industry" (CSN, 2022a, para. 6). CSN's (2022c) Institutional Research data dashboards indicated that for full-time students who transferred within three years of their first semester at CSN, numbers are relatively low. Table 1 shows the CSN enrollments from fall 2017 through 2021 in a Department of Hospitality Management program, and the numbers and percentages of students who transferred to UNLV (for any program, not necessarily hospitality).

Four-Year and Graduate Degree Programs

UNLV's bachelor's in hospitality encompasses learning outcomes that include managing forms of

TABLE 1.
College of Southern Nevada Hospitality Enrollments and Transfers Out to University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2017–2021

Year	CSN Enrollments in Hospitality Programs	Transfers to UNLV (any program)
2017	151	18 (11.9%)
2018	172	28 (16.3%)
2019	209	15 (7.2%)
2020	133	7 (5.3%)
2021	136	2 (1.5%)

Note: CSN = College of Southern Nevada; UNLV = University of Nevada, Las Vegas

"...The focus on industry needs in the four-year curriculum does provide students with advantages for career advancement in their employment beyond entry-level roles."

capital (e.g., human, financial); understanding human resource problems and challenges; assessing legal risks in the industry; analyzing financial, marketing, and operational results and outcomes; understanding customer segments and marketing to increase revenue; and developing effective management techniques (UNLV, 2022). Many of these skills can be taught in high school magnet programs and learned through on-the-job experience, but the focus on industry needs in the four-year curriculum does provide students with advantages for career advancement in their employment beyond entry-level roles. This program has been in-person to allow students to take advantage of the many benefits the program has being situated near the Las Vegas Strip, but it will offer a fully online option beginning in fall 2023 (M. Hausbeck, personal communication, October 4, 2022).

UNLV also offers an in-person Master of Science in Hotel Administration, an online Master of Hospitality Administration with focuses on gaming management and hospitality management, an online graduate certificate in gaming management, and a PhD program in Hospitality Administration (UNLV William F. Harrah College of Hospitality, 2022). These graduate programs are designed to develop leaders and executives for the industry.

Academic Institutes and Centers

Institutes housed at institutions of higher education enable the industry to provide employees with professional development opportunities. The UNLV International Gaming Institute offers an Executive Development Program to provide executive education to leaders in the gambling industry (UNLV International Gaming Institute, 2022). The UNLV Sands Center for Professional Development (2022) provides professional education for industry professionals. Both of these entities are situated within UNLV's William F. Harrah College of Hospitality. This center aims to support industry professionals who seek to fill skills or competency gaps and workers who need formal education to advance in their career (H. Erpelding-Welch, personal communication, September 20, 2022).

College Partnerships

Major industry employers have developed partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide education benefits to their employees.

- In 2022, Caesars renewed its relationship with eCornell for two years so every full-time team member gets $5,500 per year for tuition reimbursement for classes or certificates at a corporate negotiated rate. Internal publications inform employees about these opportunities at eCornell or other executive development programs (e.g., a general manager program).
- In 2018, MGM Resorts International partnered with the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) to develop the MGM College Opportunity Program (MGM Resorts International, 2018), where MGM funds employees' pursuit of degrees at different levels (associate, bachelor's, or master's) at the following NSHE institutions: UNLV;

University of Nevada, Reno; Nevada State College; Great Basin College; Western Nevada College; College of Southern Nevada; and Truckee Meadows Community College.
- The Governor's Office on Workforce Innovation is offering upskilling and other training to citizens, funded by the SANDI Grant, through partnerships with NSHE institutions (L. Levine, personal communication, October 4, 2022).

Increasing access to higher education through these programs involves challenges and opportunities. For instance, institutions need to promote the value of these programs to employees, expand the range of programs available to serve the diversity of industry employees, ensure equitable access to these programs for all employees, and design programs so that they can promote access and success. We also note that only the largest gaming companies have introduced these forms of benefits. We further discuss these possibilities in the next section.

PART II: CURRENT RESEARCH

In examining current research related to streamlining key learner transitions, we reviewed scholarship from both the industry perspective and higher education. Each has an important role to play in creating smoother transitions between education and industry and increasing degree attainment and worker satisfaction in Southern Nevada. With respect to transitions from higher education to the tourism and hospitality industries, these include mentoring programs, career pathways, and co-operative education (co-op) and internship programs. With respect to transitions from the hospitality and tourism industries to higher education, these include employer-sponsored education benefits and dedicated training programs for employees.

Streamlining Transitions from Higher Education to Industry

Mentoring

As graduates transition into hospitality roles, a divide exists regarding the expectations from those studying to enter the field and the individuals charged with hiring them. Raybould and Wilkins (2005) found that while students placed significant emphasis on conceptual and analytical skills in the workplace, hiring managers were more focused on areas such as problem solving, interpersonal capabilities, or ability to self-manage. The gap between employers and employee expectations found by Raybould and Wilkins (2005) has been found by other researchers (Shum et al., 2018; Walmsley et al., 2020).

Mentoring programs between industry professionals and college students can provide students with the opportunity to network and gain experience while considering their next career steps (Scerri et al., 2020). In their qualitative study of a mentoring program between industry professionals and final-year students in an Australian institution's hospitality program, Scerri et al. (2020) found that both mentors and mentees had positive attitudes toward their experience. Mentees gained self-confidence through emotional support from the mentoring relationship, while mentors felt altruistic for "giving back" to the industry (Scerri et al., 2020). In addition, mentees' takeaways included beneficial knowledge, skills, and networking in the hospitality industry (Scerri et al., 2020).

Career Pathways

Significant progress has been made at the community college level in defining career pathways for students that lead not only to a degree but also to skills that allow for career advancement, higher salaries, and improved quality of life (Perna, 2015; Price et al., 2021). Career pathway programs typically begin by developing working relationships among stakeholders such as employers, government agencies, and community colleges to identify areas of need within specific industries. Community colleges then define career pathways that

provide a sequence of stackable credentials that are closely aligned with industry needs and employment opportunities and that provide economic mobility (Price et al., 2021).

Several programs have worked in partnership with industries, such as hospitality and health care, to identify industry needs and to align noncredit courses, continuing education courses, and for-credit degree programs with these needs. Such programs include the Northeast Resiliency Consortium (NRC), a network of community colleges in the Northeast; Credentials to Careers (C2C), part of a network of 40 Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training programs across the country; and Skills, Tasks, and Results Training (START), a program from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. To improve degree attainment, these programs have worked to scaffold learning experiences to help students who enter community colleges through different entry points work toward certificates, credentials, or degrees that lead to better-paying jobs within partner industries. Programs such as NRC focused on matriculating noncredit or continuing education students into degree or certificate seeking students, while C2C focused on training or retraining unemployed and displaced workers (Myran et al., 2021). Regardless of the specific program emphasis, these programs focus on helping students gain the skills and competencies necessary to be competitive in industries that are also in need of workers with particular skill sets (Myran et al., 2021), providing opportunities for social and economic mobility. These types of programs have the added benefit of helping students complete their programs in less time by accounting for prior knowledge; the programs also make learning more transparent for students and employers through the use of assessments (McCarthy, 2014).

Employers are an integral part of career pathways, not just in identifying their industry's needs, but also in partnering with educational institutions to develop curricula and provide experiential learning opportunities. C2C found that tapping into the local knowledge of industry professionals and engaging employers in identifying skills and competencies that should be included in program curriculum led to more innovative curricular design (Myran et al., 2021). Additionally, they worked closely with employers to develop experiential learning opportunities such as internships for students and professional development opportunities for faculty. These programs leverage the responsibility of both the industries and higher education institutions in helping students navigate the complexities of degree attainment. It is important to examine systemic inequities in access to internships and provide greater access to students who have historically been excluded from such opportunities (Hora et al., 2022).

Cooperative Education Programs

The hospitality industry includes a unique combination of technical skills and proficiencies and customer service-oriented skills; however, employers often cite that new employees, and especially recent college graduates, lack the necessary customer service and problem-solving skills (Wilkie, 2019). Employers often lay the blame on higher education for not adequately preparing students (Wilkie, 2019). Many higher education institutions now emphasize experiential learning opportunities such as internships in order to meet the increasing demand for students to graduate with such skills (Yiu & Law, 2012). Cooperative (co-op) educational programs provide opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience while still enrolled in college. Northeastern Co-op is one of the most successful examples of such a program, where students alternate between semesters of in-class study and semesters of full-time internships in a desired industry (Northeastern University, n.d.). These programs help students develop not only technical skills required for the workforce, but also skills and

competencies such as the ability to take initiative, make decisions in the face of uncertainty, and provide customer service (Kelly & McGonagle, 2013).

The integration of classroom learning and hands-on experience also helps students develop the valuable leadership skills that are needed to manage teams and to move up into management roles within the hospitality industry. In their study of virtual hospitality and tourism internships during COVID-19 for a hospitality program at a college in northeast, Park and Jones (2021) found that interns and site supervisors were able to craft a positive internship experience, just requiring more technology and communication outside of a physical workplace. They noted the importance of college internship coordinators and industry site supervisors in establishing learning outcomes together for student interns and an organized onboarding process for virtual hospitality interns (Park & Jones, 2021).

Streamlining Transitions from Industry to Higher Education

Organizations want to invest in their employees and use education as a retention tool and to develop leaders, since retaining talent is very challenging in the current context of labor. Developing talent and internally promoting leaders is key, and partnerships with higher education institutions can be vital to these efforts.

“Competitive benefits also attract and retain workers, which is particularly crucial in industries such as service and retail that have high turnover of ‘frontline’ workers.”

Employer-Sponsored Education Benefits

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2022) reported that 48% of companies in the United States offered tuition-assistance benefits to their employees. A range of large national employers including Google, Apple, Amazon, Smuckers, Chipotle, and Starbucks, financially help their employees obtain college degrees and other postsecondary credentials (Busta, 2019; Carnevale et al., 2015; Glover, 2021). For example, McDonald’s provides partial tuition coverage of up to $700 a year for workers and $1,050 for managers attending community colleges. Wal-Mart covers all tuition, fees, and materials for associates, who are eligible on their first day of employment through its Live Better U program. By April 2021, over 30,000 students were active in the program and nearly 7,300 credentials were earned (Glover, 2021). Student loan repayment is also emerging as a valued education benefit (Becker, 2019; Kilgour, 2017).

Employers may provide these benefits for a number of reasons, including to develop talent, equip employees for leadership, and increase workforce productivity (Capelli, 2004). Competitive benefits also attract and retain workers, which is particularly crucial in industries such as service and retail that have high turnover of “frontline” workers (Glover, 2021). In a survey of nearly 32,000 workers who used education benefits, education benefits (e.g., tuition or student loan repayment) were the third most desired voluntary benefits, after retirement plans and paid vacation time (Bright Horizons, 2019). More than 80% reported that education benefits made them more effective employees, and half of respondents indicated they would not have pursued further education without the availability of education benefits (Bright Horizons, 2019).

Research also shows a positive return on investment to these corporate investments. A study of education benefits at Cigna and Discover showed reduced employee turnover and increased rates of internal promotions (Lumina Foundation, 2016). Walmart's program also appeared to increase promotion rates and employer performance (Glover, 2021). A study of community college students who used employer-sponsored educational assistance benefits reported they had better chances of progressing toward their degree and earning higher GPAs than other students (Tran & Smith, 2017).

Compared to the rest of the college-enrolled population, students receiving employer-sponsored aid are more likely to be older, married, and have children, and more likely to be first-generation college students (Faulk & Wang, 2014). Another study of one state's community colleges found racial and gendered differences in use of employer-sponsored benefits for education, with Black students and women more likely to use employer benefits than their counterparts (D'Amico et al., 2014). These findings together suggest that employer-sponsored programs can be a critical way to increase access to higher education for a broad range of individuals. Nevertheless, inequities in access and use of these programs must be highlighted. Estimates indicate that just 2% to 5% of eligible employees are able to take advantage of these benefits (Glover, 2019). Our conversations with experts in Southern Nevada, both in the tourism and hospitality industries and in higher education, underscored concerns about whether all employees were aware of and eligible for education benefits.

Equity in Access and Use to Benefit Programs

There are several challenges and opportunities to consider in expanding employer-sponsored education benefit programs. We provide here some recommendations based on research examining existing employer-sponsored programs and college access programs. With respect to characteristics of the benefit programs, research suggests flexibility may be important for serving more employees with these programs. Employers may consider the amount of the benefits, whether benefits provided are up front or require reimbursements, the types of institutions that students can attend, the instructional mode, and any work or student performance requirements (Glover, 2019; Ngo et al., 2022), as these may affect workers' decisions to use the benefits. One study of Head Start employees pursuing associate degrees described support for tuition and books as a significant benefit of the program (Taylor, 2021). However, one of the disadvantages was that participants had to pass all their classes for the program to cover the costs; students who did not earn a "C" or better in their courses could lose the opportunity to stay in the program and would need to pay back the money the program invested in them (Taylor, 2021). Overall, employer-sponsored programs should aim to provide comprehensive support to cover the full cost of attendance and minimize any financial burdens that participants may face in pursuing their credentials.

With respect to increasing usage, research on equitable practices in college access

2% to 5%

of eligible employees who are able to take advantage of employer-sponsored education benefits

(SOURCE: GLOVER, 2019)

“By expanding educational benefits to more workers, including those at the lower end of the wage spectrum and entry-level workers, the hospitality and tourism industry could support a broader range of employees beyond management and provide a path toward social and economic mobility.”

programs for low-income and first-generation students also provides important recommendations for employer-sponsored programs. For example, Perna’s (2015) recommendations included (a) targeting students with the greatest financial need; (b) assisting students with navigating pathways into and through college, with particular attention to financial aid processes and other critical steps for college entry; and (c) adapting services to recognize the relevant context and characteristics of targeted students, including the state, regional, and local context in which the programs are embedded. These recommendations from effective college access programs are important because employer-sponsored programs report similar challenges. A study of employees participating in their employer’s tuition assistance program felt there was a lack of marketing of the program, since the majority of participants learned about the tuition assistance programs from their managers after being hired (Tlapa, 2017). Further, employees who did not participate in the program reported the following reasons for not doing so: not having enough time, not being able to transfer prior credits, having financial holds on previously earned credits, and limited recognition of work experience (Tlapa, 2017). Both employers and higher education institutions can address these challenges in the designs of their education benefits programs to increase access and use. By expanding educational benefits to more workers, including those at the lower end of the wage spectrum and entry-level workers, the hospitality and tourism industry could support a broader range of employees beyond management and provide a path toward social and economic mobility.

PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are preliminary recommendations based on the information we have gathered. These recommendations encourage collaboration between industry and higher education stakeholders.

Provide Outreach to Employees

- Establish the enrollment of first-generation, low-income, and nontraditional students into employer-sponsored higher education programs as a high priority
- Provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of students who participate in employer-sponsored higher education sponsored programs

Follow Established Models for Career Pathways

- Gather Southern Nevada stakeholders: high school career and technical education coordinators, community college leaders, UNLV leaders, hospitality industry leaders, and economic development experts
- Outline the educational requirements for different levels of employment (i.e., which jobs need a high school diploma or an associate, bachelor’s, or master’s degree)

- Create clear educational pathways based on the needs and educational requirements of different job opportunities
- Work with industry to define career ladders from entry-level positions to managerial roles and the types of education (e.g., trainings, certificates, or degrees) that are required to move up to higher level positions
- Develop clear matriculation agreements so that continuing education (nondegree) credits can be used toward associate degrees and that community college credits can be used toward bachelor's degrees at UNLV
- Collaborate with the hospitality industry to ensure that the curriculum aligns with current trends and expectations (e.g., technology usage in the industry)

Offer Flexibility in Course Taking

- Establish standards for Prior Learning Assessments (e.g., work experience that counts toward a degree program in lieu of taking a related course)
- Consider competency-based learning that allows students to move through curricula at whatever pace works best for them instead of adhering to a traditional semester model
- Recognize the transient nontraditional college population that is present in Southern Nevada and in the hospitality industry
- Consider hybrid, asynchronous, and online options

Experiential Learning

- NSHE institutions can partner with the hospitality industry to implement co-op style programs, alternating semesters between full-time (paid) internships and academic coursework
- Give students more hands-on experience to develop customer service skills necessary to be successful in the hospitality industry
- Develop mentor programs between the industry and hospitality and tourism programs at different levels (high school, two-year college, and four-year college/university)
- Allow students to work in different areas of the industry to determine which areas are the best fit for a career
- Work with the hospitality industry to use internships as a recruiting tool so that students interning at the end of their junior year/beginning of their senior year receive full-time job offers for after graduation

Authors (from left to right): José Del Real Viramontes, Amanda Davis Simpfenderfer, Lisa M. Rubin (Co-Team Leader), Benjamin Pincus, and Federick Ngo (Co-Team Leader) (Not Pictured).

Supporting Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

ASHLEY B. CLAYTON (TEAM LEADER)
Louisiana State University

MICHELLE BAILEY (TEAM COORDINATOR)
University of Delaware

ALI WATTS
University of Utah

TY C. MCNAMEE
University of Mississippi

KAMIA F. SLAUGHTER
Auburn University

FREDERICK D. PATTERSON
Research Insitute, United Negro College Fund

This section focuses on an overview of policies and practices that support rural postsecondary education and workforce training in the state of Nevada. Although Nevada is the seventh largest state in the country, it has a population of only 3 million residents. Therefore, a large portion of the state is considered desert and rural. Nevada is located in the western region of the United States and borders Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. Nevada's capital, Carson City, is located near the western border and close to Lake Tahoe. In the first section, we provide an overview of Nevada's postsecondary context, rurality in the state, and the policy landscape. In the second section, we discuss the current literature on rural-located and rural-serving institutions, postsecondary career and technical education, and rural student populations. In the final section, we provide policy and practice recommendations to further support rural postsecondary education and workforce training in Nevada.

PART I: NEVADA'S POSTSECONDARY RURAL EDUCATION CONTEXT

The Nevada System of Higher Education ([NSHE], n.d.) is "comprised of two doctoral-granting universities, a state college, four comprehensive community colleges and one environmental research institute [and] serves the educational and job training needs of Nevada" (para. 1). This report is focused on rural postsecondary education and workforce training within the NSHE. In connection with the higher education context, there are two robust examples of Nevada institutions serving rural students and communities. The first is Great Basin College (GBC), a community college and the only college classified as a rural-serving institution in Nevada (Koricich et al., 2022). The second example is the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), the only land-grant university of the state. We provide an overview of these two institutions and how they reach the rural population of Nevada. Further, we provide examples of college access and preparatory programs in Nevada that assist rural students in enrolling in postsecondary education.

Great Basin College

In northern Nevada, the Great Basin College system is an example of an innovative institution. GBC is a comprehensive community college offering two and four-year degrees as well as workforce certification programs (GBC, 2022). One of the college's core missions is to "serve rural Nevada," claiming "[mission] extends beyond the main campus, providing for the needs of place-bound residents with appropriate accessibility through local distance delivery methods" (GBC, 2022, p. 19). This focus on "place-bound residents" is evident through Great Basin College's expansion to include campuses across the northern Nevada region, and the college's approach to distance education. The college offers online courses in a variety of formats, including through the use of a live television stream (GBC, 2022). The college also holds class sessions in community-based locations in areas not served by a GBC satellite campus (GBC, 2022). Further, Great Basin College continually assesses its program offerings to ensure that they align with community needs, creating new workforce training and degree programs as the local industries shift (GBC, 2022, p. 15).

University of Nevada, Reno

The Morrill Act of 1862 established a land-grant university in every state and territory in the United States (Abramson et al., 2014; Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities,

2012). The University of Nevada, Reno is the 1862 land-grant university in the state of Nevada. UNR has a large outreach to rural communities through the UNR Cooperative Extension. A key component of land-grant universities is the role of the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, which established the Cooperative Extension System. The goal of Cooperative Extension is to transmit knowledge—particularly research and knowledge related to the agriculture industry—from the land-grant universities to the citizens of each state (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.). UNR has an extension office in 15 counties in Nevada, in addition to an office in Carson City (UNR, n.d.a). For over 90 years, the UNR Cooperative Extension (n.d.b) has administered the 4-H program of Nevada, which facilitates in-school, afterschool, and off-campus activities, clubs, and initiatives (4-H, n.d.a). Notably, 4-H (n.d.a) is the largest youth development program in the United States and nearly half of the participants are from rural areas.

Pre-College Programs

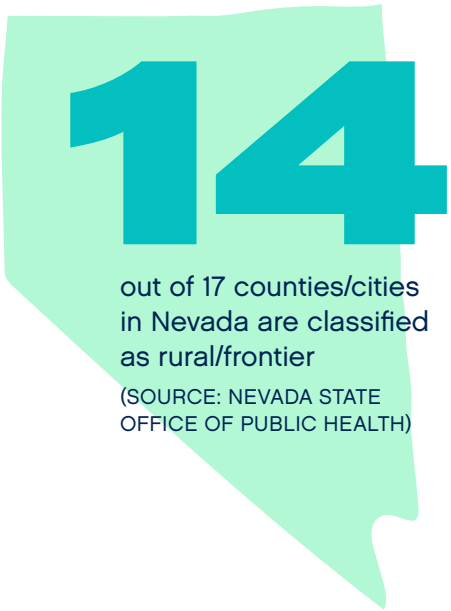
Several pre-college programs in Nevada help prepare high school students for college and career opportunities. Many are federally funded programs, including Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and the eight TRIO Programs. These initiatives provide outreach and student services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., low-income and first-generation) to enter and succeed in higher education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a, n.d.b). Postsecondary institutions within the Nevada System of Higher Education currently receive federal grants to host TRIO programs. For example, Nevada State College, Truckee Meadows Community College, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and UNR all have Upward Bound programs. UNLV also provides a Talent Search program. Furthermore, Nevada State GEAR UP is a statewide, federally funded grant program that reflects partnerships between a network of high schools and postsecondary institutions. Other pre-college programs specifically serve and attract students from rural communities. For example, the National FFA Organization (2023) prepares youth for leadership and careers in various areas of agriculture, from education to science to business, through local chapter meetings and conferences, and it provides students with scholarships to higher education institutions. The Nevada FFA Association has nearly 30 chapters (Nevada Agriculture Education, 2021).

Rurality in Nevada

According to the U.S. Census data (2022), Nevada continues to grow in population size. Nevada is geographically diverse; although it does house major urban centers, such as Las Vegas and Reno, a larger part of the state is rural. Nevada's six most northeastern counties (Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Pershing, and White Pine) are classified as non-metro by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Management and Budget and comprise one commuting zone, which is considered a postsecondary education desert[1] (Hillman, 2016). The Nevada State Office of Public Health's report on rural and frontier health (Griswold et al., 2017) states that of the 17 counties/cities in Nevada, only three are classified as urban, while 14 are classified as rural/frontier.

According to a report from the Guinn Center (2022), although there are more youth in urban Nevada areas, the proportion of residents aged 14 to 24 years is actually similar across the state's urban and rural counties. In fact,

1 In defining "education deserts," Hillman (2016) explains, "not all communities have equal chances of having a college nearby; there are many places across the country where no colleges are located or where the options are scarce" (p. 988).



rural areas alone educate 9% of the state's population (Guinn, 2020), around 7,500 PreK-12 students (Showalter et al., 2019). Nevada's rural populations are the most diverse in the country, in terms of social class[2] and race (Showalter et al., 2019). Rural Nevadans are also diverse in disability identities, with larger percentages of rural students, compared to urban students, having Individual Education Programs (Guinn, 2020). Nevada has seen some of the highest improvements in rural student test scores in recent years, as compared to other states' rates. The state, however, continues to rank in the lowest high school graduation quartile and is amongst the highest priority states in the country when it comes to college readiness[3] (Showalter et al., 2019).

Nevada Policy Landscape: Considerations of Rurality

The Nevada policy landscape has direct implications on rurality, particularly as some educational policies incorporate discourses that reflect considerations of and sensibilities about place. For example, the Nevada Department of Education's (NDE) **2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP)** outlines a set of visions, missions, values, goals, strategies, and outcomes that the state strives to implement to promote student success (NDE, 2020). One of the values is *access to quality*, described as "students, educators, and families hav[ing] opportunities to take full advantage of Nevada's education system, regardless of zip code, district, or setting" (p. 18). The language emphasizes acuity to residence and insinuates location and distance as being potential barriers to address. Further, the STIP acknowledges the relationship between rural communities and the need for career and technical education, positioning it as a pathway to employment. In 2017, the Nevada Legislature created and implemented a **College and Career Ready (CCR) Diploma**, which was designed to better support students' postsecondary success and career outcomes (NDE, 2020). Unlike the standard or advanced diplomas offered throughout the state, the CCR diploma requires students to be proficient in multiple languages, take coursework with transferable credit, and earn certificates or credentials centered on college- and career-readiness (NDE, 2021).

Essential to sustaining criteria for the CCR diploma are major student success assessment stakeholders such as ACT WorkKeys, which measures basic workplace skills, and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, which assesses readiness for fields in the military. Another,

2 We use the terms "social class" and "poor and working-class" versus "socioeconomic status" and "low-income" to encompass a variety of classism factors impacting individuals, including income, parental occupation/education, access to resources, and how one feels about their social standing compared to others' (APA, 2007; Class Action, n.d.; Diemer et al., 2013).

3 The *Why Rural Matters* report gauges college readiness based upon high school graduation rates in rural areas, as well as percentage of rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment courses, passing AP exams, and taking the ACT or SAT. States ranked as highest priority are those "where key factors converge to present the most extreme challenges for rural schooling, suggesting the most urgent and comprehensive needs for policymakers' attention" (Showalter et al., 2019).

more localized, entity facilitating workforce-related efforts is the Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (GOWINN), which operates as an accountability partner to create policy, collect and analyze data, and encourage promising practices to advance Nevada's workforce. One of the tasks it oversees is credentialing, specifically by validating industry-specific licenses, certificates, and exams. Notably, some of Nevada's high-priority industries are information technology, health care and medical services, manufacturing, and logistics. Other targeted industries are aerospace and defense, natural resources, construction, hospitality and tourism, and mining and materials.

Other policy documents in Nevada explicitly acknowledge rurality as a consideration and feature of its geospatial and socio-economic landscape. The **Nevada 2020–2023 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan** provides an overview of the state's strategy for supporting its workforce development system (GOWINN, 2020). Though the WIOA Unified State Plan reinforces mining and materials as a targeted industry that benefits rural Nevada residents, it also limits discourses about rurality to being associated with earnings and viable career pathways. Further, the **2021 Nevada State Plan for the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSERF)** outlines some of the state's plans for safely sustaining operations of schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Discourses about rurality in the ARP ESSERF discussed internet connectivity issues in rural communities, logistics for transporting nutrition packages to rural residents, and strategies for recruiting teachers to rural schools. Overall, both policy documents frame rurality as an issue of access.

PART II: CURRENT RESEARCH ON RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Scholars and policymakers have consistently struggled to define what rurality looks like in the United States. As Cain et al. (2020) noted, "the concept of rural is multidimensional and complex" (p. 6) and cannot be reduced to geographic, political, or economic boundaries. Rural students are diverse, as are the institutions that serve them. Despite this variation, students from rural backgrounds are more likely to have experienced childhood poverty (Lichter & Johnson, 2007; O'Hare & Savage, 2006), to be first-generation college students (Provasnik et al., 2007), and to have had limited access to Advanced Placement courses, career counseling, or college preparatory programs while in high school (Graham, 2009; Griffin et al., 2011). In addition, for many rural communities, postsecondary institutions are physically too far away for students to easily access (McDonough et al., 2010). Not only are public transportation options sparse, but reliable personal transportation also poses a

"...Students from rural backgrounds are more likely to have experienced childhood poverty, to be first-generation college students, and to have had limited access to Advanced Placement courses, career counseling, or college preparatory programs while in high school."

challenge for many rural students, particularly those from poor and working-class backgrounds (McDonough et al., 2010). Online education has also been suggested as a potential solution for rural students. However, many rural areas lack reliable access to broadband internet, making online education difficult to pursue in such regions (Kim, 2019; Rosenboom & Blagg, 2018). Rural counties are home to just 14% of the nation's college campuses, even though these counties represent 97% of the overall U.S. land area (Kim, 2019). This relatively lower number of higher education institutions in rural regions is of importance as U.S. residents have become less mobile over recent decades, and only 20% will live more than 100 miles from their childhood homes at any point during their lives (Northern & Petrilli, 2019).

These realities contribute to a nationwide education gap where only 20% of rural adults between the ages of 25 and 34 have four-year degrees compared to 37% of their urban peers (USDA, 2016). Of 467 U.S. counties identified by the USDA as "low education," in places where 20% or more of the population has less than a high school diploma, 79% are rural (USDA, 2018). One rural county in Nevada—Pershing—qualifies as a "low education county" (21.6% holding less than a high school diploma), while four others are within a few percentage points (Humbold 17.6%, Lander 17.1%, Elko 16.62%, and White Pine 16.18%; note that all of these counties are located within "education deserts."

The above-mentioned challenges are intensified in rural areas situated within "education deserts" (Hillman, 2016; Hillman & Weichman, 2016), spaces in which there are none or only one broad-access higher education institutions. Students living in education deserts are more likely to be working class, to be the first in their family to attend college, and to be less likely to apply to and enroll in college (Hillman, 2016; Klasik et al., 2018). These education deserts also offer fewer employment opportunities that require postsecondary education (Cain, 2020; Kim, 2019; Ruiz & Perna, 2017); this exacerbates rural economic challenges arising from issues like the shift away from traditional economic mainstays in rural communities, such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing (Corbett, 2021; Koricich et al., 2018; McDonough et al., 2010; Ruiz & Perna, 2017). The mismatch between education and employment opportunities results in a trend of rural students who receive postsecondary credentials leaving their home communities in search of job opportunities aligned with their training and skill sets (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Koricich et al., 2018; McDonough et al., 2010; Sherman & Sage, 2011).

Rural-Located and Rural-Serving Institutions

Despite these challenges, rural-located institutions (RLIs) and rural-serving institutions (RSIs) play an important role in providing education opportunities for rural students and for serving rural communities. RLIs, defined as institutions located in rural places, are often pillars of the community, providing an "outsized" share of local employment opportunities (Koricich et al., 2022). RSIs are defined as colleges and universities that

- Contain a high percentage of their residing county population classified as rural;
- Are located in areas where a high average percentage of adjacent counties are classified as rural;
- Possess lower population size;
- Are located further away from metro areas;
- Are within counties comparatively further away from metro areas; and
- Have a high percentage of the institution's total credentials awarded in fields that are often unique to and predominant in rural areas, including, agriculture, natural resources, and parks and recreation (Koricich et al., 2022).

RSIs also span postsecondary types, making up 33% of all private four-year, 46% of public four-year,

and more than half of two-year colleges and universities; one-third of Historically Black Colleges and Universities; 18% of high Hispanic-enrolling institutions; 93% of Tribal Colleges and Universities; and 94% of high Native-enrolling (nontribal) colleges (Koricich et al., 2022). However, of the 1,087 U.S. RSIs classified by Koricich's team, only one institution in Nevada—Great Basin College—is defined as an RSI.

Postsecondary Career and Technical Education

The labor shortage in the United States is reaching crisis level (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2022). Carnevale and colleagues (2017) have noted that one of the greatest challenges in rural regions is a shortage of qualified and trained workers. To alleviate these challenges and given rural contexts' connections to working-class industries, postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) offerings can provide rural populations with real-world, skills-based postsecondary training to use in their local workforces (AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 2017; Dortch, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Postsecondary education scholars are not alone in making these calls—federal policy since the mid-1980s has also encouraged tighter connections between CTE programs and local labor demands. The widest-reaching of these policy efforts—the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1984 (and its reauthorizations in 1998, 2006, and 2018)—ties public funding to efforts by CTE providers to increase access to vocational training programs and align curricular offerings/learning outcomes with local industry and workforce needs. The 2018 reauthorization of the act introduced a "congressional watchdog"[4] accountability measure to ensure that Perkins Grant recipients are sufficiently grounding their work in data, research, and program assessment. Recipients of these funds are now asked to complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) every two years in order to be eligible for funding.

Although the alignment of CTE and workplace demands is in some ways admirable, it also comes with a range of challenges, particularly for small RSIs. First, the federal government has struggled to provide clarity into what "alignment with workplace needs" means at a national level, and state and district level CLNA vary significantly in terms of data collected, relationships with employers and industry leaders, and specificity of learning outcomes/program collaborations. Rapidly shifting employment sectors (e.g., in fields such as telecommunications and computer science), and disruptions like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, make it difficult for postsecondary institutions to keep abreast of industry needs and to alter programmatic offerings to align with workplace demand. The strengthened accountability measures also require up-to-date and comprehensive data, which many under-resourced rural institutions may struggle to collect, manage, and analyze in a timely and comprehensive way (Sublett & Tovar, 2021).

Rural Student Populations

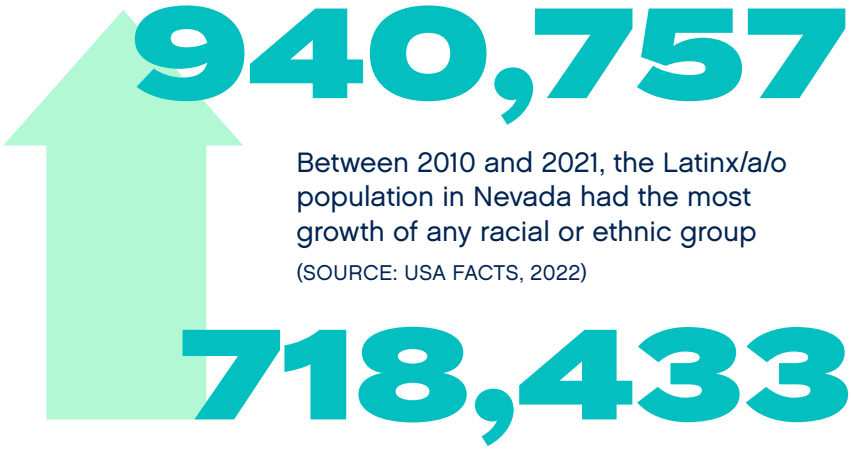
It is important to pay close attention to student groups who are underrepresented in higher education in other ways, as the intersection of rurality and other marginalized identities produces different and much more nuanced experiences as compared to general trends found in the literature. In particular, we focus on Indigenous students, Latinx/a/o students, poor and working-class

4 This is an independent, nonpartisan review process charged by Congress to ensure that tax dollars are allocated to efficient, effective, and nonpartisan initiatives; it is typically managed through the Government Accountability Office.

students, and students requiring special education.

Indigenous Students

Although Indigenous students comprise 0.9% of the total student population in Nevada, they comprise 4.1% of students enrolled in rural Nevada school districts (Guinn Center, 2020), meaning rural districts serve more Indigenous students relative to urban districts in the state. Indigenous students are a unique group in that they are both a racialized group and can be dual citizens of the United States and their tribal nations (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Though Indigenous communities value higher education as a means of nation-building (Waterman et al., 2018), nationally they are underrepresented in higher education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). One barrier to access and persistence is the hostile environment in most institutions of higher education that differ from and de-value Indigenous cultures, values, and ways of knowing (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Further, many Americanized college-access interventions are not relevant for Indigenous students (Waterman et al., 2018). Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), many of which are RSIs (Koricich et al., 2022), play an important role in bridging this divide and serving not only Indigenous students, but their local community as well (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). There are currently no TCUs in the state of Nevada. From 2005 to 2008 the University of Nevada partnered with the Walker River and Pyramid Lake branches of Paiute Nation to host agricultural sciences and workforce development projects through a Cooperative Extension Indian Reservation Program. However, that federally funded effort has been discontinued, and we found little evidence of the program being reconstituted (UNR, n.d.b).



Latinx/a/o Students[5]

Latinx/a/o students make up the largest percentage of Nevada students statewide (42.4%), but their presence varies dramatically between urban (44.3%) and rural (27.1%) districts (Guinn Center, 2020, p. 3). Between 2010 and 2021, the Latinx/a/o population in Nevada had the most growth of any racial or ethnic group—increasing from 718,433 in 2010 to 940,757 in 2021 (USAFacts, 2022). Although this growth is focused in urban centers, such as Las Vegas and Reno, certain rural counties, particularly those near the state borders like Elko and Humboldt, have also seen significant demographic shifts. As of 2021, approximately 17% of rural Nevadans identified as Latinx/a/o (DataUSA, 2022). These demographic shifts are represented in the enrollment changes of Great Basin College—the only RSI in the state of Nevada—which increased its Latinx/a/o

5 We recognized that *Latinx/a/o* and *Hispanic* are distinct cultural and political terms and should not be used interchangeably (Salinas & Lozano, 2017). Throughout this section we strive to use the more inclusive-term of Latinx/a/o to refer to student populations who trace ancestry to Latin America, however, we shift to Hispanic at times to reflect language used in the U.S. Census and other government policies and national initiatives.

enrollment by nearly 21% between 2018 and 2021 (GBC, 2021). Five institutions in Nevada are classified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)[6]—the College of Southern Nevada, Nevada State College, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Truckee Meadows Community College, and Western Nevada College—and Nevada is currently the only state with a system-wide HSI Task Force. While Great Basin College falls short of the 25% Latinx/a/o enrollment threshold necessary for the federal HSI designation (23.5% in fall 2021), it is a member of both the Nevada System Higher Education HSI Task Force and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. It is interesting to note that Great Basin College has consistently graduated Latinx/a/o students at a higher rate than other racial and ethnic groups (NSHE, 2022). According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data available on the Nevada System of Higher Education's Institutional Research Dashboard, Great Basin is the only state college or university where Latinx/a/o students consistently hold the highest graduation rate among all racial/ethnic groups (excluding "Unknown").

Poor and Working-Class Students

Social class issues are prevalent within rural Nevada. Almost 25% of youth in rural Nevada regions live in poverty, compared to less than 15% of youth in urban areas within the state (Guinn Center, 2022). Almost half (49.5%) of rural students in the state also qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Guinn Center, 2020). Further, youth in rural areas also have more difficulty accessing resources, such as health care (Guinn Center, 2022). Scholars have shown how these social class issues, such as income and lack of access to resources, compound with rurality to impact college access, choice, and success for rural students (Koricich et al., 2018; Wells et al., 2019). In particular, rural students who also are from poor and working-class backgrounds, face heightened effects on their college trajectories (Ardoin, 2018; Ardoin & McNamee, 2021; Chambers, 2020; Tieken, 2016). For example, rural students from poor and working-class backgrounds have fewer education options, so they face exacerbated difficulties funding both their higher education degree and the additional expenses of traveling back and forth to their campuses (McNamee, 2022). In addition, given that many of those students are the first in their family to attend college and may not have been able to afford to travel long distances to their campuses, they face cultural, social, and academic adjustment barriers to becoming accustomed to their new higher education environments (Heinishch, 2017; McNamee, 2022; Schultz, 2004). Because of the prevalence of social class issues in rural areas throughout the state, such obstacles for rural, poor, and working-class students must be

25%

of youth in rural Nevada regions live in poverty, compared to less than 15% of youth in urban areas within the state

(SOURCE: GUINN CENTER, 2022)

6 The Higher Education Act, 20 USCA Section 1101a, defines a Hispanic-Serving Institutions as an institution of postsecondary education that, at the time of application, has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Latinx/a/o and that provides assurances that 50% or more of its Latinx/a/o students are low-income individuals.

considered and addressed by postsecondary institutions in Nevada.

Students Requiring Special Education

Rural districts have the highest percentages of students requiring Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) relative to urban and suburban districts in the state of Nevada (Guinn, 2020). Though the percentage of students requiring special education is increasing for many rural communities nationwide, issues in providing quality K-12 special education persist, including hiring and adequately funding special education teachers and other certified staff (Demchak & Morgan, 1997; Rude & Miller, 2018). In Nevada in particular, some districts are so remote that they must rely on third parties to provide needed services for students with IEPs, such as audiology or occupational therapy (Demchak & Morgan, 1997). Students requiring special education value higher education and other job training opportunities; these students are successful at the postsecondary level when provided adequate support through Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations and academic and social mentoring (Ryan, 2014). The University of Nevada, Las Vegas offers a program for adult students with disabilities called Project FOCUS, which provides career training and academic, employment, and independent living supports (UNLV, n.d.b).

PART III: SPANNING THE BORDERS

As previously noted, rurality is challenging to define in the spheres of education, policy, and advocacy (Cain et al., 2020). The complexity of this naming is evident in our conceptualization and research of rural postsecondary supports and workforce training as well as our approach to spanning the borders. In this section, we present recommendations as considerations for policy and practice that we envision as steps toward cultivating and supporting marginalized students from rural communities who are seeking postsecondary opportunities in rural Nevada. If people living in the United States are becoming less likely to move more than 100 miles from their childhood homes and only 14% of rural counties house colleges and universities, then rural students have fewer postsecondary options within their communities and may feel compelled to move away to gain access to higher education (Kim, 2019; Northern & Petrilli, 2019). We will present practice and policy recommendations that include questions for consideration as our research and community collaboration around this issue continues to develop.

> **“Rural districts have the highest percentages of students requiring Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) relative to urban and suburban districts in the state of Nevada.”**

Recommendations for Practice

Strengthen Career and Technical Education

Nevada recognizes the importance of CTE to rural communities and rural student success. The connection between the two is evident in statewide policy documents that address CTE diploma options and career trajectories. Nevada should consider strengthening its focus on CTE to better support rural students and its workforce in rural communities. One area of

opportunity is via career-readiness assessments offered as prerequisites for statewide CTE diplomas. Currently, students can choose to take general assessments that potentially apply to various fields and/or specialized, skill-based assessments that directly lead to industry-specific credentials. Some assessments align clearly with academic and workforce trajectories.

For example, the lists of approved industry-specific credentials by ASVAB and GOWINN lists outline relationships between assessments, credentials, and trades. In addition, they align with Nevada's high-priority and targeted industries and the workforce landscape that accommodates job availability. The credentials on GOWINN's list include certificates in high-priority industries across the state, for example IT, health and medicine, manufacturing, and hospitality and tourism. Both the ASVAB and GOWINN's list of approved credentials delineate clear alignment between secondary education and the workforce, and they both reflect a return on investment between credentialing and the economy.

All CTE assessment options, however, do not explicitly or fluidly demonstrate commitments to student success or the workforce. Particularly, the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), part of ACT WorkKeys, measures three proficiencies: applied math, workplace documents, and graphic literacy. Essentially, it provides a snapshot of the extent to which students can understand basic workplace documents and problems. Unlike its credentialing counterparts such as the ASVAB or those that are industry-specific, it fails to provide students with a clear pathway into the workforce that underscores its utility to students' professional development. This dilemma brings to bear a couple of questions with implications for students and practitioners.

Questions:

1. Is the ACT NCRC practical as an assessment for CTE and rural student success?
2. What teachers, administrators, and practitioners are left to fill in the gaps of assessment ambiguity?

Reconceptualize Articulation Agreements to Enhance Partnerships Between Rural Communities, Postsecondary Education Institutions, and the Workforce

Postsecondary education institutions across the state offer a range of degree programs that are attentive to workforce demands. Technical, associate, and baccalaureate programs at various institutional types provide access to credentials and degrees needed for students to succeed. One way that institutions promote and ease matriculation is through articulation agreements. Articulation agreements outline policies and coursework associated with transfer, typically between two-year and four-year institutions. For example, Great Basin College has articulation agreements with the University of Nevada, Reno and Truckee Meadows Community College. Such arrangements reflect commitments to maintain institutional partnerships and ease education and career pathways for rural students.

Though the discourse and practice of articulation agreements has existed in higher education contexts, it has potential to actualize across educational and employment boundaries. We recommend that Nevada adopt the practice of extending articulation agreements to reach rural schools and employers. Rural schools and counties can coordinate graduation requirements to align with admissions requirements and course offerings at postsecondary institutions. Postsecondary institutions can consider the roles of outreach offices, programs, and practitioners in communicating, implementing, and enforcing articulation agreements. Employers can also provide profiles of skills, experiences, and credentials needed to be successful at jobs in rural locations. Articulation agreements created by each stakeholder help identify and streamline which postsecondary options best serve rural communities. Therefore,

“As a result of the lack of research and absence of rurality in the policy discourse, it may be more difficult for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates to understand… if they are meeting the needs of rural constituents.”

we offer two questions about structures and practices that support expanding conceptions of articulation agreements.

Questions:

1. What accountability structures exist between rural communities, rural employers, and postsecondary education institutions?
2. What opportunities exist to create articulation agreements between rural secondary schools and postsecondary education institutions that serve rural students?

Recommendations for Policy

Naming Rurality in Policy

The first policy recommendation that emerged from our research around rural postsecondary opportunities and workforce development was around the necessity to name and define rurality in policy documents and discourse. An important aspect of understanding any documents or discourse is interpreting what is being “done” through that discourse which includes the “interpersonal, institutional, socio-cultural and material contexts” (Mayr, 2008, p. 7). Research on rural-serving institutions (RSIs) and the students who depend on them is scarce, and as Koricich et al. (2022) assert, policymakers and government agencies need to understand how to identify RSIs in order to ensure they receive the funding and resources they require to support rural students. Although named RSIs, as defined by Koricich et al. (2022), the colleges and universities that serve rural students are not only those located in rural areas. The report noted the importance of RSIs in not only educating students but also preparing students for the local workforce and employing members of those communities.

As a result of the lack of research and absence of rurality in the policy discourse, it may be more difficult for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates to understand how we understand what is “being done” through the current policies and if they are meeting the needs of rural constituents. This absence of rurality in policy could also impact stakeholders’ understanding of the types of support rural communities are looking for regarding education and workforce development.

Questions:

1. Would explicitly naming rurality in public policy impact postsecondary and workforce access and support for rural communities and students?
2. What aspects of the policy discourse could speak to the specific needs of rural students and rural postsecondary institutions?

Increase Funding Priorities for Rural Institutions and Regional Workforce Development Initiatives

The second policy recommendation that emerged from our research was regarding the way grant funders supporting postsecondary opportunities could prioritize or uplift the cultural priorities of rural communities. By this we mean that grantors should consider supporting postsecondary access in both urban and rural communities to ensure a broader approach to

equitable access for any and all resource-deprived communities. Often in states like Nevada where the majority of the land qualifies as rural, more grants are awarded to urban-based institutions such as UNLV or UNR. Although philanthropic grantors like Ascendium focus on supporting rural students, other organizations may need to understand the impact that their support could have on all the students who live and want to remain in rural communities. In addition, state and federal funders should consider the impact of their support on the access to college for rural students in rural communities by supporting colleges within those communities, such as Great Basin College.

Narratives of school choice for rural students in California serve as an example of the challenges that Latinx/a/o students experience in deciding to attend schools that force them to move away from their families and community (Puente, 2020). For students deeply tied to their communities the choice is not as simple as being accepted into their dream school. They must also navigate the emotions, responsibilities, and impact on their identity and community ties as they move to new cities (Puente, 2020). While students contemplate moving away to pursue an experience at schools outside of their community, they also reference the opportunities that the rural community college had afforded many members of their community (Puente, 2020). Puente's findings imply that there is more that we can learn regarding the experiences of rural students of color as they grapple with school choice, location of institution, and workforce development and professional opportunities being impacted by these decisions.

Although urban cities have the capacity to educate and employ large populations of students, there are postsecondary options for employment that allow students to work from home and make living wages in developing industries. If grants support that type of pathway, rural institutions may have more opportunities to develop the necessary curriculum and certifications for those pathways to increase.

Questions:

1. How might philanthropic grant funders prioritize the cultural priorities of rural communities to support rural postsecondary institutions and workforce development initiatives in rural Nevada?
2. How would the prioritization of cultural priorities of rural communities shape the impact of federal and state funding?

Authors (from left to right): (top row) Ty C. McNamee and Natasha McClendon, (bottom row) Kamia F. Slaughter, Michelle Bailey (Team Coordinator), Ashley B. Clayton (Team Leader), and Ali Watts

References

REFERENCES FOR INTRODUCTION

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (n.d.). *Child population by race and ethnicity in Nevada*. https://datacenter.kidscount.org/

Cota, M. C. (2022). *MSI/HSI institutions providing the gateway to higher education* [PowerPoint slides]. Nevada System of Higher Education. https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Document/28019

Krogstad, J. M. (2019.) *A view of the nation's future through kindergarten demographics*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/31/kindergarten-demographics-in-us/

Krogstad, J. M. & Fry, R. (2014). *Dept. of Ed. projects public schools will be 'majority-minority' this fall*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/18/u-s-public-schools-expected-to-be-majority-minority-starting-this-fall/

Las Vegas Sun. (n.d.). *Clark county school district: Overview*. https://lasvegassun.com/guides/about/ccsd/

Nevada Aging and Disability Services. (n.d.). *Nevada aging and disability services division 2016–2020 state plan for aging services: Appendix B*. https://adsd.nv.gov / uploadedFiles/adsdnvgov/content/About/Reports2/StatePlan/AppendixBNevadaGeographicandDemographicData.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *Quickfacts Nevada*. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NV

REFERENCES FOR "REMOVING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESS IN SOUTHERN NEVADA"

Allen, T. (2021, November 9). *CBER report: Southern Nevada's economy improving, tied to path of pandemic*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. https://www.unlv.edu/news/release/cber-report-southern-nevadas-economy-improving-tied-path-pandemic

Center for Minority Serving Institutions. (2022). *What are MSIs?* Rutgers Graduate School of Education. https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/content/what-are-msis

Clark County School District. (2013). *Overrepresentation by gender, race/ethnicity, or disability in discipline-related actions and/or special education placement*. Superintendent's Educational Opportunities Advisory Council. https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Document/5545

Clark County School District. (2018). *Expulsions, suspension and behavior referral totals 2014–2018*. https://newsroom.ccsd.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sus.Exp_.Beh_.Ref_.Enr_.14-18.pdf

College of Southern Nevada. (n.d.). *Accountability–The student right to know*. https://www.csn.edu/accountability-the-student-right-to-know

Garcia, G. A., Núñez, A-M., & Sansone, V. (2019). Toward a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding "servingess" in Hispanic-serving institutions: A synthesis of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 89*(5), 745–784.

Herder, L. (2022, May 13). The struggle for dual identity: MSI grant restrictions. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. https://www.diverseeducation.com/institutions/msis/article/15291994/the-struggle-for-dual-identity-msi-grant-restrictions-and-the-aapi-community

Hernandez-Toledo, B. (2020). *"There's life beyond the strip": Immigrant rights activism and spatial resistance in Las Vegas, Nevada*. [Master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles]. Proquest Dissertations Publishing.

Higher Ed Immigration Portal. (2022). *State data: Nevada*. https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/nevada/

Lane, T. (2022, March 10). *Stats show disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions of Black students in CCSD*. KSNV-TV NBC. https://news3lv.com/news/local/stats-show-disproportionality-in-suspensions-and-expulsions-of-black-students-in-ccsd

Leverett, P., Jackson, L., Dambo, N., & Lau, J. (2021). Educational equity perspectives in response to the Black Lives Matter movement: A road map for Nevada. *Policy Issues in Nevada Education, 4*(1), 1–6. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/co_educ_policy/32

Lumina Foundation. (n.d.). *Nevada Progress*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/state/nevada/

Klein, A., & Smith, E. (2021, February 4). *Explaining the economic impact of COVID-19: Core industries and the Hispanic workforce*. Brookings Mountain West. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/brookings_policybriefs_reports/2/

Martinez-Hill, J. (2021, February). *A monumental shift: Restoring access to Pell grants for incarcerated students* [Fact sheet]. Vera Institute of Justice. https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/restoring-access-to-pell-grants-for-incarcerated-students.pdf

McCann, A. (2022, February 14). *Most & least educated states in America*. WalletHub. https://wallethub.com/edu/e/most-educated-states/31075

Miller, G. N., Lynn, F. B., & McCloud, L. I. (2021). By lack of reciprocity: Positioning Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the organizational field of higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, (92)*2, 194–226.

Nehls, K., Schneider, H., Espinoza-Parra, O., & Nourrie, E. (2017). Higher education funding in Nevada. *Policy Issues in Nevada Education, 2*, 1–13.

Nevada Cares Act Overview. (2020, July). *Nevada Cares Act Overview*. Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo. https://gov.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/govnewnvgov/Content/News/Press/2020_attachments/Nevada_CARES_Act_Overview.pdf

Nevada Department of Education. (n.d.). *Nevada high school graduate college enrollment rates* [Annual report].

Nevada State GEAR UP. (2020). *About Us*. https://gearup.epscorspo.nevada.edu/about-us/?tabid=tab-0b72c9d7f1af648d11a/

Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). (n.d.). *NSHE enrollment*. https://ir.nevada.edu/page.php?p=enrollment

Nevada System of Higher Education. (2022). *NSHE institutions fall enrollment*. https://ir.nevada.edu/dashboard.php?d=fall_enrollment

Nevada System of Higher Education. (2023). *Budget 3017 - NSHE - prison education program*. Nevada Legislature. https://ir.nevada.edu/dashboard.php?d=fall_enrollment

Office of Postsecondary Education. (2021, December 17). *Upward Bound Program*. U.S. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html

Office of Postsecondary Education. (2022, June 9). *TRIO Programs*. U.S. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

Orozco, R. C. (2022). *Aquí entre nos: Identity and socio-political consciousness development of queer Latinx/a/o of college student activists through the Muxerista Consciousness Development Framework*. [Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University–New Brunswick]. Proquest Dissertations Publishing.

Palmer, R. T., Maramba, D. C., Arroyo, A. T., Allen, T. O., Boykin, T. F., & Lee, J. M. (Eds.) (2017). *Effective leadership at minority-serving institutions: Exploring opportunities and challenges for leadership*. Routledge.

Police Scorecard (n.d.) Nevada. https://policescorecard.org/nv

Prison Policy Initiative. (n.d.). *Nevada profile*. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NV.html

Reeves, R., Welch, M., & Van Drie, H. (2021, September). *"You never know": Work and precarity in Las Vegas before and during COVID-19*. Brookings Mountain West. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/brookings_policybriefs_reports/5

Ryu, W. Burmicky, J., Sáenz V. & Ponjúan, L. (2021). Exploring educational and workforce trends on Latino boys and men: Implications for research and practice. In E. G. Murillo (Ed.). *Handbook of Latinos and education: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 237–248). Taylor & Francis.

Sáenz, R., & Sparks, C. (2020). *The inequities of job loss and recovery amid the COVID-19 pandemic*. University of New Hampshire: Carsey Research. https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1413&context=carsey

Skiba, R. J., Arredondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*(4), 546–564.

Solis, J. (2020, July 10). *Data reveals large racial disparities in school policing*. Nevada Current. https://www.nevadacurrent.com/2020/07/10/data-reveals-large-racial-disparities-in-school-policing/

Tijerina Revilla, A., & Rangel-Medina, E. M. (2011). The Las Vegas activists crew. In M. Berta-Avila, A. Tijerina Revilla, & J. Figueroa (Eds.), *Marching students: Chicana and Chicano activism in education, 1968 to the present* (pp. 167–187). University of Nevada Press.

United States Code. (2011). *Title 20–Education*. U.S. Government Publishing Office. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title20/html/USCODE-2011-title20-chap28-subchapIII-partE-subpart3-sec1067k.htm

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.a). *Federal TRIO programs*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.b). *Programs: Upward bound*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.c). *Programs: Talent Search Program*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

REFERENCES FOR STREAMLINING KEY LEARNER TRANSITIONS

Becker, G. (2019). *Employer-sponsored student loan repayment programs: Alaska postsecondary policy brie*f. Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education.

Bright Horizons. (2019). *Working learner index: Study examines motivations of U.S. workers seeking education benefits while on the job*. https://www.brighthorizons.com/-/media/BH-New/B2B-Assets/WLI_report.ashx?la=en

Busta, H. (2019, November 26). What employers want from colleges in tuition benefit partnerships. *Higher Ed Dive*. https://www.highereddive.com/news/what-employers-want-from-colleges-in-tuition-benefit-partnerships/568103/

Capelli, P. (2004). Why do employers pay for college? *Journal of Econometrics, 121*(1–2), 213–241.

Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., Melton, M., & Price, E. (2015). *Learning while earning: The new normal*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Clark County School District. (n.d.a). *About Clark County School District*. https://teachvegas.ccsd.net/our-district/about-clark-county-school-district/

Clark County School District. (n.d.b). *CCSD magnet schools: High schools*. https://magnet.ccsd.net/our-schools/

College of Southern Nevada. (2022a). *Department of hospitality management*. https://www.csn.edu/schools/school-of-business-hospitality-and-public-services/department-of-hospitality-management

College of Southern Nevada. (2022b). *Hospitality management, AA*. https://catalog.csn.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=6&poid=2918

College of Southern Nevada. (2022c). *IR data dashboards*. https://www.csn.edu/ir-data-dashboards

D'Amico, M. M., Morgan, G. B., Robertson, S., & Houchins, C. (2014). An exploration of noncredit community college enrollment. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 62*(3), 152–162.

Faulk, D. G., & Wang, Z. (2014). Undergraduates with employer-sponsored aid: Comparing group differences. *Journal of Student Financial Aid, 43*(3), 132–147.

Gilbertson, K. M. (2022). Strengthening the Southern Nevada workforce pipeline. *Brookings Public Policy Minor Culminating Project*, 1–29. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/brookings_capstone_studentpapers/13/

Glover, H. (2019, November 18). *Most companies now offer tuition assistance for employees—but are they doing it right?* https://www.luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/most-companies-now-offer-tuition-assistance-for-employees-but-are-they-doing-it-right/

Glover, H. (2021, September). *Study shows the benefits of Walmart education effort. Retail giant's Live Better U program is proving its value.* Lumina Foundation. https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/lf-lbu-program-proofv9.pdf

Goh, E., & Okumus, F. (2020). Avoiding the hospitality workforce bubble: Strategies to attract and retain Generation Z talent in the hospitality workforce. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 33*, 1–7. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100603

Golubovskaya, M., Solnet, D., & Robinson, R. N. S. (2019). Recalibrating talent management for hospitality: A youth development perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 31*(10), 4105–4125. http://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-11-2018-0911

Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation. (2020). *WIOA state plan 2022 modifications draft for public commen*t. https://gowinn.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/owinnnvgov/Content/StatePlan/Public%20Copy%20Nov%2024%20Nevada_PYs_2020-2023%20Clean_.pdf

Heskett, J. L., Jones, T. O., Loveman, G. W., Sasser, W. E., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2008). Putting the service profit chain to work. *Harvard Business Review, 86*(7/8), 118–129.

Hora, M. T., Wolfgram, M., Huerta, A. H., Lee, C., & Gopal, A. (2022). A multilevel, agent-centered analysis of intersectionality in a Hispanic-Serving Institution: The case of college internship access for Latinx students. *AERA Open, 8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221102162

Kelly, K. P., & McGonagle, S. T. (2013). *Leveraging co-op experiences to enhance engineering students' leadership skills* [Paper presentation]. American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition, Atlanta, GA, United States. http://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--19025

Kilgour, J. G. (2017). Employer-provided student loan repayment assistance benefits. *Compensation & Benefits Review, 4*9(4), 206–220.

La Rue, M. (2019). *Nevada's leisure and hospitality sector is the largest portion in its economy where in the nation education and health services is the largest.* Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation. http://epubs.nsla.nv.gov/statepubs/epubs/31428003050115-2019-84.pdf

Liu, P., Mellicant, E., Stephen, R., & Sullivan, J. R. (2020). *Mapping the future: An analysis of Clark County communities and economy.* Center for Innovation Strategy and Policy, SRI International.

Lumina Foundation. (2016). *Talent investments pay off: Cigna realizes return on investment from tuition benefits* [White paper]. https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/talent-investments-pay-off-cigna-full.pdf

McCarthy, M. A. (2014). *Beyond the skills gap.* New America Foundation.

MGM Resorts International. (2018, September 7). *NSHE board of regents approves MGM college opportunity program* [Press release]. https://s22.q4cdn.com/513010314/files/doc_news/NSHE-Board-of-Regents-Approves-MGM-College-Opportunity-Program.pdf

Myran, S., Sylvester, P., Williams, M. R., & Myran, G. (2021). Four promising practices from a workforce development partnership. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 1–15. http://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2021.1925177

National Academy Foundation (NAF). (2022). *About us.* https://naf.org/about

Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development. (2022). *Nevada's tourism, gaming, and entertainment sector.*

Ngo, F., Johnson-Hernandez, M., & Rincón, B. (2022, November). *Would you like college with that? Corporate-sponsored college benefits for low-wage workers* [Paper presentation]. Annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Las Vegas, NV, United States.

Northeastern University. (n.d.). Cooperative education. https://careers.northeastern.edu/cooperative-education/

Park, M., & Jones, T. (2021). Going virtual: The impact of COVID-19 on internships in tourism, events, and hospitality education. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 33*(3), 176–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2021.1907198

Perna, L. W. (2015). *Improving college access and completion for low-income and first- generation students: The role of college access and success programs*. https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Perna%20Testimony%20FINAL.pdf

Pew Research Center. (2016, October). T*he state of American jobs: How the shifting economic landscape is reshaping work and society and affecting the way people think about the skills and training they need to get ahead*. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/10/ST_2016.10.06_Future-of-Work_FINAL4-1.pdf

Price, D. V., Sedlak, W., & Valentine, J. L. (2021). Connecting noncredit and credit programs: Lessons from the Northeast Resiliency Consortium. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2021*(193), 45–56. http://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20438

Raybould, M., & Wilkins, H. (2005). Over qualified and under experienced: Turning graduates into hospitality managers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 17*(2/3), 203–216. http://doi.org/10.1108/09596110510591891

Scerri, M., Presbury, R., & Goh, E. (2020). An application of the mentoring framework to investigate the effectiveness of mentoring programs between industry mentors and student mentees in hospitality. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 45*, 143–151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.08.010

Shum, C., Gatling, A., & Shoemaker, S. (2018). A model of hospitality leadership competency for frontline and director-level managers: Which competencies matter more? *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 74*, 57–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.03.002

Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM). (2022, June 12). *SHRM releases 2022 employee benefits survey* [Press release]. https://www.shrm.org/about-shrm/press-room/press-releases/pages/shrm-releases-2022-employee-benefits-survey--healthcare-retirement-savings-and-leave-benefits-emerge-as-the-top-ranked-be.aspx

Taylor, R. (2021). *The perspectives of Head Start employed community college students who earned an associate degree in early childhood education programs: A phenomenological study exploring challenges and successes* (Publication No. 28409933) [Doctoral dissertation, Portland State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Tesone, D. V., & Ricci, P. (2005). Attributes of entry-level employees: Hospitality and tourism managers seeking more than knowledge and skills. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, 10*(2), 3–12.

Tlapa, M. (2017). *The value of tuition assistance programs: A multiple exploratory case study* (Publication No. 10682866) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of the Rockies]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Tran, H., & Smith, D. (2017). The impact of employer-sponsored educational assistance benefits on community college student outcomes. *Journal of Student Financial Aid, 47*(2), 83–100.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). (2022). *Bachelor of Science in hospitality management*. https://www.unlv.edu/degree/bs-hospitality-management

UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research. (2021). *2021–2060 population forecasts: Long-term projects for Clark County, Nevada*. https://files.clarkcountynv.gov/clarknv/2021%20CBER%20Population%20Forecasts.pdf

UNLV International Gaming Institute. (2022). *Executive education*. https://www.unlv.edu/igi/executive-education

UNLV Sands Center for Professional Development. (2022). *Sands Center for Professional Development*. https://www.unlv.edu/sandscenter

UNLV William F. Harrah College of Hospitality. (2022). *Graduate programs in hospitality*. https://www.unlv.edu/hospitality/graduate-programs

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022, September 2). *Las Vegas area economic summary*. https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/summary/blssummary_lasvegas.pdf

Walmsley, A., Cripps, K., & Hine, C. (2020). Generation Z and hospitality careers. *Hospitality and Society, 10*(2), 173–195. https://doi.org/10.1386/hosp_00019_1

Wilkie, D. (2019, October 21). *Employers say students aren't learning soft skills in college*. Society for Human Resource Management. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/employers-say-students-arent-learning-soft-skills-in-college.aspx

Yiu, M., & Law, R. (2012). A review of hospitality internship: Different perspectives of students, employers, and educators. *Journal of Teaching Travel & Tourism, 12*(4), 377–402. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2012.729459

Zippia. (2022, September 9). *Casino games dealer demographics and statistics in the U.S.* https://www.zippia.com/casino-games-dealer-jobs/demographics/

REFERENCES FOR SUPPORTING RURAL POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

Abramson, C. I., Damron, W. S., Dicks, M., & Sherwood, P. M. A. (2014). History and mission. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed), *The modern land-grant university* (pp. 3–13). Purdue University Press.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association. (2017). *Leveling the playing field for rural students*. https://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/Resources/AASA_Rural_Equity_Report_FINAL.pdf

American Psychological Association. (2007). *Definitions: Social class*. https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/class/definitions

Association for Career and Technical Education. (2018). *Perkins v: Strengthening career and technical education for the 21st century act*. https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/PerkinsV_One-Pager_082418.pdf

Ardoin, S. (2018). *College aspirations and access in working-class rural communities: The mixed signals, challenges, and new language first-generation students encounter*. Lexington Books.

Ardoin, S., & McNamee, T. C. (2021). Spatial inequality and social class: Suggestions for supporting rural students across social class backgrounds. *New Directions for Student Services, 2020*(171–172), 37–46. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20363

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (2012). *The land-grant tradition*. http://www.aplu.org/library/the-land-grant-tradition/file

Brayboy, B. M. J., & Castagno, A. E. (2011). Indigenous millennial students in higher education. In Fred A. Bonner II, Aretha F. Marbley, & Mary F. Howard-Hamilton (Eds.), *Diverse millennial students in college: Implications for faculty and student affairs* (pp. 137–155). Stylus Publishing.

Cain, E. J. (2020). Place-based identity: A model. *New Directions for Student Services, 2020*(171–172), 11–19. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20360

Cain, E. J., Sorgen, C. H., & Calhoun, D. W. (2020). Editors' notes. *New Directions for Student Services, 2020*(171–172), 5–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20359

Carnevale, A. P., Garcia, T. I., & Gulish, A. (2017). *Career pathways: Five ways to connect college and careers* [State report]. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://cewgeorgetown.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/LEE-final.pdf

Carr, P. J., & Kefalas, M. J. (2009). *Hollowing out the middle: The rural brain drain and what it means for America*. Beacon press.

Chambers, C. R. (2020). Let's give 'em something to talk about: Spurring college conversations among rural students, schools, and families. In H. C. Green, B. S. Zugelder, & J. C. Manner (Eds.), *Handbook of research on leadership and advocacy for children and families in rural poverty* (pp. 279–294). IGI Global. doi: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2787-0.ch013

Class Action. (n.d.). Class definitions. https://classism.org/class-definitions/

Corbett, M. (2021). Re-placing rural education: AERA special interest group on rural education career achievement award lecture. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 37*(3), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.26209/jrre3703

DataUSA. (2022). *Rural Nevada Public Use Microdata*. https://datausa.io/profile/geo/rural-nevada-puma-nv

Demchak, M., & Morgan, C. R. (1997). Providing related services to students with disabilities in rural and remote areas of Nevada. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 16*(3), 26–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687059701600305

Diemer, M. A., Mistry, R. S., Wadsworth, M. E., López, I., & Reimers, F. (2013). Best practices in conceptualizing and measuring social class in psychological research. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 13*(1), 77–113. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12001

Dortch, C. (2014). *Career and technical education (CTE): A primer*. Congressional Research Service. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R42748.pdf

Ferguson, S. (2022, September 7). *Understanding America's labor shortage: The most impacted industries*. U.S. Chamber of Commerce. https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage-the-most-impacted-industries

4-H. (n.d.). *What is 4-H?* https://4-h.org/about/what-is-4-h/#!menu

Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation. (2020). *Nevada PY's 2020–2023 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act unified state plan*.

Graham, S. (2009). *Students in rural schools have limited access to advanced mathematics courses*. Carsey Institute. https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=carsey

Great Basin College. (n.d.). *2022–2023 Great Basin College course catalog*. https://www.gbcnv.edu/catalog/catalogs/catalog2022.pdf

Great Basin College. (2021). *Great basin college annual student enrollment trends: 2017–18 thru 2021–22*. https://www.gbcnv.edu/IR/docs/Annual_Student_Enrollment_Trends.pdf

Griffin, D., Hutchins, B. C., & Meece, J. L. (2011). Where do rural high school students go to find information about their futures? *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*(2), 172–181. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00075.x

Griswold, T., Packham, J., Gunawan, A., Etchegoyhen, L., Jorgensen, T., & Marchand, C. (2017). *Nevada rural and frontier health data book* (8th ed.). Nevada State Office of Public Health. https://med.unr.edu/Documents/med/statewide/reports/2017%20Nevada%20Rural%20and%20Frontier%20Health%20Data%20Book_ADA.pdf

Guinn Center. (2020). *Rural education in Nevada*. https://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Guinn-Center-Rural-Education-in-Nevada.pdf

Guinn Center. (2022). *Youth outcomes in Nevada*. https://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Guinn-Center-NV95-Youth-Outcomes-2022.pdf

Heinisch, B. (2017). Small fish out of water: Rural first-generation student experience at a large university. *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition, 24*(1), 21–33.

Hillman, N., & Weichman, T. (2016). E*ducation deserts: The continued significance of "place" in the twenty-first century*. American Council on Education. https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Education-Deserts-The-Continued-Significance-of-Place-in-the-Twenty-First-Century.pdf

Hillman, N. W. (2016). Geography of college opportunity: The case of education deserts. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(4), 987–1021.

Kim, A. (2019). *Make America's "higher education deserts" bloom*. Progressive Policy Institute.

Klasik, D., Blagg, K., & Pekor, Z. (2018). Out of the education desert: How limited local college options are associated with inequity in postsecondary opportunities. *Social Sciences, 7*(9), 165. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7090165

Koricich, A., Chen, X., & Hughes, R. P. (2018). Understanding the effects of rurality and socioeconomic status on college attendance and institutional choice in the United States. *The Review of Higher Education, 41*(2), 281–305. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2018.0004

Koricich, A., Sansone, V. A., Fryar, A. H., Orphan, C. M., & McClure, K. R. (2022). *Introducing our nation's rural-serving postsecondary institutions: Moving toward greater visibility and appreciation*. Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges. https://www.regionalcolleges.org/project/ruralserving

Lichter, D. T., & Johnson, K. M. (2007). The changing spatial concentration of America's rural poor population. *Rural Sociology, 72*(3), 331–358. https://doi.org/10.1526/003601107781799290

Mayr, A. (2008). *Language and power: An introduction to institutional discourse*. A&C Black.

McDonough, P. M., Gildersleeve, R. E., & Jarsky, K. M. (2010). The golden cage of rural college access: How higher education can respond to the rural life. In K. A. Shafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 191–209). Pennsylvania State University Press.

McNamee, T. C. (2022). *The cultural transition into and navigation of higher education for rural students from poor and working-class backgrounds (Publication No.* 29397176) [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College]. ProQuest.

National FFA Association. (2023). *About FFA*. https://www.ffa.org/about/

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (n.d.). *Extension*. https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/how-we-work/extension

Nevada Agriculture Education. (2021). *Nevada agriculture programs*. https://nvaged.com/explore/nevada-agricultural-programs/

Nevada Department of Education. (2020). *Statewide plan for the improvement of pupils*. https://doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/Boards_Commissions_Councils/State_Board_of_Education/2020/July/NVSTIP.pdf

Nevada Department of Education. (2021). *2021–2023 Nevada graduation college and career ready credit and assessment requirements*. https://doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/CTE/Documents/NV_Diploma_Requirements.pdf

Nevada System of Higher Education. (n.d.). The Power of a System. https://nshe.nevada.edu/

Nevada System of Higher Education. (2022). *NSHE institutions graduation rate*. https://ir.nevada.edu/dashboard.php?d=graduation_rates

Northern, A. M., & Petrilli, M. J. (2019, April). Foreword and executive summary. In C. Sublett & D. Griffith, *How aligned is career and technical education to local labor markets?* Thomas Fordham Institute: Advancing Educational Excellence. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598867.pdf

O'Hare, W., & Savage, S. (2006). Child poverty in rural America: New data shows increases in 41 states. https://doi.org/10.34051/p/2020.9

Provasnik, S., Kewal Ramani, A., Coleman, M. M., Gilbertson, L., Herring, W., & Xie, Q. (2007). *Status of education in rural America*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.

Puente, M. (2020). Leaving la puente: A critical race counterstory of rural Chicana/Latina college choice. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 16*(2).

Rosenboom, V., & Blagg, K. (2018). *Disconnected from higher education: How geography and internet speed limit access to higher educatio*n. Urban Institute.

Rude, H., & Miller, K. J. (2018). Policy challenges and opportunities for rural special education. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 37*(1), 21–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/8756870517748662

Ruiz, R., & Perna, L. W. (2017). The geography of college attainment: Dismantling rural "disadvantage." *Indicators of Higher Education Equity*, 94–102.

Ryan, S. M. (2014). An inclusive rural post secondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 33*(2), 18–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051403300204

Salinas, C., & Lozano, A. (2017). Mapping and recontextualizing the evolution of the term Latinx: An environmental scanning in higher education. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 18*(4), 302–315. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1390464

Schultz, P. F. (2004). Upon entering college: First semester experiences of first-generation, rural students from agricultural families. *The Rural Educator, 26*(1). https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v26i1.521

Sherman, J., & Sage, R. (2011). Sending off all your good treasures: Rural schools, brain-drain, and community survival in the wake of economic collapse. *Journal of Research in Rural Education (Online), 26*(11), 1.

Showalter, D., Hartman, S. L., Johnson, J., & Klein, B. (2019). *Why rural matters 2018–2019: The time is now*. Rural School and Community Trust.

Sublett, C., & Tovar, J. (2021). Community college career and technical education and labor market projections: A national study of alignment. *Community College Review, 49*(2), 177–201.

Tieken, M. C. (2016). College talk and the rural economy: Shaping the educational aspirations of rural, first-generation students. *Peabody Journal of Education, 91*(2), 203–223.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas. (n.d.a). *Nevada System of Higher Education*. https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=30&navoid=7382

University of Nevada, Las Vegas. (n.d.b). *Project F.O.C.U.S.* https://www.unlv.edu/education/focus

University of Nevada, Reno. (n.d.a). *Extension: College of agriculture, biotechnology, & natural resources*. https://extension.unr.edu/default.aspx

University of Nevada, Reno. (n.d.b). *Extension: People of the land*. https://extension.unr.edu/program.aspx?ID=23

U.S. Census Bureau (2022). *QuickFacts: Nevada dashboard*. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/dashboard/NV/PST045222

U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2022). *A national crisis by the numbers*. America Works Data Center. https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/america-works-data-center

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2016). *Economic research service: Annual report*. https://www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers/plans-and-accomplishments/ers-annual-report-fy-2016/

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2018). *Rural America at a glance*. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/90556/eib-200.pdf?v=2160.4

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.a). *Federal TRIO programs*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.b). G*aining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)*. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2019). *Bridging the skills gap: Career and technical education in high school*. https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html#data-story-title

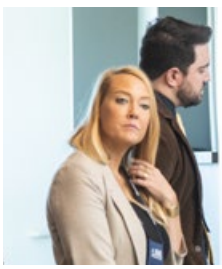
USAFacts. (2022). *Our changing population: Nevad*a [data dashboard]. https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/nevada?endDate=2021-01-01&startDate=2010-01-01

Waterman, S. J., Lowe, S. C., & Shotton, H. J. (2018). *Beyond access: Indigenizing programs for Native American student success*. Stylus Publishing.

Wells, R. S., Manly, C. A., Kommers, S., & Kimball, E. (2019). Narrowed gaps and persistent challenges: Examining rural-nonrural disparities in postsecondary outcomes over time. *American Journal of Education* 126, 1–31.

Thank You

A special thank you to all of our participants and leaders from Southern Nevada!

















ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION
9450 SW Gemini Drive PMB 88737
Beaverton, Oregon 97008-7105
www.ashe.ws • office@ashe.ws • Phone: (202) 660-4106