

## The CSN Chronicle

Welcome to *The CSN Chronicle* for March 2009. A major part of this Chronicle discusses CSN's financial health and budget.

### **Anxiety and Uncertainty**

More than any casual rumor, the thing I'm hearing most from our CSN family is anxiety and fear about what is happening with our local economy, how that affects the State of Nevada, and, in turn, CSN and jobs. Folks are nervous, and that's understandable in these difficult times.

I want you to know that I remain confident that things will work out; that CSN will continue to function, and that jobs and students will remain our top priorities. Here's what we've done:

- We've had three budget hearings, and with each one we or NSHE staff on our behalf have stressed funding enrollment growth, restoring our base budget, and funding our equity request as approved by the Board of Regents;
- Thanks to many faculty, staff and students, we've mustered countless letters, phone calls and personal communications to Legislators for CSN and its budget; and
- We've met one-on-one with legislative leaders to advocate our request.

As a result, here's where we are at the end of March:

- It appears that the governor's draconian budget cuts are off the table; legislators are not going to decimate the Nevada System of Higher Education or CSN;
- It also appears at this time that the 6% salary cut for public employees may not happen as recommended in the executive budget;
- Federal stimulus funding may be directed toward the education budgets of the State;
- CSN's enrollment growth and historical equity problem may be addressed in this session;
- NSHE has provided multiple budget scenarios for legislative leaders to consider, and we continue to work out funding scenarios as requested. As you can imagine the permutations are myriad. Each scenario has some level of budget reduction, so right now we expect a budget cut may be part of a final budget decision;
- The first capital budget hearing is scheduled for April 16; the next hearing on the operating budget is scheduled for April 17; and
- CSN, and all institutions of higher education, will need to continue to implement efficiencies in their operations.

Please note that we're in an every changing and narrowing situation. That's why "may" is the operative language in the bullet points above. The process is like a long roller coaster ride with only limited excitement. We have to consider everything tentative until final enrollment of appropriations bills.

A recent media report about our learning centers was in response to our planning for next year and to one of the budget scenarios we've developed. Until we know how the budget will "settle out" our decisions are tentative. We are, indeed, moving ahead with plans for the next academic year.

### **Improvement Request and Parking**

At the April and June meetings of the Board of Regents, CSN will be seeking approval to expend capital funding to improve parking and traffic flow on West Charleston. At the April meeting we'll seek approval to grade graveled areas and eliminate the berm along Torrey Pines, pave the area for more surface parking, and add lights. At the June meeting we'll seek approval for funding to improve west-to-east drainage across the campus, extend utilities from Del Ray to the new fire station, and construct a road across the campus accessing parking and side streets. For a time, the gravel area south of the Engelstad Building (K) will be used as a staging area for construction, but after the construction is finished, we will pave the area for about 200 parking stalls. When completed the project should yield 640 new parking stalls, improve access and drainage, and offer better lighting. Improvements at the Cheyenne campus were previously approved by the Board of Regents along Gowan Avenue. New drive ways, lighting and a sidewalk will provide a more finished look to the campus. We are also exploring improvements at the Henderson campus that will add more parking.

I understand, too, that there has been some frustration from non-Cheyenne folks traveling to the Cheyenne campus. Until mid-May, the I-15 Cheyenne Avenue off ramp will be closed. Those traveling to the Cheyenne campus from other CSN locations are advised to exit on Lake Mead, head north on Civic Center and take a right on Cheyenne Avenue.

**Thanks to all who organized events and presented issues during Women's History Month. Heritage months and events are offered for the enrichment of faculty, staff and students, and I hope you took some time to attend them and to support this important dimension of CSN diversity.**

### **Legislative Session**

The 2009 Legislative Session is entering its ninth week. We have budget hearings and engaged multiple opportunities to share our message with legislators. Our advocacy group of faculty and staff are regularly contacting legislators and conveying messages. We are particularly watching developments on PERS and PEBP recommendations. Changes to the PERS system are expected, and this will affect some of our employees. PEBP proposals have less traction right now, but we're still monitoring any debate on PEB issues.

This is really the key time for legislative contacts. Operating budget decisions will be "finalized" in the next two weeks. PLEASE LET YOUR LEGISLATORS KNOW YOUR FEELINGS.

**We have identified about 40 full-time positions that will be advertised over the next several months. Nearly all of these positions are vacancies in our budget that have not been swept for cuts. Faculty for next year as well as several staff positions. So we'll be reviving our hiring processes to fill these many positions.**

### **Questions:**

*"What is spring semester enrollment?"*

At the census date of March 15, CSN's headcount was 40,704 – up 5.63% from the same point last year. FTE was 20,922, up 8.64%. All main campuses were up; online enrollments were up 11.7% to 4,461 FTE students.

***“What are the possible changes to PERS and PEBS?”***

**PENDING CHANGE TO RETIREMENT PLAN CONTRIBUTION RATE**

Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)

NSHE Retirement Plan Alternative (RPA)

§ Employee contribution increase from 10.5% to 11.25% on 7/1/09

**POSSIBLE CHANGES TO HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN (PEBP)**

§ Retiree health insurance subsidy may be eliminated for employees who retire after July 1, 2009. (Retirees would be able to purchase health insurance coverage at 100% of the benefit cost.)

§ Significant health insurance premium increase

§ Elimination of Health Insurance Questionnaire (HAQ)

§ Increase in Employee deductible

§ Increase in Employee + Spouse deductible

§ Increase in Employee + Family deductible

§ Decrease in number of Dental visits

§ Decrease in Dental Plan Year Maximum

The Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing about these possible changes tomorrow at 8 a.m. I encourage you to tune in and follow the discussion, if you're interested.

Best,

Mike Richards