

First a preamble--

Who am I? As I said before, David Steel, Executive Director of the Nevada Faculty Alliance. I am a former archaeologist, BA from UC Berkeley, MPhil and ABD from University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Since that time, I've been in the world of labor relations. This will be the tenth bargaining process I've been involved in, including in academia.

Who are our team members? Our eight team members were elected by the NFA membership to represent faculty in these negotiations. Many were involved in the process to achieve collective bargaining, and have already put many hours into talking with colleagues about faculty issues. They are all ready and willing to put in the time and energy needed to make sure these negotiations produce a valuable result.

Who are we, organizationally? NFA is a state affiliate of AAUP, the American Association of University Professors, the oldest and largest professional organization for faculty in America. Founded in 1915, AAUP was instrumental in the development of the norms of shared governance, academic freedom, and tenure in higher education. After some lengthy and thorough debates, as they always are in academia, AAUP decided to endorse and organize via faculty collective bargaining in the 1970s, precisely as a way to strengthen the core ideals of shared governance and academic freedom.

Lastly, how did we get here? We went through a multi-year process for getting collective bargaining, which was based on one-on-one contacts. In the course of our effort, those on our organizing committee, which eventually reached over thirty members, spoke to about ninety percent of bargaining unit faculty face-to-face, most of them multiple times. I personally had conversations with over one hundred individuals, Jason Elias, AAUP organizer, likewise, Rob Manis our Chapter President, reached one hundred forty, and the members of our committee hundreds in total. Through this process, we feel that we have become a strong grassroots organization. Our membership has increased almost one hundred percent in the last two years and continues to grow; we collected double the amount of interest cards legally needed to trigger the collective bargaining election and more were coming in when we submitted them; and, in the election we won with a more than a 2:1 ratio of yes to no votes.

With that preamble, on to the negotiation at hand.

We see this negotiation as an opportunity to positively transform CSN. It is an opportunity provided by the faculty vote in April, where the majority of faculty expressed a desire for change that could be achieved through the collective bargaining process.

We think that this negotiation will allow CSN to better accomplish its mission. The CSN vision statement, values statement, and mission statement all talk about “quality teaching,” “excellence in teaching,” and “student success.” We see faculty morale, recruitment, and retention as key factors in promoting a high quality learning environment. A good contract that faculty like would go a long way toward improving morale, as well as allowing for better recruitment and retention.

The CSN vision and values statements also talk about “shared governance” and “fact-based decision making and accountability to all stakeholders.” Here also we see the contract as having a positive role to play.

Certainly, a good contract and a cooperative negotiation process would generate much good will from faculty toward administration. And that, in itself, would positively transform CSN.

The opportunity is here to take a strong stand for faculty and CSN's educational mission in establishing CSN's priorities. Take the recently concluded special session that raised the seven hundred and fifty million dollars in new tax revenues to fund Sheldon Adelson's stadium. After all the harping on scarcity of resources that faculty have been subjected to over the years, to see such an enormous sum of money raised in a single stroke, many faculty felt was a slap in the face. I think we are on the same page here, given what I know of President Richards having alluded to what transpired with the stadium several times. What if those politicians had real vision? Less than 10% of the stadium revenue stream could have given every full-time NSHE faculty member in the state – the whole state -- an instant \$30,000 dollar raise. That would have put Nevada on the map nationally in higher education. It would have sent shock waves across the country. People would have got the message that Nevada is a state that cares about higher education and values professors. Similarly, here, resources will undoubtedly be said to be scarce, but we are confident that, if we have the will, and the right priorities, we have the opportunity to send a powerful message.

There is a lot to work on here. We heard it first-hand. Now, I come from an academic family, have an academic background myself, and have worked in higher education unionism in other states, and I have to say, talking to the faculty here, I witnessed as low a level of faculty morale as I've ever seen. AAUP personnel who visited us from across the country said the same thing.

Let's start in the first place with salary – pay freeze, furloughs, pay reduction – people are hurting. And not just hurting to take an extra tropical vacation. I spoke to one professor who is a single mother of three kids, I can tell you she's struggling. Talking to me, I could tell she was holding back tears. Another professor was near tears talking to me about her pay equity issue. Another professor I spoke to ran more toward anger

regarding his initial salary placement, which he regarded as opaque and incorrect. And the list goes on. Whatever their circumstances, salary was a complaint for virtually everybody we spoke to, and all our surveys have reiterated that.

However you slice it, whether it's comparison to where people would have been if they didn't get hit with all the salary damage after the Great Recession, or nation-wide comparisons, or the ratio of salaries here to those at the universities, it's a bad picture. And it's pretty much the same when it comes to health care and retirement. Faculty are feeling the need for improvements.

So those issues, the bread and butter issues, are key for us. From our point of view, that's the marquee headline. But there are plenty of other things on the card too.

Another theme that came out in our discussions with faculty, was dissatisfaction with the way CSN is run. Our surveys have also consistently found this for years. Again, we think that a good contract can strengthen shared governance and positively shift these perceptions. We will have a proposal specifically on shared governance, and beyond that, the fact of the contract itself, with easily located, binding policies, negotiated in good faith by faculty and administration, will be a powerful move toward enhancing shared governance.

To sum, let me say again that we view this as an opportunity to positively transform CSN. Through our many conversations with faculty, we've become knowledgeable of various issues and we look forward to sharing that knowledge with you in the negotiations and working to fix the problems identified.