

**BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER**

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Nevada State University Honorary Degree Recipient, 2026 Commencement

MEETING DATE: March 5-6, 2026

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Nomination of an individual to receive an honorary degree at 2026 commencement ceremony.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Nevada State University Acting President Amber Lopez Lasater requests approval to present Stephanie Garcia-Vause with an honorary degree at NSU's 2026 commencement ceremony.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Nevada State University's commencement is scheduled in May 2026. Procedures and Guidelines Manual Chapter 8, Section 1(2) requires approval by the Board of Regents for honorary degree nominations.

5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:

- X Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
 - X Success (Increase student success)
Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
 - X Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce/industry education needs of Nevada)
 - X Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st century Nevada and raise the overall research profile)
- Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

This nomination supports NSHE's strategic goals of Access, Student Success, and Workforce Development through Stephanie Garcia-Vause's leadership in education-centered community planning. Her pivotal role in the College Area Plan established the foundation for the development and growth of Nevada State University, expanding access to postsecondary education and positioning the institution to serve a growing and diverse student population.

Additionally, Garcia-Vause's establishment of the City of Henderson's Office of Education, coupled with her emphasis on cross-sector collaboration, align directly with NSHE's workforce goals by strengthening partnerships between local government, higher education, and industry.

6. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Nearly 30 years of leadership with the City of Henderson, advancing education-centered community development.
- Played a key role in the College Area Plan, establishing the foundation for the development and growth of Nevada State University.
- Led land-use and infrastructure planning to integrate Nevada State into the surrounding community and regional economy.
- Established the City of Henderson's Office of Education, strengthening municipal support for higher education.
- Advanced policies supporting student access, workforce development, and academic excellence

7. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None

8. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

None

9. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:

The Chancellor's Office recommends approval.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # 4 Chapter # 1 Section # 15
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Other: Consistent with Procedures and Guidelines Manual Chapter 8, Section 1(2)
- Fiscal Impact: No: X
Explain: _____



Honorary Degree Nomination Form

1. Degree to be Awarded:

Honorary Masters Honorary Baccalaureate Honorary Associate

2. Please state the name and address of your nominee for an Honorary Degree.

Stephanie Garcia-Vause
[REDACTED]

3. Honorary degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at one of the NSHE's institutions. Persons currently holding public elected office are not eligible for the degree except in extraordinary circumstances.

What are your reasons for nominating this person? (Attach additional pages, if necessary.)

Stephanie Garcia-Vause is a distinguished public servant whose nearly three decades of leadership with the City of Henderson have produced a lasting and measurable impact on higher education and academic life in Southern Nevada, particularly through her role in the development and success of Nevada State University. As City Manager and Chief Executive Officer, and previously as Assistant City Manager, Garcia-Vause has consistently advanced strategic planning and community development initiatives that directly support academic institutions, student success, and long-term educational sustainability.

Most notably, Garcia-Vause played a pivotal role in the creation of the College Area Plan, which established the foundation for the development and expansion of Nevada State University. Her leadership ensured that land-use planning, infrastructure, and long-range growth strategies were aligned to support a thriving university campus integrated into the surrounding community. This work was instrumental in positioning Nevada State University as a central component of Henderson's educational, civic, and economic future.

Through her sustained commitment to thoughtful planning and partnership, Garcia-Vause has made significant contributions to the improvement of academic life and the institutional environment in which Nevada State University has grown and flourished, exemplifying the spirit and intent of an honorary degree from Nevada State University.

Acting President

2.03.2026

Date

Nevada State University

Bio: Stephanie Garcia-Vause



Having dedicated nearly three decades of public service to the City of Henderson, Stephanie Garcia-Vause is a seasoned leader with a proven track record of successful community development and strategic planning.

Stephanie Garcia-Vause was named City Manager for the City of Henderson in December 2024 and officially took on her responsibilities as City Manager/CEO on January 22, 2025. She served as an Assistant City Manager from March 2018 through January 2025. Over the last several years, she has involved herself in several major achievements that have enhanced our community including the redevelopment of Water Street District, receiving the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and attracting the Las Vegas Raiders and Haas Automation to West Henderson. Stephanie has overseen development-related departments, Communications, and the Department of Performance and Innovation. She also established the Office of Education as a result of community feedback and the 2019 Strategic Planning session with Mayor and Council. Most recently, her focus has shifted to public safety departments and Finance. Prior to that, she spent nearly a decade as Director of the City's Community Development and Services Department—ensuring high-quality development and service standards and progressive long-term City planning.

Her long-tenured leadership is expansive, and her experience and accolades are many. Stephanie's efforts range from securing significant public lands funding for parks and trails, securing a \$3.5 million sustainable communities grant for Southern Nevada, legislative involvement, and planning expertise such as developing the College Area Plan to set the stage for development of Nevada State University. She played a crucial role in West Henderson's expansion, from working with property owners to annex into the City, developing the first land use plan for West Henderson, and lobbying Congress for the LTA (Limited Transition Area) legislation, which set the foundation for attracting companies like Haas Automation to support economic diversification in the City. Her leadership was vital in the City attaining the 2024 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which is the highest honor given by the President of the United States for performance excellence. Henderson is only one of five cities (and the largest) to have ever earned this accolade.

Stephanie was recently appointed to serve the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA) Board of Directors, her expertise in strategic planning and fostering collaborative partnerships makes her a perfect fit for this role where she will represent Henderson and our economic priorities well. She is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners, a past Chair of the Southern Section of the Nevada American Planning Association (APA), a past Chair of the Nevada Urban Land Institute (ULI) District Council, and Chair of the Nevada ULI District Council Governance Committee. She was recently re-appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to the Bureau of Land Management's Mojave-Southern Great Basin Recreation Advisory Committee, having served two terms since 2015 as Vice Chair and Chair. She is currently a member of the St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School Advisory Council and PTO, as well as a member of the Henderson Libraries Foundation. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada and HopeLink.

When not working or volunteering, Stephanie loves to bake, read a good mystery novel, watch college football (rooting for the Cal Bears even though they usually lose) and spend time with her husband and two daughters—especially at their favorite vacation spot in La Jolla.