

BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Honorary Degree, UNLV — Mr. Jacob Coin

MEETING DATE: March 5–6, 2026

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

The William S. Boyd School of Law (the “Law School”) seeks to confer an honorary doctorate degree upon Mr. Jacob Coin in recognition of his work with the Law School’s Indian Nation Gaming and Governance Program (INGG), as well as with the Law School, for the last 25 years.

Mr. Coin is a citizen of the Hopi Tribe who was raised on the Hopi Indian Reservation, where traditional values continue to inform his work on behalf of tribal nations. He earned a degree in business administration from Arizona State University and began his career advocating for the Hopi Tribe in Washington, DC. Over nearly 30 years, he has played a leading role in Indian gaming law and policy, including founding the Arizona Indian Gaming Association (AIGA), serving as executive director of both AIGA and the National Indian Gaming Association, leading the California Nations Indian Gaming Association, and serving as a senior advisor to the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation. In this role, he advises on governance, policy, gaming regulation, and the protection of tribal sovereignty.

Mr. Coin’s contributions to UNLV and the Boyd School of Law have had significant impacts on student mentorship, workforce development, fundraising, teaching, faculty development, and tribal engagement. He has helped create meaningful internship and employment pathways for students in the gaming and hospitality sectors and played a key role in securing a \$9 million grant to expand UNLV’s education initiatives in these areas. As a longtime guest lecturer and member of the Gaming Law Advisory Council, he has supported curriculum development and faculty mentorship, while also strengthening UNLV’s connections with tribal leaders and communities nationwide.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Interim President Chris Heavey will request approval to award an honorary doctorate degree to Mr. Jacob Coin.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Mr. Coin has had an incredible career in tribal gaming and, with the maturation of the INGG Program (due in part to his strong support and assistance), it is a timely moment to award him with this honorary doctorate.

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

- Access (Increase access to higher education)**
- Success (Improve student success)**
- Close Institutional Performance Gaps**
- Workforce (Meet workforce needs in Nevada)**
- Research (Increase solutions-focused research)**
- Coordination, Accountability, and Transparency (Ensure system coordination, accountability, and transparency)**
- Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals**

6. INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Expanded educational access for students: Mr. Coin has leveraged his leadership and industry relationships to connect UNLV with Native communities, fostering recruitment and inclusion efforts that benefit all of our UNLV students.

Facilitated major philanthropic investment in education: Through his guidance and collaboration with the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, Mr. Coin was instrumental in securing a \$9 million grant to UNLV to expand tribal hospitality and legal curricula, a transformative investment that directly enhances student learning opportunities and UNLV’s capacity.

Enhanced curriculum and real-world exposure: Mr. Coin's long-term involvement with UNLV and the Law School has led to the creation of specialized courses and public lectures in tribal gaming law and related topics, exposing students to complex, real-world policy issues and strengthening UNLV's national profile in hospitality and gaming law.

7. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Mr. Coin has built strong institutional partnerships. His long-standing collaboration with UNLV reflects a shared commitment to opportunity through education, professional excellence, and fiscal responsibility.
- Mr. Coin has personally invested in the next generation of leaders by engaging law students and young professionals in practical discussions about governance, regulation, and leadership. This has fostered civic pride and accountability in future public servants.
- Mr. Coin's work aligns with UNLV's core mission and Nevada's values. His career embodies individual initiative, respect for tradition, and the belief that education and enterprise are the foundations of freedom and prosperity.

8. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None.

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

None.

10. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:

The Chancellor's Office recommends approval.

11. 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 P&GM: Chapter 8, Sec. 1.2 _____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No **X** _____
Explain:



Honorary Degree Nomination Form

1. Degree to be Awarded:

Honorary Doctorate
 Honorary Baccalaureate

Honorary Masters
 Honorary Associate

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

Mr. Jacob Coin

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.)

See attached memo.

Chris Heavey

2/2/2026

President

Date

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Institution

(B/R 3/03; Added 6/05; A. 3/24)

To: Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents
From: Chris Heavey, Interim President, University of Nevada, Las Vegas 
Date: February 2, 2026
Subject: UNLV Honorary Degree Nomination — Jacob Coin

It is my distinct honor to nominate Mr. Jacob Coin for the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Jacob has had a distinguished career in federal Indian policy and has been a supporter of UNLV for the last 25 years.

Background & Experience

Jacob was born and raised on the Hopi Indian Reservation. As a citizen of the Hopi Tribe, he learned social, ceremonial, and spiritual practices from his parents and elders, integrating these teachings into his daily life. Today, these Hopi values influence his work serving tribal nations and their leaders.

Jacob completed his undergraduate studies in business administration at Arizona State University in Tempe, AZ. After graduating from ASU, he served as an advocate and lobbyist for the Hopi Tribe in Washington, DC. Jacob's work in gaming law began when he campaigned in favor of Arizona to negotiate gaming compacts with Arizona tribes. He followed this work up with establishing the Arizona Indian Gaming Association (AIGA) in 1996. He served as the first AIGA executive director until 1998 when he was recruited for the executive directorship for the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA).

In July 2000, Jacob was recruited to manage the California Nations Indian Gaming Association (CNIGA). While in California, in 2004, Jacob was brought to the Yupaaviatam of San Manuel Nation (YSMN) as communications director where he was responsible for all internal and external communications, media relations, and communicating with tribal citizens and other tribal nations and governments. Jacob also established the Office of Public Affairs at San Manuel. Today, he serves as strategic advisor to the YSMN Tribal Council on matters of government, governance, politics, leadership, policy, tribal government gaming and regulation, and strategic approaches to protecting tribal sovereignty and preserving tribes' gaming exclusivity in California.

In short, Jacob has approximately 30 years of deep experience in crafting laws and policies that have directly impacted tribal communities for the better.

Connection with UNLV and the Boyd School of Law

Jacob has had a 25-year association with UNLV and Boyd School of Law. His contributions to UNLV have touched multiple areas, such as student success (including workforce development), fundraising for UNLV, teaching, faculty development, and connecting UNLV to tribal communities across the U.S.

Students and Workforce Development

Jacob has had a profound impact on UNLV students through his sustained commitment to mentorship. He has consistently made himself available to provide advice, guidance, and support, earning a reputation as a trusted and approachable resource for students navigating academic and career pathways.

He has also played a key role in creating stable internship and clerkship opportunities for law students, building strong connections between academia and industry. Through initiatives at the YSMN legal department and the Palms Casino & Resort, Jacob facilitated hands-on experiences that introduced students to the gaming and

hospitality sectors. These opportunities have equipped students with practical skills and industry insight and have directly supported their transition into permanent employment, strengthening UNLV's workforce development efforts in Nevada.

Fundraising

Through his leadership and work with YSMN, Jacob ensured that UNLV received a \$9 million grant from YSMN in order to grow hospitality, gaming, and governance education initiatives and opportunities.

Teaching, Curriculum Advising & Institution Building

In the early 2000s, Robert D. Faiss (since deceased), a leader in gaming law and adjunct professor at the law school, invited Jacob to guest lecture on tribal government gaming and related policy issues. These lectures expanded into regular appearances across multiple law courses, including Federal Indian Gaming Law. In 2010, Jacob was appointed to the Gaming Law Advisory Council, where he continues to provide curriculum advising to ensure courses remain aligned with industry developments.

With Jacob's expertise and guidance, UNLV also established two enduring programs: the Indian Nations Gaming & Governance Program and the Tribal Education Initiatives. These programs have expanded educational opportunities in tribal-related fields and better prepared students to enter the workforce.

Faculty Development

Further, Jacob has contributed to the development of faculty at UNLV. He gave a faculty enrichment talk at the College of Hospitality and has mentored junior faculty members (through emails, phone calls, and meetings). His contributions have helped faculty navigate the complexities of the academic environment.

Connecting UNLV to U.S. Tribal Communities

Jacob has been instrumental in connecting Boyd Law and UNLV with leading tribal gaming experts and tribal communities nationwide. These efforts include facilitating relationships with the attorneys who argued the landmark Cabazon case before the U.S. Supreme Court. Through these connections, Jacob has significantly strengthened UNLV's partnerships with tribal communities.

In recognition of all his contributions, I respectfully recommend Mr. Jacob Coin for an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.