ADMINISTRATIVE FACULTY COMMITTEE
UNLV FACULTY SENATE

Statement of Support from the UNLV Administrative Faculty Committee (AFC) Regarding the Appointment of Dr. Chris L. Heavey as President of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Under NSHE Handbook Title 2, Chapter 1, Section 1.5.5, the Board of Regents may appoint an interim president to the permanent role after at least one year of service. The board has exercised this option three times in the last several years for the presidencies of other NSHE institutions. Dr. Chris Heavey has now reached that point, and the Administrative Faculty Committee offers its strong support for his appointment.

Many of us have spent a large part of our education and careers at UNLV and have witnessed repeated leadership turnover. We understand the negative impact that has on an institution. It becomes harder to follow through on long-term priorities and to address issues that cannot be solved in a year or two. In the last decade, UNLV has had 4 Presidents. That says a great deal about how often leadership has changed and why continuity matters right now.

President Heavey comes into this role with more than 30 years at UNLV, including six years as Executive Vice President and Provost. During that time, he demonstrated strong administrative leadership and a clear ability to improve the academic enterprise. The results are evident in the key performance indicators (KPIs) that define a university's core mission. Enrollment is at a record level, graduation and retention rates are at historic highs, research expenditures have reached record levels, and UNLV has completed a second consecutive NWCCU accreditation cycle with multiple commendations and no recommendations, an outcome that is extremely rare in higher education.

Over the past year, we have seen Dr. Heavey extend that leadership across the full scope of the presidency. Based on public information, it is clear that he stepped into the role at a time when the university faced a number of challenges. While many of these issues developed over years, and even decades, and therefore may take some time to fully resolve, meaningful and immediate improvements were evident after he stepped into the role of interim president. For example, he moved quickly to strengthen external relationships, which helped lead to the successful execution of a land lease at the UNLV Research & Technology Park for Southern Nevada's first dedicated children's hospital, an important and long-needed resource for the region. More broadly, relationships with donors and community partners have improved, and the university is operating with greater consistency and focus.

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UNLV is now in the middle of several major efforts that will take time to get right, including leadership searches in health sciences and a fundraising campaign that has not taken place in nearly two decades. These efforts depend heavily on the relationships, credibility, and momentum that have already been established.

We do not believe a national search is the right step at this moment. Dr. Heavey applied for the UNLV presidency in 2020 and was the runner-up in that national search. Bringing in an external candidate would mean selecting someone who does not yet know UNLV, NSHE, or Nevada, and who would face a significant learning curve at a time when steady leadership is essential. Searches also require significant time and resources and can slow institutional progress at precisely the moment when continuity and historical knowledge are needed.

We strongly believe that past and present performance are the best indicators of future success. President Heavey has demonstrated that he can lead this institution forward, and we should build on that momentum rather than risk interrupting it.

Just as important, President Heavey is someone people trust. He is widely respected across campus and beyond it as a person of integrity and who is thoughtful, knowledgeable, and highly capable as a leader. He brings a strong combination of intelligence, sound judgement, and deep experience, and is known for approaching complex issues in a practical and strategic way. He is committed to doing what is best for the institution, even when that requires difficult decisions. He also has deep roots in this community and a long-term commitment to UNLV and southern Nevada.

Having President Heavey serve as UNLV's permanent president would allow the university to continue its upward trajectory and fully realize its potential as the only research university in Southern Nevada. We have seen peer institutions transform under a stable, committed leadership that is willing to address challenges directly and follow through on long-term strategic priorities. As professionals who dedicate our time and energy to UNLV every single day, we are excited about what the future holds under President Heavey's leadership and vision.

For these reasons, the Administrative Faculty Committee offers our strongest support for the appointment of Dr. Chris Heavey as President of UNLV.

Approved by UNLV Administrative Faculty Committee, April 21, 2026