

Nevada System of Higher Education



MEMORANDUM

To: All NSHE Presidents

Fr: Melody Rose Chancellor

Dt: March 25, 2021

Re: Guidance on Spring 2021 Campus Graduation Ceremonies

Cc: Joe Reynolds, Chief General Counsel

The conclusion of the Spring 2021 Semester is quickly approaching, and NSHE institutions are engaging in campus-level discussions on how to best address graduation ceremonies for our students this Semester in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, the data and science surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic is evolving daily, and trends in Nevada currently are on a favorable trajectory. Governor Sisolak recently authorized vaccinations to become available to all Nevada residents ages 16 years old and up beginning on April 5, 2021. This authorization will provide vaccination opportunities to all NSHE employees, and a majority of our students and their families. Recent data also shows that Nevada's Covid-19 positive test rate is declining, as well as hospitalizations and deaths, resulting from the virus.

However, medical experts caution that we must remain vigilant and measured in our approaches on lifting Covid-19 restrictions too soon. Other states throughout the country, and countries throughout Europe, are seeing a concerning resurgence in the spread of the virus and its variants, as mass vaccination efforts are not complete. Those variants have been detected in Nevada.

Pursuant to the current favorable Covid-19 landscape in Nevada, Governor Sisolak issued Directive No. 41, effective March 15, 2021, which provides the following relevant provisions regarding public gatherings that are particularly relevant to NSHE graduation ceremonies:

SECTION 8: Effective immediately, Section 3 of Directive 037 is hereby amended to add the following:

For public gatherings at outdoor gathering spaces that do not have an assigned fire code capacity, including without limitation: parks, beaches, plazas, and public or private streets, the number of attendees is limited to the lesser of 250 persons or to the extent necessary to allow each attendee to maintain a distance of at least six feet from all other attendees, at all times.

SECTION 9: Sections 10 and 11 of Directive 037 shall terminate at 11:59 p.m. on March 14, 2021. Effective 12:00 a.m. on March 15, 2021, this Section shall apply to all gatherings and events in excess of 250 attendees that will occur **before May 1, 2021.**

Authority is hereby delegated to the Nevada Department of Business & Industry (B&I) to determine and prescribe the necessary COVID-19 mitigation measures, which may take into account the type of event and/or the venue. B&I shall consult with the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and may modify those mitigation requirements as necessary to respond to changes in COVID-19 transmission, vaccination rates, and guidance from DHHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), except that B&I shall not allow for more attendees than 50% of fire code occupancy capacity.

A person wishing to host, organize, or conduct a large gathering (the "organizer") under this Section must submit a Large Gathering Plan to B&I. The Large Gathering Plan must explain how the organizer will meet each of the requirements prescribed by B&I for implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures and must contain any other information deemed necessary by B&I. B&I will review the application and may consult with state public health authorities and any other state agencies, commissions or regulatory boards, as applicable, to determine the sufficiency of the Large Gathering Plan. B&I will not approve any Large Gathering Plan for more attendees than 50% of occupancy capacity.

SECTION 10: Effective 12:00 a.m. on March 15, 2021, this Section shall apply to all gatherings and events in excess of 250 attendees that will occur between **May 1, 2021 and June 30, 2021.**

A person wishing to host, organize, or conduct a large gathering (the "organizer") under this Section may submit a Large Gathering Plan to B&I as set forth in Section 9. B&I will not approve any plan for more attendees than 50% of occupancy capacity.

The organizer may also submit a Large Gathering Plan to the applicable authorities in the county, in accordance with the processes and procedures set forth by the county. However, even if the Large Gathering Plan is approved by the county, it is not valid unless the county receives a delegation of authority pursuant to Section 4 of this Directive.

If the county approves the Large Gathering Plan and, prior to the gathering, the county in which the event will occur has adopted a Local Plan pursuant to Section 3 of this Directive and received a delegation of authority pursuant to Section 4 of this Directive, the organizer may hold the event according to either the plan approved by B&I or the plan approved by the county, whichever is less restrictive.

The intent of this Section is to promote certainty for the planning of events that will occur during the period of transition from State to county authority.

Since the inception of the Covid-19 pandemic, NSHE Presidents have been afforded discretion within a broader framework applicable to all NSHE institutions on how best to tailor Covid-19 planning, such as remote instruction, that best fits their geographic region and campus community needs. Accordingly, this guidance will continue towards Spring 2021 graduation ceremony planning. NSHE institutions may schedule limited in-person ceremonies, virtual ceremonies, drive-thru ceremonies or a hybrid combination of the above or other creative ceremonies to ensure that students, families, friends, and faculty have a meaningful graduation experience celebrating their achievements.

With this guidance in mind, certainly all applicable Covid-19 directives issued by Governor Sisolak, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Nevada OSHA, and other federal, state, and county Covid-19 guidance must be followed. Please ensure to plan for contingencies in the event Nevada's current Covid-19 progress changes. Once your institution's graduation plans are finalized, please forward them to me so that I may provide a summary to the Board of Regents.