

**BOARD OF REGENTS**  
**BRIEFING PAPER**

*Handbook* Revision, Selection of Peer and Aspirational Institutions for DRI

**BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

During the June 2021 regular meeting of the NSHE Board of Regents, the Chancellor recommended and the Board approved a process for selecting peer and aspirational comparison institutions for the seven teaching institutions. It was clear in the Board's discussion in June 2021, that the policy proposal as written for the regular selection of comparison peer and aspirational institutions was appropriate for the teaching institutions but did not recognize the unique mission of the Desert Research Institute (DRI) and the challenges associated in selecting appropriate peer and aspirational institutions for the institute.

The DRI is not a degree-granting institution and therefore does not report to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which is a critical component for the selection of peer and aspirational institutions for the teaching institutions. Further, there are legitimate cases where DRI's unique mission and research endeavors are similar to private entities and therefore, may be appropriate comparison institutions. The proposal as written allows the DRI to recommend peer and aspirational institutions that will be reviewed by the Chancellor's Office and ultimately presented to the Board for approval.

**SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

Amend Title 4, Chapter 11, by adding a new Section 13 requiring DRI to select comparison peer and aspirational comparison institutions at least every three years. Further, revise Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 4 to clarify that the provisions of that section are applicable to the teaching institutions only. See attached policy proposal.

**IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

This policy proposal is brought forward at the recommendation of the Board following its adoption of similar provisions for the teaching institutions at its June 2021 regular meeting.

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

- Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- Success (Increase student success)
- Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)
- Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21<sup>st</sup> 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**

The peer lists ultimately selected for DRI will be used for comparison and provide an objective point of review for institutional strategic planning and therefore implicitly supports the Board's five strategic goals.

**BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

The selection of peer and aspirational comparison institutions:

- Allows DRI to utilize comparable peers that are similar to DRI in terms of mission, size, research endeavors, etc.;
- Provides context for performance particularly in areas of grants awarded and research expenditures; and
- Provides an objective point of review for strategic planning.

**POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

None have been brought forward.

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

Maintain the status quo and not adopt a formal policy on the selection of peer and aspirational comparison institutions for DRI.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:**

The Chancellor’s Office recommends the proposal to formalize the process and frequency to be utilized in selecting peer and aspirational comparison institutions for DRI distinct from the process that has been established for the teaching institutions.

**COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Amends Current Board Policy: *Title 4, Chapter 11, new Section 13; Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 4*  
 Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  X   
 Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

## POLICY PROPOSAL

### Title 4, Chapter 11, *new* Section 13

#### Selection of Peer and Aspirational Institutions for DRI

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

#### ***Section 13. Selection of Peer and Aspirational Institutions for DRI***

- 1. At least every three years, the Desert Research Institute will recommend a list of three comparison peer institutions and no more than three aspirational institutions. Peer institutions will serve as the basis of comparison for outcomes in areas such as grants awarded, research expenditures, and other relevant metrics, particularly those associated with the NSHE strategic plan. Aspirational institutions will represent the general characteristics of the desired future state for DRI's strategic goals.***
- 2. The recommended comparison peer institutions may include public and/or private entities that are similar to DRI in terms of characteristics, including but not limited to research revenue as reported to the National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey, scientific productivity, size in terms of personnel, sponsorship and general research topic areas (e.g. basic and applied environmental research). The recommended aspirational institutions may include public and/or private entities and have characteristics that reflect DRI's strategic direction and reflect the institute's aspirational goals.***
- 3. The recommended list of comparison peer and aspirational institutions will be submitted to the Chancellor's Office for review and feedback. Following review by the Chancellor's Office, peer and aspirational institutions will be submitted to the Board for approval.***

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 4**  
Selection of Peer and Aspirational Institutions

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 4.     Selection of Peer and Aspirational Institutions *for Teaching Institutions*

4. At least every three years, *NSHE teaching* institutions will recommend a list of three comparison peer institutions and no more than three comparison aspirational institutions. Peer institutions will serve as the basis of comparison for outcomes in areas such as student retention rates, graduation rates, awards conferred, research productivity, and other relevant metrics, particularly those associated with the NSHE strategic plan. Aspirational institutions will represent the general characteristics of the desired future state, for the institution's strategic goals.
5. The recommended list of comparison peer institutions must include public institutions only and come from the most recent annual IPEDS Data Feedback Report. Comparison peer institutions must be selected due to similarity with the NSHE institution, based on characteristics including but not limited to 12-month full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment, percent of undergraduate students receiving a Pell Grant, academic program mix, urban/rural location, and/or percent of faculty who are full-time. Aspirational institutions shall be recommended by the institution in consultation with the Chancellor and shall include public institutions only.
6. The recommended list of comparison peer and aspirational institutions will be submitted to the Chancellor's Office for review and feedback. Following review by the Chancellor's Office, peer and aspirational institutions will be submitted to the Board for approval.
7. This section does not apply to Desert Research Institute.