

BOARD OF REGENTS

BRIEFING PAPER

1. **AGENDA ITEM TITLE:** Great Basin College and the University of Nevada, Reno Consolidation.
2. **MEETING DATE:** July 21, 2023

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Great Basin College and the University of Nevada Reno recognize that creating a *well-lit path* for students to successfully have access to and be successful in higher education depends on collaboration rather than competition, on aligning institutions' strategic plans with current market forces and industry needs. To that end, GBC and UNR have embraced the mindset of continuous transformation/improvement together for the last five years and have consolidated many business and academic/student affairs services as a clear strategy focused on preserving mission as well as sustainable financial health which strengthens and supports the higher education legacy, particularly in rural Nevada.

At the September 2022 Board of Regents meeting the Regents voted to allow GBC and UNR to continue exploring next step consolidation of services as a means to greater effectiveness and efficiency and charting a more secure future while preserving the diversity and excellence represented in their missions and identities. While the US Dept of Education may refer to consolidation as a "merger", either term as used herein shall refer to a process that results in GBC maintaining its name, identity, service area, and mission. At the December 2022 Board of Regents meeting, Presidents Helens and Sandoval presented an update to the Regents on new and successful existing consolidation of services and how that has moved the two institutions to further define their strategic alliance and identify an overlapping stakeholder market that could enhance strategic positioning in workforce development, community engagement, and other areas that are part of both institutions' mission.

Since then both institutions have continued to consolidate services through memorandums of understanding (MOUs), an updated list of which has been shared with the Board of Regents and is available for public view on the GBC website. Both institutions have been in contact with our accreditors and the US Department of Education to further answer questions that would continue our efforts towards a full consolidation where GBC, while maintaining its identity and mission, would become a college within UNR, sustaining the GBC legacy of providing higher education and training opportunities to rural Nevada.

President Helens and President Sandoval anticipate finalizing the details of consolidation during the 2023-24 academic year, reporting progress at a Fall 2023 Board of Regents meeting and requesting Board approval of a final Consolidation Plan or Merger Plan at the Spring 2024 Board of Regents meeting.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

President Joyce Helens and President Brian Sandoval will discuss the details of what the "merger" or "consolidation" of their institutions will entail and entertain questions and discussion from Regents regarding details of any such merger or consolidation. The Board may also take action to

- 1) Direct the presidents to bring a detailed Consolidation Plan or Merger Plan back to the Board for consideration at the Spring 2024 Board of Regents meeting; and /or
- 2) Provide direction to the chancellor and presidents regarding the details of this or any other consolidation or merger alternatives.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This is a timely update from the September and December 2022 Board of Regents meetings about the progress towards GBC/UNR consolidation.

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

The GBC/UNR alliance supports transformative change which directly supports and streamlines the educational experience to create the “well-lit path” our students deserve. Becoming more “student-centric” together, where students in rural and frontier Nevada have access to more educational opportunity delivered rurally requires investing in new growth initiatives that affirm our interrelated core values and concepts such as student-centered excellence, inclusiveness of diverse cultures and identities, and broad stakeholder engagement.

7. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

GBC and UNR have many focused and successful strategic collaborations over the last five years in various aspects of our business and academic/student support operations.

Each year GBC and UNR teams have explored next steps in improving services to our students and stakeholders through a closer alliance with the ultimate goal of full consolidation.

Consolidation would preserve the GBC name/identity and rural mission. Structured stakeholder discussions in the communities which GBC serves have been positive.

Finalizing the consolidation efforts with our accreditors and the US Department of Education requires support of the Nevada System of Higher Education’s Board of Regents.

8. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

Concerns have been identified and addressed.

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

Status quo with diminishing state funding.

10. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:

The Chancellor’s Office supports additional planning by the institutions and a discussion of alternatives to the GBC/UNR consolidation.

11. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Other: _____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No _____
Explain: _____