

## BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER

**1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE:** Appointment, Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents

**MEETING DATE:** July 21, 2023

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**2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

The position of Chief of Staff to the Board is created by the *Bylaws* of the Board of Regents (Title 1, Article IV, Section 5). The position also serves as secretary to the Board, a role established by Nevada Revised Statutes 396.090 and the *Bylaws*, Title 1, Article IV, Section 1). Ms. Keri D. Nikolajewski has served as the Interim Chief of Staff from January 15, 2021, to August 7, 2022, and November 30, 2022, to present. In April 2023, the Board voted to remove the duties of Special Counsel, placing the legal role with the System General Counsel's Office, leaving the distinct role of Chief of Staff. Pursuant to Board policy, Title 1, Article IV, Section 5, the Chief of Staff to the Board shall serve at the will of the Board and shall be compensated in an amount determined by the Board. The Human Resources Office was directed to make a recommendation and accordingly conducted an analysis of the Chief of Staff position and made a salary recommendation for the current incumbent in accordance with a position description questionnaire based on the duties outlined at Title 1, Article IV, Section 6 as well as historical position descriptions, salary schedules, and information derived from the recent external position review and equity study.

Human Resources concluded that over the years responsibilities have been added, removed, and then added back to the role, yet one sure and consistent theme is the level of accountability for the Chief of Staff to the Board is considerable as the position is responsible for managing an increasingly complex department composed of many diverse activities and consulting with members of the Chancellor's cabinet in order to assist in resolving complex issues. The analysis took into consideration the impact of actions and decisions made in the position not only affect the Board of Regents Office, but can also have a lasting impact on NSHE as a whole, the extensive range of responsibilities held by this position including supervision of five members of the Board staff, the responsibility for the efficient functioning of the Board of Regents and coordination of all activities between the Board, System Administration, the Presidents, administrators, faculty, and students of the NSHE Institutions, other governmental officials, and the public as well as preparation of agenda items, amendment to the *Handbook and Procedures and Guidelines Manual*, resolving issues brought by all NSHE constituents before they are escalated and require Board attention or action. Policy codification and executive administrative responsibilities of this position cross over not only to System Administration but to all eight NSHE institutions. Additionally, the Chief of Staff serves as the "Secretary of the Board" pursuant to NRS 396.090 and maintains all official records of the Board; and as "Corporate Secretary and Custodian" of the corporate seal, affixes the seal to documents of the NSHE as appropriate, and certifies actions of the Board or its committees and the identity, appointment, and authority of Officers of the Board and the institutions of the Nevada System of Higher Education. All of the foregoing tasks require little to no supervision and necessitate that the incumbent make independent judgements very quickly with a high degree of diplomacy, empathy, and critical thinking.

As such, Human Resources recommends that the Chief of Staff position maintain the current classification of a grade three (3) on the NSHE Executive Salary Schedule (salary range of \$208,942.00 to \$355,286.00, with a median of \$282,114.00). If approved for appointment as Chief of Staff, Human Resources recommends that the Board consider an adjustment that would bring the salary of the current Interim incumbent, Ms. Keri D. Nikolajewski, to the minimum of the grade (\$208,942.00) as appropriate in light of Ms. Nikolajewski's education and years of experience; specifically, her two and a half years of service successfully performing the role of the Interim Chief of Staff to the Board.

The Board will consider the appointment of Interim Chief of Staff Keri D. Nikolajewski to serve as Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents and approval of the proposed contract terms.

**3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

The Board will consider the appointment of Interim Chief of Staff Keri D. Nikolajewski to serve as Chief of Staff to the Board of Regents and approval of the proposed contract terms.

**4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

Regent Goodman requested the agenda item. Ms. Nikolajewski has served successfully as Interim over more than one period of time.

**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**

N/A

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

The incumbent employee is qualified and has a solid track record.  
Twenty-one (21) years of service to the Board of Regents.

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

N/A

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

Take no action, maintaining the interim appointment, which expires December 1, 2023.

**10. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:**

The Chancellor's Office supports the appointment.

**11. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # 1 Chapter # IV Section # 5
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No x
- Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

## Nevada System of Higher Education

**System Administration**  
4300 South Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89119-7530  
Phone: 702-889-8426  
Fax: 702-889-8492



**System Administration**  
2601 Enterprise Road  
Reno, NV 89512-1666  
Phone: 775-784-4901  
Fax: 775-784-1127

### CONTRACT SUMMARY OF TERMS CHIEF OF STAFF BOARD OF REGENTS KERI D. NIKOLAJEWSKI

- 1) **Base salary:** \$208,942.00 per fiscal year.
- 2) **Benefits:** Ms. Nikolajewski shall be entitled to all healthcare, leave, and other customary fringe benefits enjoyed by NSHE administrative faculty.
- 3) **Contract Period:** Ms. Nikolajewski's contract will commence upon Board approval and shall be in effect through the fiscal year end on June 30, 2024, and, unless amended or terminated, shall renew each July 1 and end on the following June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Keri D. Nikolajewski

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### EDUCATION

- **Bachelor of Science, Public Administration** **December 2016**  
Honors: *summa cum laude*  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

### EXPERIENCE

- **Interim Chief of Staff** **November 2022-present**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education **January 2021-August 2022**  
Las Vegas, NV

- Ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the Board of Regents and assist the members in carrying out their duties of office
- Liaise between and among Regents and NSHE administration, working directly with the Board Chair, Vice Chair, Chancellor, and other executive and senior leaders of the System and its institutions
- Support effective governance through short- and long-range planning, timely and complete communications, and problem solving on significant issues and challenges
- Maintain a comprehensive understanding of the Board's stewardship of the NSHE to effectively contribute to and support the work of the Board
- Manage the priorities and activities of the Board Office, including daily operational oversight, supervision and evaluation of staff, assignment and review of work, and initial and ongoing training/mentoring
- Develop and maintain an annual work plan and lead quarterly review meetings with the Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Chancellor to ensure the timely hearing of agenda topics
- Assist the Board Chair and committee chairs in the development of agendas
- Lead quarterly agenda review meetings with the Chancellor, cabinet members, institution presidents, and the Board Chair and Vice Chair to ensure completeness and accuracy of Board and committee agendas and establish the cadence of Board and committee meetings
- Give legal notice of all meetings of the Board and its committees, fully supporting the public transparency requirements of the Board
- Coordinate material provided to the Regents for action and information items in connection with Board meetings including reviewing content for completeness, accuracy, and responsiveness.
- Consult with Regents as needed on agenda items coming before the Board and its committees
- Provide administrative support to the Board and the Chair including planning, preparation, and staff support for all Board and committee meetings.
- Oversee the documenting and record keeping of the proceedings of the Board and its committees
- Work collaboratively with the Chief General Counsel to ensure the activities of the Board comply with all relevant legal guidelines
- Inform and advise both Regents and the administration on issues, procedures, and Board policies
- Review and approve all spend authorizations, travel and hosting expenses, Regent statutory salary payments, and staff purchasing card reconciliations for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with Board policies
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information related to Board and NSHE matters
- Serve as the principal point of contact for communications between and among the Regents and NSHE constituencies and stakeholders
- Serve as corporate secretary and custodian of the Seal of the University and other vital corporate records, executing in the name of the University and attesting to a broad range of documents necessary for the operation of the NSHE
- Serve as a member of the Chancellor's leadership team and bring the perspective of the Board to discussions
- Provide individual orientation sessions for newly elected Regents and oversee all onboarding activities carried out by the Board Office
- Assist in the execution of Board-related projects, initiatives, and mandates to further the Board's fulfillment of its governance responsibilities

Keri D. Nikolajewski

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**Deputy Chief of Staff**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

**October 2017-January 2021**  
Las Vegas, NV

- Assisted the Chief of Staff and Special Counsel with the efficient functioning of the Board of Regents
- Assisted the members of the Board of Regents in carrying out their duties of office
- Coordinated activities with the Board of Regents, System Administration, institution presidents, campus administrators, faculty, staff and students of the NSHE, other government officials, media and the public
- Prepared agendas, reference material and schedules for Board of Regents meetings
- Participated in agenda planning and review meetings
- Reviewed and edited initial drafts of agendas and minutes prepared by Special Assistants
- Provided support for president and chancellor searches, including oversight of Special Assistants assigned to searches
- Coordinated planning and logistics for Board of Regents meetings
- Established calendar of Board of Regents meetings, committee meetings and deadlines for agenda submissions
- Reviewed and approved spend accounts for expense reimbursements, purchasing card statements, statutory salary payments and related transactions
- Worked on special projects on behalf of the Board of Regents and Board Office, including reports requested by Board leadership and other Regents, background on agenda items and election and redistricting issues
- Assisted with onboarding of new Regents
- Coordinated annual Regents Awards process
- Maintained Board of Regents website
- Served as Officer in Charge when the Chief of Staff and Special Counsel was absent

**Manager of Board Operations**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

**July 2014-October 2017**  
Las Vegas, NV

- Managed Board Office staff activities including oversight of agenda preparation and posting, minute preparation, travel and host arrangements and reimbursement, and policy revision and codification
- Provided proactive analytical and executive support to the Board of Regents and the Chief of Staff and Special Counsel
- Coordinated, maintained and distributed daily and long-range schedules and calendars for the Board of Regents and Board Office
- Prepared agendas, reference material, meeting schedules and minutes for Board of Regents and committee meetings
- Coordinated planning and logistics for Board of Regents meetings
- Reviewed, recommended, implemented and administered agenda management and meeting software solutions
- Established, implemented and directed internal handling procedures for records management
- Prepared correspondence on behalf of Board Chair, other Regents and Chief of Staff and Special Counsel
- Coordinated annual Regents Awards process
- Maintained Board of Regents website

**Special Assistant and Coordinator**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

**January 2012-July 2014**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Program Officer I**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

**January 2006-July 2012**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Administrative Assistant IV**  
Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education

**March 2005-January 2006**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Administrative Assistant III**  
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

**January 2002-March 2005**  
Las Vegas, NV