

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

Handbook Revision, Regents' Rising Researcher Award

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Due to the recent and untimely passing of former Regent Jason Geddes, and at the request of Regents Byron Brooks, Stephanie Goodman, and Joe Arrascada, the Board will consider a policy revision honoring his memory and his lifelong dedication to higher education in Nevada. Regent Geddes was one of the longest-serving recent regents, having served 16 years representing Pershing and Washoe counties. He was originally appointed to serve on the Board of Regents by Governor Kenny Guinn in 2006 and was retained in subsequent elections as the representative for District 11.

Regent Geddes was born in Winnemucca, Nevada, and spent his formative years in Gabbs. He was a native Nevadan who understood the benefits and challenges that come from living in a rural community, in large part from his own personal experiences living in Gabbs as a young boy. His love for higher education began when he enrolled at the University of Nevada, Reno to pursue a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry. Like many NSHE students today, he worked full-time while going to college and graduated in 1990. He wasn't ready to leave UNR after receiving his bachelor's degree and continued to earn a Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences and Health in 1995. Regent Geddes' love for UNR, in particular, began during those years as a student and graduate student, but continued his entire life as he often wore UNR garb making clear his love for his alma mater.

His state service extended beyond the Board of Regents as he was elected to serve in the Nevada State Assembly in 2002. As a member of the state legislature, he served on the Education, Judiciary and Natural Resources, Agriculture and Mining committees. He further exhibited his dedication to the state and environmental sciences through the various professional positions he held over the course of his life, including Environmental Sciences Administrator for the City of Reno; Government Affairs Manager for the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada, Senior Petroleum Chemist for the Nevada Department of Agriculture; and Director of Operations and Quality Assurance Officer for Nevada Environmental Laboratories – to name but a few.

During his time on the Board, Regent Geddes served in many capacities, including Board Chairman (for three terms: 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2019-2020). However, his love was always for the academic side of higher education and as such he thrived in his role as Chair of the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs Committee. He also served on numerous committees, all of which changed over the years, including the former Workforce, Research and Economic Development Committee, the ad hoc Committee on Institutional Service Areas, the ad hoc Marketing, Publicity and Public Safety Committee, and numerous presidential search committees. During his time on the Board, Regent Geddes was a fervent supporter of the universities as they sought status under the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as "Tier 1" (Very High Research Activity) institutions. He was a champion of a number of reforms over the years including policy revisions supporting seamless transfer and articulation, implementation of corequisite instruction, a performance-based funding formula, the 15-to-Finish campaign and numerous other initiatives all intended to support students on their path to a college degree. In September 2023, the Board recognized Regent Geddes with the status of Regent Emeritus.

His dedication to his state, love for higher education, and vast knowledge and experience in environmental sciences made him an ideal mentor to young students and rising researchers across NSHE – a role that he relished. The Regents' Rising Researcher Award is given annually to up to three NSHE faculty members at each UNLV, UNR, NSU and DRI in recognition of early-career accomplishments and potential for future advancement and recognition in research. It is fitting to honor a former regent, dedicated public servant, colleague, and friend to so many by formally recognizing future rising researchers in the name of Jason Geddes, whose life was dedicated to learning and supporting the state and System he loved dearly. As such, staff recommends revising the provisions governing the Regents' Rising Researcher Award so that it is issued annually in his name.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend *Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 18*, to provide that the Regents’ Rising Researcher Awards granted shall be referred to as the “Jason Geddes Rising Researcher Award” in commemoration of his service and dedication to higher education in Nevada.

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This policy revision is brought forward in light of the recent and untimely passing of former Regent Jason Geddes.

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

INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

The Regents’ Rising Researcher Award is given annually to up to three NSHE faculty members at each UNLV, UNR, NSU, and DRI in recognition of early-career accomplishments and potential for future advancement and recognition in research – supporting the Board’s goal to increase solution-focused research.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

Regent Geddes was a stalwart supporter of higher education in Nevada during his time on the Board and remained a supporter when his term ended. His guidance, historical knowledge and willingness to support his colleagues across the System was apparent in all he did. He leaves an indelible mark on NSHE and will be thoughtfully remembered by adding his name to the recognition of the Regents’ Rising Researcher Award – fitting given his broad knowledge and experience in environmental sciences.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None have been presented at this time.

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

Maintain the Rising Researcher Award as currently implemented.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:

The Chancellor’s Office supports the revisions as presented herein – commemorating former Regent Jason Geddes.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Amends Current Board Policy: *Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 18*
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Other: _____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No _____
Explain: _____

POLICY PROPOSAL - HANDBOOK
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 1, SECTION 18

Nevada Regents' Researcher Awards

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

Section 18. Nevada Regents' Researcher Awards

1. The Nevada Regents' Researcher Award shall be given annually to NSHE faculty members at UNLV, UNR, NSU and DRI with a distinguished record in research. Two awards will be given annually: one to a faculty member in recognition of a distinguished career in research and one to a faculty member in recognition of mid-career accomplishments in research. Although this award is intended for individuals, groups who by their collaboration have made major advances may be recognized as well. In addition, a Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award shall be given annually to up to three NSHE faculty members at each UNLV, UNR, NSU and DRI in recognition of early-career accomplishments and potential for future advancement and recognition in research. *The Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher awards granted shall be referred to as the "Jason Geddes Rising Researcher Award" in commemoration of his service and dedication to higher education in Nevada.*
2. The Researcher Award will carry with it a cash stipend of \$5,000. The intent is to select one individual (or group) for recognition each year for the Researcher Award. However, the Selection Committee may choose to send forward more than one nomination for the Researcher Award in exceptional circumstances. The Rising Researcher Award will carry with it a cash stipend of \$2,000 for each recipient.
3. Faculty members who receive the Regents' Researcher Award may use the title as such in perpetuity.
4. Guidelines for the nomination and selection of the recipient of the Nevada Regents' Researcher Award and the Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Awards shall be established by the office of the Chancellor. Institutions may establish additional guidelines related to the nomination of faculty members for the Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award.