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April 14, 2009

The Honorable Bernice Mathews, Chair
Nevada State Senate Finance K-12 Education
and Higher Education Subcommittee
c/o Nevada Senate
401 S. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701

The Honorable Morse Arberry, Chair
Nevada State Assembly Joint Subcommittee
on K-12 Education and Higher Education
c/o Nevada Assembly
401 S. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Chairpersons Mathews and Arberry:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of College and Universities (HACU), I am writing in strong support of a higher education budget which ensures that the higher education systems are able to provide a quality, affordable, and accessible higher education to the students of the State of Nevada. We understand that like much of the country, the State of Nevada has experienced a significant economic downturn and that difficult decisions must be made during this biennium. However, we encourage the Legislature to work with Nevada's higher education system and their business communities to find solutions that continue to provide an educated workforce for the economy of tomorrow.

Cuts as dramatic as those proposed by Governor Gibbons would result in faculty and staff layoffs, reduced access to college courses, longer times to completion for students, and quite possibly fewer programs that enable low-income and first-generation students to successfully complete their college degrees. According to information from the Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, from 1993 to 2007 only 12.2 percent of individuals from low-income families were working towards a college degree. This figure ranks Nevada 49th in the nation for college participation among low-income families. If Nevada is to succeed economically, its universities must have adequate resources to ensure academic access and success among low-income and first generation college-going students. Additionally, the state must ensure that there are increases in financial aid that allow low- and moderate-income families to bear the burden of any tuition increases necessitated by cuts in state support to higher education.

We are confident that the Legislature will do its best to work with the higher education community to fully utilize federal stimulus dollars and find new state resources for the education of its population and future workforce. I look forward to continuing to work with you to make college a reality for all students.

If we can be of any assistance, Erica Romero, our Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, would be happy to help your office. Erica may be reached at eromero@hacu.net or (916) 442-0392.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Flores". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Antonio Flores
President and CEO

cc: Members, Joint Subcommittee on K-12 Education and Higher Education
Nevada HACU Member Institutions
Erica Romero, Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, HACU