



**James E. Rogers**  
**Chancellor**

**Nevada System of Higher Education**

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 9, 2008

**TO:** Board of Regents

**FROM:** James E. Rogers  
Chancellor

**CC:** NSHE Presidents

**RE:** Budget cuts at Great Basin College

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James E. Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the "FROM:" field.

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In terms of sheer dollars, any budget reductions imposed on the NSHE will be focused on the two universities and the College of Southern Nevada. However, the pain of these cuts and the impact of them cannot be limited to which schools suffer the largest dollar cuts. Nowhere is this more true than at Great Basin College as the attached memorandum demonstrates.

Great Basin College serves a vast area of the state but a relatively small population. It serves that most rural part of state where most communities struggle with a challenging economy even in good times. Workforce demands are more acutely felt in these small communities of Nevada, and in this region there is only one higher education provider – Great Basin College.

As you read the attached memo, put yourself in the position of a college student in this part of the state who, without GBC, has a very limited cultural and economic future. With the proposed budget cuts, entire programs will close and the students affected will never be able to repair the damage. The state, through its system of higher education, has a legal obligation to provide educational opportunities throughout Nevada. That obligation, under the Nevada Constitution, Article II, Section 6, seems to have been missed by the state's leaders, both business and government.



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 9, 2008  
**TO:** Chancellor James Rogers  
**FROM:** Dr. Michael McFarlane  
Administrator in Charge  
**RE:** **Proposed Budget Cuts/Impacts on Campuses – Great Basin College**

Vast distances define Great Basin College, and the mission of GBC is to provide educational opportunities to the many small, widely dispersed towns of this region. This is not an easy task. GBC has the distinction of being Nevada's smallest community college in student numbers (about 3200 total students, or about 1650 full-time equivalent students), but the largest in number of square miles of service area (62,000). The GBC service area covers six counties in two time zones and borders four states, but has a population only about 120,000 people. It extends from McDermitt and Jackpot in the north, to Pahrump and Beatty in the south. Being the most rural of the Nevada community colleges, GBC has a special role in fulfilling the educational needs of its isolated population centers. Because of the relatively small numbers of people and their typically place-bound situations (through jobs, family, and other commitments) most Nevada System of Higher Education colleges and universities cannot provide educational programs to the smaller communities of rural Nevada. Yet, the needs of these communities are the same as those of metropolitan areas. A trained workforce in health care, education, and technical careers is required in rural areas, and usually the only reliable source of people to train for these positions is the people who live within these small towns. GBC provides training and education to these people. They fulfill the needs of their communities and are likely to remain for long periods of time.

In fulfilling the current requirement of a statewide 4.5% budget cut during the current budget cycle, GBC has managed to get by in the short term in the same manner as other NSHE institutions: cut operating budgets, impose hiring freezes, defer maintenance, defer merit raises for employees, and increase student fees. Even if these budget cuts remain static in

future years, this would be harmful to GBC and its educational function for many years to come. Buildings will begin to fall into disrepair, programs will be limited in the number of students that can participate, students will find it more difficult to finance their education, and the quality of the programs will decrease without the ability to provide necessary operating funds.

However, now GBC – along with other NSHE institutions – is being asked to consider a 14.5% budget cut for the next budget cycle. This would be devastating. The scenarios below are examples of possible options for achieving these cuts, and some of the implications.

### Scenario One

The first scenario closes all branch and satellite centers, and retains operation of only the main Elko campus. This would include shutting the branch campuses of Winnemucca, Ely, and Pahrump, closing facilities at Battle Mountain and Wendover, and closing the coordinated sites at 13 other locations (McDermitt, Owyhee, Jackpot, Wells, Crescent Valley, Carlin, Eureka, Austin, Lund, Round Mountain, Gabbs, Tonopah, Beatty). The people living in many of these small communities would then be hours of travel time from the nearest center for higher education. Enrollments from these areas would plummet, creating even more gravity to budget cuts in the future from lost enrollment. The savings from this action would still not completely cover a 14.5% cut, and further cuts would be necessary.

### Scenario Two

The second option is to cut entire programs. The scale at which programs would need to be cut is so great that GBC could not effectively exist and serve its educational mission. As an example, if all Health Sciences programs (RN Nursing, BSN, Certified Nursing Assistant, Radiology Technology, Human Services) and all Career and Technical programs were cut (Diesel, Welding, Electrical and Instrumentation, Industrial Millwright, Agriculture), there would still need to be further cuts. These programs are vital to rural Nevada. The Health Sciences provide a steady stream of trained nurses and other health care specialists for 120,000 residents of rural communities. If these professionals are not available in the future, it will be very difficult and expensive to recruit for these positions. GBC provides a very large proportion of initial training and ongoing workforce development needed by the mining industry of northern Nevada, where there is always a shortage of technically trained personnel. Mining is contributing to a diversified state budget base, and this industry should be encouraged and supported through workforce training.

### Scenario Three

The third option is across-the-board reductions in all areas, severely crippling GBC's ability to effectively provide any programs for students. The Education program, which is providing teachers for rural Nevada in the same way the Nursing program is providing trained practitioners, will be derailed. The quality and availability of all programs, even in general education, will be degraded, and will bring in question college accreditation standards. Overall GBC enrollment will decline, which reduces formula funding even more, which will lead to even further budget cuts. This is a downward feedback cycle termed the "Death Spiral" for an educational institution. GBC's current established record of growth in programs, their quality, and the number of students being served, will go into a tail-spin.

GBC has worked hard to carry out a difficult mission in effectively supplying cost-effective, specialized education and training to rural Nevada. A 14.5% budget reduction would effectively destroy this effort.