

**DR. MARC JOHNSON, PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO  
PRESIDENTIAL EVALUATION**

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY PRESIDENTIAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 23, 2017**

INTRODUCTION

On October 26, 2016, Acting Chancellor John White convened a meeting of the newly formed Committee to assist in the periodic evaluation of Marc Johnson, President of the University of Nevada, Reno. The Committee was chaired by Gerald Smith, Executive Director and Foundation Manager of the Nell J. Redfield Foundation and immediate past Chair of the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation. The Committee included Paul Bible, a practicing attorney, former Chair of the Nevada Gaming Commission and two-time Chair of the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation, Bruce James, President and CEO of Nevada New Tech, Inc., and former Public Printer of the United States and David Sanders, University of Nevada, Reno Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering. The Committee had an opportunity to review President Johnson's self-evaluation and interviewed him on November 3, 2016. We again met with President Johnson at the conclusion of our investigation on January 9, 2017 to provide him with a summary of our findings. As a part of its investigation, the Committee conducted fifty-one interviews with student leaders, UNR Faculty, vice presidents, associate vice presidents, the Provost, vice provosts, deans, directors, classified staff, UNR Foundation representatives, Alumni Association representatives, members of the legislature and Reno city government, community leaders and fellow NSHE presidents. The Committee held an open meeting for Faculty and staff and a student forum on campus. The Committee members also attended a meeting of the Faculty Senate and received input from that body. Finally, the Committee received and carefully reviewed the summary of the Faculty Evaluation Survey that was sent to all Academic and Administrative Faculty.

All of the above information has been incorporated into this report to the Board of Regents.

The timetable for completion of the Committee's activities was aggressive and it could not have been met without the exceptional support and assistance of Janet Sanderson, Executive Assistant to President Johnson and Toni Odom-McNeil, Executive Assistant to Chancellor White. We also wish to thank the staff of the Knowledge Center, who provided the space for our

personal interviews. Finally, our special thanks to all who participated in our interviews and provided valuable input on which we have relied heavily in preparing this report.

The Committee appreciates the effort that President Johnson put into the preparation of his self-evaluation. By faithfully addressing the evaluation metrics, he has provided valuable input and insight to this Committee as it undertakes its appointed task.

### PRELIMINARY MATTERS

The Board of Regents has adopted a series of performance metrics to assist in the evaluation of NSHE Presidents. In his self-evaluation, President Johnson faithfully addressed each of the metrics and has provided valuable data with respect to his performance since his last evaluation. The data suggests a solid and positive performance by President Johnson in all areas which clearly support the conclusion that UNR has rebounded from the impacts of the recent economic recession even though State funding has not yet recovered.

This report will begin by an evaluation of President Johnson's performance, as measured by these metrics. We then will expand on that template by drawing on the body of information that we have gathered from all sources during our investigation.

### APPLICATION OF REGENTS' PERFORMANCE METRICS

#### 1. Fundamental Productivity

- a) Academic Completion – Student Success
- b) Enrollment
- c) Grants/Contracts/Special Events/Research & Development/Gifts

All of the empirical data available to the Committee supports a conclusion that the University is succeeding in all of these areas. President Johnson has expressed the importance of student success and the graduation rate is improving annually. It was noted how much President Johnson cares about student success and that he takes the time to interface with students.

Enrollment is at an all-time high, and, in fact, growth has been tempered to allow Faculty growth and staff and facility growth to catch up. We will discuss the issue of growth as it impacts Faculty considerations below.

The President has been outspoken in his efforts to accelerate research and he continues to search for qualified Faculty who can add to and complement the research activities ongoing on the campus at the present time.

Under the direction of President Johnson, the University has undertaken \$407.5 million in capital improvement projects by using \$386.7 million of Institutional Funds and \$23.8 from the

State of Nevada. In addition, the University has launched a multi-year \$500 million comprehensive campaign which is now halfway toward its announced goal. The success of these undertakings is a clear reflection of the support that the President has generated throughout the University and the community during his tenure.

## 2. Institutional Well Being and Management Effectiveness

Evidence of the President's efforts regarding entrepreneurship is seen throughout the campus and around the community.

The President has been praised for his successful hires, many of whom have helped to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship. The positive efforts of his hires can be seen at all levels. They include innovation and growth of business and the successful transition of the UNR School of Medicine.

President Johnson has received high marks for his use of his hires to accomplish his objectives. President Johnson is perceived as being responsible for creating an open and inviting atmosphere on campus. He is applauded for being student focused, open and approachable. He has initiated a number of different programs for communicating directly with students, including his regular "Pizza with the President" events. The President also schedules regular monthly meetings with the Faculty Senate and the classified staff to discuss matters of interest. President Johnson is viewed by most as being an effective communicator. More discussion regarding the President's communication skills will be presented below

Finally, President Johnson has embraced the principal of "shared governance" as one of the guiding policies for the University.

## 3. Institutional Relations to External Communities

- a) Collaboration
- b) Regents' Strategic Directives
- c) Community Partnerships

President Johnson is admired and respected by his peer presidents who generally view him as their spokesman in discussions with the Board of Regents. He is perceived as working closely with the peer presidents, especially with presidents of institutions in the North for the benefit of all. Several of the presidents have been extremely complimentary of President Johnson's willingness to act as a mentor for them as they have grown into their positions of leadership.

Evidence of this leadership role can be seen from the regular meetings that President Johnson schedules with the President of TMCC and the Superintendent of the Washoe County School District designed to improve the pathway for high school students to higher education.

The President has accepted and embraced the Regents' Strategic Directives. One of the more significant initiatives has been the desire of the Regents for the University to seek and achieve Carnegie R-1 status. Here, the President has clearly established Carnegie R-1 status as a goal to be achieved and he has begun to build the foundation for accomplishing that goal. This specific initiative will be discussed in detail below.

Similarly, the President has accepted and on several fronts, is implementing the "Shared Services" initiative. An example of this, is the blending of the UNR and TMCC police forces into a single unit.

During his tenure, President Johnson has formed strong and useful partnerships with the City of Reno and with Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada. This is evidenced by his drive to support Reno as a "University Community" and to assist in attracting new businesses to the area. The President's vision of a University community has been widely circulated and is generally supported internally and externally. More discussion of this matter will follow.

#### CONCLUSIONS REGARDING REGENTS' METRICS

The Committee finds that the President has done a solid job of addressing the Regents' metrics and his performance has been viewed as very effective.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

##### 1. Performance as a leader and as a spokesman for the University

President Johnson is viewed as a person of great vision who cares deeply about the University and its students. He is person of high integrity and faithful to his mission which is to advance the interests of the University at all levels. The President consistently stresses three goals: improving the student Faculty ratio; striving to achieve Carnegie R-1 status; and making a greater economic impact in the community. While seeking to achieve these goals, he has continued to stress academic excellence and the need for the campus to become more inclusive and diverse. President Johnson has clearly articulated his vision for the campus which focuses on increasing research while continuing the traditional focus on undergraduate education.

It is often said that a good leader can be judged by the quality of his hires. If this be true, President Johnson has excelled. It is generally believed that the hires made by him have been game changing. However, concerns have been expressed that he does not provide sufficient responsibility to his administrators and also that he needs to provide more oversight. He was praised for being very thorough in his decision making but some have suggested that he has difficulty accepting view points and criticism from others.

The President has been generally viewed as an effective communicator, both orally and in writing. He has initiated a series of different approaches to more effectively communicate internally. These include his regular "Pizza with the President" meetings with students and his regular meetings with the Faculty Senate and the classified staff. Nevertheless, there is a perception among some that the President could improve his communications internally. Much of this commentary comes with respect to his goal to achieve Carnegie R-1 status.

Externally, the President has been very effective in the community. He has engaged at every level as the champion of higher education. He has advanced the notion that Reno is a University community and that the success of the City and the University are closely tied. He appears regularly at community events where he effectively articulates his vision for the University and the community. There are some who believe that this initiative needs more clarification. Notwithstanding, the President has reached out to the City and to EDARN to collaborate on issues of common interest.

In describing his communication skills, it has been said that he may not be flashy but he wears well and is consistent in his messaging. He has an optimistic view of the world that he projects which is contagious.

The President did an outstanding job working with the City on the Campus Master Plan and on the Gateway Project. He has worked tirelessly to make the Gateway a reality and to move the University in a southerly direction all the while advancing innovation, technology and collaboration. The acquisition and renovation of the office building in downtown Reno and the partnership with SWITCH to develop the InNEVation Center created a space for entrepreneurs from the campus and the community to come together to develop technology and prototypes of products of the future.

There is a belief held by some in the community that the President has not fully embraced the challenge to advance the status of the College of Engineering sufficiently to accommodate the urgent needs of new industry locating in northern Nevada. His decision to make construction of a new engineering building a priority and to fast track funding for and construction of the new engineering building will go far to address these concerns.

President Johnson is strong supporter of Intercollegiate Athletics on campus. He regularly attends a wide variety of athletic events and he sponsors the President's tailgate before football games for friends of the University. He also regularly meets with prospective student athletes and their parents during campus recruiting trips. Some believe that the President must become more supportive of athletics if the University is to successfully compete in the Mountain West Conference. There is a feeling the University needs more flexibility for it to be competitive and that this flexibility need not be at the expense of the desire to continue to strive for academic excellence. A decision has been made for the University to align itself with the Mountain West Conference and resources must be identified to allow the University to compete effectively. This challenge rests with the President.

## 2. Results of the Faculty Evaluation Survey

The results of the Faculty Evaluation Survey (“FES”) received by this Committee on Thursday, December 22, 2016 contains data that the Committee members believe to be of sufficient importance to be highlighted in this report. It is significant to note that the FES was sent to 2,047 academic and administrative Faculty who hold appointments at .50 or greater Full-Time Equivalent. Three hundred ninety nine (399) completed responses and 52 partial responses were received generating a 22% response rate. A majority of those responding agreed with the 24 Likert type positive statements presented. Faculty could respond with strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree, or no basis for evaluation. The Evaluation Survey is attached as an addendum to this report. Provided below are responses to specific statements (the number in parenthesis is the percentage of those responding that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement):

“3. President Johnson has articulated a clear vision for the future of UNR.” (71%)

“6. President Johnson has promoted student diversity on campus.” (81%)

“7. President Johnson has promoted Faculty diversity on campus.” (71%)

“21. President Johnson is a good President for UNR.” (67%)

“24. President Johnson should remain as President of UNR.” (69%)

Question 25 asks for a description of President Johnson’s strengths and comments generally mirror the information contained elsewhere in this report such as his personal integrity/care of UNR, relationship building with Faculty, community and students, and leadership and vision for the University.

Question 26 asks for areas in which there is an opportunity for improvement in President Johnson’s service to UNR. Here, many of the comments reflect statements captured elsewhere in this report such as the need to create a plan to support the vision and more effective oversight of administrators. However, in the view of the Committee, several comments deserve special consideration to assist President Johnson in better understanding an undercurrent of discontent existing within a small number of the responding Faculty members.

### A. Sensitivity to issues of diversity

There is some concern expressed that President Johnson appears to be insensitive to issues of diversity, especially related to gender equity on campus. Some faculty members suggest that diversity is inadequate, especially with women in decision-making and leadership positions. More broadly, they suggest that President Johnson has proven resistant to issues of gender equity on campus and the ways that issues of gender are interwoven with those of race and ethnicity. As evidence of this belief, several responders referenced the recent hire of a “recruiter” by the

athletic department that, in their opinion, evidenced the President's lack of sensitivity to women on campus and resulted in the isolation of women as well as those concerned about the status of women.

#### B. Support for Faculty to improve campus morale

As with the discussion above concerning diversity issues, there was a small number of responders concerned with the failure by the President to rectify salaries, other compensation issues and morale after recovery from the financial crisis. The suggestion was that the President needs to recognize and address the lack of merit pay for Faculty and place this ahead of any plan to hire new Faculty. In the view of some, too many years have passed without addressing this issue which has created low morale and has adversely affected incentive to achieve excellence.

This Committee observes that compensation issues fall within the purview of the State Legislature and the Board of Regents. Information available to the Committee strongly suggests that, during the last Legislative Session, President Johnson worked tirelessly to support funding for increasing salary and merit compensation. While fully understanding the impact on morale, he was unsuccessful in his search for funding.

President Johnson has been placed in the difficult position of having to manage a Faculty and staff at a time when increasing enrollment and expectation for research and engagement are countered by budget constraints that have made it impossible to address Faculty compensation that has not substantially changed for eight years.

### GOALS AND SUCCESSES

#### 1. Carnegie R-1 Status and Carnegie Engaged Status

In furtherance of the expressed initiative of the Board of Regents to seek and achieve Carnegie R-1 status, President Johnson has set achievement of that status as an institutional goal. It is generally felt that he has a clear vision with respect to this goal which is lofty but achievable. It is the President's belief, supported by most, that to not aspire is to go backward.

The President has received high praise from many for aggressively pursuing the goal and for laying out his plan for reaching the goal. Others, while praising the President's vision, have felt that the plan lacked clarity and that he needs to develop a broad outline regarding the steps that must be taken to reach the goal. Members of the Faculty have questioned what will be required of them in the process. All acknowledge that more resources will be needed in order to achieve success. Some question whether the resources will be made available to reach the goal. There appears to be a frustration among faculty members with respect to communication at all levels concerning achievement of the goal. There is a concern that there is not adequate infrastructure to support a vision of high level research including administrative support, teaching work load accommodation, balance of different types of Faculty, space, travel budget, administrative systems, appropriate research-level salaries and support for graduate students.

Simultaneously, the President has launched a program to achieve “Carnegie Engaged” status. It is generally believed that this too is a laudable goal and achievable in the near term. Some feel that it is inconsistent to be seeking both statuses on a parallel track but most agree with the President that it is quite appropriate to do so. Here again, the suggestion is that the President fully articulate his plan to Faculty and staff so that there is a clear understanding of expectations at all levels.

## 2. Separation of the University of Nevada School of Medicine

The President receives high praise for his efforts with respect to UNSOM and separation of the Reno Campus from the South. President Johnson worked tirelessly with his staff to complete the separation while at the same time preserving and protecting the positions of the UNR staff in Las Vegas who would be transitioning to the new entity. After a long and arduous negotiation, virtually all of the UNR staff positions were preserved. By his firm but measured approach, President Johnson was able to navigate through serious obstacles and favorably resolve some most challenging issues. Those who worked closely with the President on the separation were outspoken in their praise for his efforts to successfully complete the transition while showing great sensitivity to the Las Vegas Faculty whose positions were in serious jeopardy.

## 3. Successful Completion of the University’s Strategic Plan and Master Plan

President Johnson, with the assistance of his staff, completed the University’s Strategic Plan which has provided a tangible road map for the future of the University through 2021. The Strategic Plan is viewed as a highly successful and positive vision for the future of the campus.

Similarly, the Comprehensive Master Plan, which was approved by the Board of Regents, is a thoughtful and far reaching blueprint for future campus development. In preparing the plan, President Johnson and his staff work closely with the City of Reno, Regional Transportation Commission and EDawn to craft the document which begins to effectively bridge the distance between the City and the campus. The plan is a significant collaboration among the broad range of stakeholders, including University Faculty, staff and students as well as business leaders, government leaders and interested citizens.

Some believe that more transparency and greater communication should have been provided in the planning process but the vast majority of persons interviewed were extremely complimentary of the process and the result.

## 4. Addressing Campus Diversity

It is generally believed that the President is effectively advancing diversity on the campus at all levels. The President has identified diversity as a major priority. To assist in the process, he has engaged a Chief Diversity Officer and the officer is viewed as effectively supporting the President’s initiative. The President is viewed as not just “talking the talk” but as taking positive action at all levels. He has effectively addressed the diversity issue with students and student diversity is on the rise.



However, some responders believe that more work needs to be done especially with respect to diversity at the highest levels of administration giving special attention to gender diversity and people of color.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Effective Communication

The President is praised for his effort to increase communication at all levels and the steps that he has taken to ensure full communication have been outlined above. Yet, there is an underlying current of concern with respect to full and adequate communication in certain specific areas.

Objectives and goals for the University have been clearly stated but identification of the resources needed to achieve the goal has been inadequate. Greater demands are being imposed on Faculty to pursue the goal without providing funding to support the increased demands.

#### a) Carnegie R-1 Status

Although the goal has been fully articulated, there is a sense among some that much of the detail has been overlooked. Why is this status important? How is the goal to be achieved? What will be required of me to support the effort? Where will the resources be found to achieve the goal? There is a disconnect between resources and objectives. The President should consider providing a fuller description of his plan for achieving Carnegie R-1 status with a view to addressing the questions noted above.

#### b) Institutional Information

We would recommend that, where possible, the President more fully communicate his institutional decisions to his deans, Faculty and staff. Where material changes are being considered, a greater effort should be made to be sure that those involved are fully informed with respect to the intended purposes so that they can effectively support the proposed changes. Along the same line, it might be helpful to provide more information internally concerning the status of the Capital Campaign and its impact on the Faculty and staff.

#### c) Shared Governance

Concerns have been expressed regarding lack of shared governance. This focuses on a perceived failure to fully explain how initiatives have been identified and after identification, how they have been developed. There is a need to be more inclusive in the process of developing and implementing plans and initiatives.

## 2. Faculty Interaction

As the campus grows and as that growth necessarily places more demands on Faculty and facilities, the President should be prepared to receive input from those who are most significantly impacted including deans and Faculty and to provide more full articulation of decisions that impact this group.

## 3. Athletic Oversight

The President should consider working more closely with the Athletic Director to understand the demands placed on the department as a member of the Mountain West Conference and, where possible, to work collaboratively to achieve a reasonable balance.

## 4. Diversity Concerns

Recognizing significant positive steps made on campus to achieve greater diversity, there is a belief expressed by some that more sensitivity to the issues of diversity is needed and more implementation is needed. Specifically, there is a need to increase the role of women and minorities in leadership positions and Faculty positions on campus.

## CONCLUSION

President Johnson is the right leader at the right time for the University. He is a man of personal integrity, fair, and cares about the University. He has performed at an exceptionally high level since his last evaluation. He clearly heard and understood the message delivered to him by the Board of Regents at that time and he took prompt and effective steps to address all recommendations. He is considered by Faculty, staff, students and community leaders to be an industrious, high energy leader of exceptional character and integrity. He has a clearly articulated vision for the University which speaks to increasing research while continuing its traditional focus on undergraduate education.

The overwhelming view reported to this Committee is that the University is moving forward in a positive direction. Under his leadership and with his vision, the President is building a solid foundation on which to support the growth and expansion of the University as it addresses the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Based upon its extensive investigation, this Committee unanimously approves the performance of President Marc Johnson since his last evaluation and recommends that, when timely, his employment contract be renewed.

The Committee further unanimously believes that the compensation provided to the President in any new contract be more closely aligned with the compensation being received by the President of the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January, 2017.

Gerald C. Smith, Chair