

**April 14, 2015**

**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance**

*Prepared Statement by Dr. Nancy E. Brune, Executive Director of the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities, Chair of the College of Southern Nevada's Institutional Advisory Council (IAC), and Member of GOED's Knowledge Fund Advisory Council*

**Community Colleges Need Flexibility to Respond to Economic Development Needs and Priorities**

- One of the primary functions of the community colleges in Nevada is to meet the training needs of Nevada's workforce and employers. Our community colleges must work closely and seamlessly with the State's businesses and key industry sectors in the assessment, design and implementation of customized curricula and training programs.
  - Community colleges must be able to respond in a timely effort to design and implement customized training programs.
  
- Currently, Nevada's community colleges do not have a means of funding new curriculum development during the biennium.
  - In 2011, the Legislature approved AB 499, which established the Knowledge Fund, a \$10 million fund designed to spur research, innovation and commercialization in Nevada, housed within the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED). Only NSHE's research institutions (UNLV, UNR, and DRI) are eligible to apply for support from GOED's Knowledge Fund.
  - The Workforce Development Rapid Response Fund establishes a program for awarding grants to community colleges to facilitate the expedited development of education and training programs to ensure an educated and skilled workforce for industries targeted for growth in this State by GOED.

**Other States Have Adopted Similar Programs**

Many states have dedicated state resources to promote more effective workforce development programming between community colleges and industry partners.

- Other states that have similar efforts in place (and their levels of funding) include: Florida (\$20M),<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin (\$35M), Georgia (\$30M),<sup>2</sup> Arkansas (\$15M),<sup>3</sup> and Utah (\$3.3M), Louisiana (\$3M).<sup>4</sup>
  - Georgia's Quick Start program, which provides free workforce training services to qualified businesses, has been ranked among the top workforce development programs in the nation since 1999. Quick Start has demonstrated such success that Louisiana and Wyoming have adopted its model.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fldoe.org/newsroom/latest-news/florida-department-of-education-celebrates-florida-career-and-technical-education-month.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.georgia.org/2014/03/26/wall-street-journal-states-boost-workforce-development-attract-employers/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://dws.arkansas.gov/AWIB/pdfs/stateplan/PY%202012-2016%20Arkansas%20State%20WIA%20W-P%20Plan,%20FINAL,%2011-2-2012%20rev%201-4-2013.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://business.utah.gov/programs/rural/resource-information-2/goed/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://wyomingbusiness.org/program/wyoming-workforce/3418>

**Recommendations**

1. Adopt accountability measures as proposed. Among these are:
  - o The application for a grant must be specific to the need for a course of study related to an economic development opportunity;
  - o The president or other chief administrative officer of a community college applying must approve each grant application.
2. Prioritize applications that are focused on STEM occupations and high priority sectors (as identified by the Governor’s Office on Economic Development).
3. Within GOED, establish or identify a Workforce Development program officer who is responsible for the work of the Workforce Development Rapid Response Investment Fund.
  - a. In Georgia and Louisiana, responsibility for their rapid response workforce development programs sits entirely within their state Office of Economic Development and is run by a single individual.
4. Ensure that the individuals selected to serve on the Committee to oversee the Workforce Development Rapid Respond Investment Fund have knowledge of one of the high priority sectors and/or workforce development training programs.
5. Expand the Committee to oversee the Workforce Development Rapid Respond Investment Fund to nine members and ensure that two committee members represent rural counties.
6. Allow one member of each of the four Institutional Advisory Councils to sit on the Committee as non-voting members.
  - a. The Institutional Advisory Councils (a byproduct of SB 391) were established to “ensure the linkage of the college to the community it serves and to anticipate future regional educational trends.”

**Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities: Contact Information**

Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities  
c/o InNEVation Center  
6795 Edmond Street, Suite 300  
Las Vegas, NV, 89118  
Phone: (702) 522-2178  
Email: [info@guinncenter.org](mailto:info@guinncenter.org)  
Email: Website: [www.guinncenter.org](http://www.guinncenter.org)

Dr. Nancy E. Brune, Executive Director  
Email: [nbrune@guinncenter.org](mailto:nbrune@guinncenter.org)

Victoria Carreón, Director of Education Policy  
[vcarreon@guinncenter.org](mailto:vcarreon@guinncenter.org)