

Higher standards, better students

BY REBECCA ZISCH

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Last month, UNLV President Carol Harter announced a plan to go to the Board of Regents in December to raise the minimum university admission requirements. If passed, her proposal will require incoming students in fall 2007 to have a high school GPA of 3.0. For anyone who has ever taught at the university level in Southern Nevada, this date will come none too soon.

It is widely known that Nevada educational statistics have us swimming in a sea of national embarrassment. For example, Nevada ranks 47 in per-pupil spending across the nation. When combined with the fact that local public school enrollment increases by 5 percent each year, more children but the same amount of dollars to distribute, the abyss of frustration for school administrators only gets wider. Without money to spend on education, how can average grades and test scores increase?

Without money to improve programs, materials and facilities, the incentive for improved student performance has to be future college admission. Currently, incoming UNLV students must only have a high school GPA of 2.5 to be admitted to UNLV and a 3.0 GPA to be awarded a Millennium Scholarship. The current plan in place is to raise that minimum requirement to 2.75 for fall 2006 admissions and 3.0 for 2010. Harter's December proposal will skip the intermediate step and raise general admission standards three years earlier.

Meanwhile, Millennium Scholarship recipients graduating high school in June 2005 and 2006 must have a minimum 3.1 GPA; after that the requirements will raise to a 3.25 GPA. The Millennium Scholarships are managed by the state treasurer's office and Harter's proposal will have no effect on those guidelines. However, it's understood that as one increases, so must the other.

From recent reports and polls, it appears that Harter's fast-forwarded plan will pass with flying colors. Several sitting regents have publicly expressed support and a *Review-Journal* poll put voter agreement at 52 percent. However, there are those who argue that raising the admission requirement early is unfair to current Nevada high school students who have been told all along that they would only need a 2.5 GPA for admission to a four year college.

The argument is that they will not have time to raise their GPAs the required points to enter UNLV. However, these arguments are being made by those who have only contributed to the worsening performances of Nevada's students. Because what is truly unfair is to only present students with what they have to do to get by. Instead they should have been encouraged to do their best, whatever that may be.

High school students with C averages either have those grades because that's their best work or because they are idling on the path of least resistance. Students who fall into either of those categories do not belong in a four-year university directly out of high school. And with the current admission standards, professors see that level of unpreparedness daily. Raising the admission standards won't eliminate that completely, but it is undeniably a step in the right direction. **CL**