

Office: Governor of Nevada

Candidate: Steve Sisolak

Party: Democratic

Campaign website: www.stevesisolak.com

Q: Public funding of higher education has declined in relative terms over the past two decades while student fees and tuition have increased and student debt has rapidly expanded, both nationally and in Nevada. How should these issues be addressed?

Sisolak: We've made some meaningful progress under my administration:

I signed into law AB450, which established a two-year study of opportunities to align workforce training and programs offered by the community colleges, including an examination of governance structure.

The average debt at college graduation has dropped by nearly \$3,000 since I took office.

With that said, much more needs to be done. It's why we've allocated \$5 million to explore ways the state can make community college and other job training programs free by 2025. The state's General Fund tax revenues are nearly \$800 million more than forecasted – about a 25% increase over projections, which positions us well to continue making investments to strengthen higher education in Nevada during a second term.

Q: The recruitment and retention of state employees, including faculty and staff in our public colleges and universities in Nevada, has become a crisis. Reasons cited for widespread vacancies include lagging compensation and cuts to healthcare benefits. What solutions do you have to restore and retain the higher education workforce in Nevada?

Sisolak: We're facing an unprecedented shortage of educators to teach our kids and operate our schools, including in higher education, and we're taking action to tackle it. Last year, we leveraged \$20.7 million in federal funds to launch the "Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching" grant program to provide stipends to those in educator preparation programs as they take classes or go through student teaching at a Nevada System of Higher Education campus.

We also launched the NSHE Teacher Pipeline Task Force to help grow the pipeline of diverse teacher candidates in our system.

In a second term, I'll continue working to make sure Nevada's higher education institutions are adequately staffed, our educators and faculty members are paid fairly, and that PEBP budget cuts are restored.

Q: Do you support collective bargaining rights for professional employees in our public colleges and universities?

Sisolak: Yes

Q: Do you support the principle of academic freedom that protects faculty members from political interference in their teaching and scholarship? (For more information see the AAUP 1940 Statement on Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure.)

Sisolak: Yes

Q: Thank you for your responses. What else, if anything, would you like to communicate to NFA members?

Sisolak: It's been an honor to work with NFA on a variety of accomplishments, including: funding

enrollment caseload growth and capacity enhancements in the NSHE budget; restoring many of the NSHE faculty and staff positions that were eliminated; approving a COLA for all state employees; and funding capital improvement projects across the state.

I look forward to continuing our partnership during a second term by building on our progress and tackling the challenges our educators face in Nevada.

(Submitted 8/4/2022)
