From the Desk of... Dr. Charles R. Donnelly

Dear Friends of the Colleges:

Nevada community colleges have now completed five years of operation and have reached a milestone that invites our reflection and analysis. This analysis shows that the three community colleges in the state are accomplishing the objectives set forth six years ago with the formation of the division.

Dr. Neil Humphrey, Chancellor of the University of Nevada System, addressed this subject in a speech to the three community college advisory boards at a statewide meeting last month.

The Chancellor recalled that the objectives for the community colleges were stated in the State Plan for Community Colleges in Nevada written in 1970 and adopted by the Board of Regents in January of 1971. Dr. Humphrey notes that the colleges are achieving their objectives and that they have come so close to original enrollment predictions in that plan that it is "spooky."

The plan projected full-time equated enrollment at Northern Nevada Community College for 1975 at 280. The actual enrollment was 308. For Clark County Community College the projected figure was 2,800 and the actual enrollment was 2,700. For Western Nevada Community College, the projection was 1,900 and the actual enrollment was 1,850. The total projected enrollment for the three colleges was 4,980 and the actual figures were 4,858.

The actual enrollment figures at the end of five years vary only about 2 percent from the predicted enrollment figures.

In that state plan the main mission of the community colleges was the mission of occupational education. The plan called for 60 percent of the enrollment to be in the occupational area. At the end of the fifth year the occupational enrollment was even stronger than planned, being about 63 percent. This figure is considerably higher than the national average figure for community colleges.

A second objective was to offer university parallel courses to provide the basic academic education for all of the colleges' programs. These liberal arts courses qualify students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities and also offer the academic study needed for students in the occupational programs. These students take a third of their course work in these areas so that they will have a better all-around education.

These university parallel courses have already enabled hundreds of Nevada's young people to perform successfully as upper division students at the two
universities in the state. Without this opportunity most of these people could never have received a university education.

The university parallel courses are offered for low-income students who cannot afford to go to the university, students whose high school grade point averages do not allow them to be admitted to the university as regular students, students who have failed at the university and need a second chance, students who prefer a community college atmosphere, and students in occupational programs who need 20 hours in general education in order to get an associate degree. None of these students would go to the university the first two years so there is no unnecessary duplication but rather a complimenting of university programs.

A third objective of the plan was to provide a developmental program that would upgrade the reading, writing, and mathematics skills of students who need this boost in order to perform well in their occupational or academic studies. These programs enable them to move ahead in their occupations or in preparation for further study. They are particularly advantageous for students who have been out of school for years. The community colleges have many of these students for our average age is 30.

A fourth objective was to provide community service courses and programs. These programs are financed from student fees and not from state funds. Hundreds of adults are served throughout the state with these classes. A model program of pioneer arts and crafts being offered by Northern Nevada Community College is a typical example.

The community college programs and courses are tailored to meet the individual needs of each student -- to get a job, to advance on the job or to progress in studying a favorite subject. We are more concerned with employment, career or academic development, or personal advancements than we are with formal degrees. Many students take one or two courses to help them in their present jobs, or to upgrade them to better positions, or to qualify them for new positions. We wish to be judged by our success in these areas rather than by the number of degrees granted.

The community colleges have provided quality education that honors the dignity of every human being and have provided education geared to democracy consonant with Jeffersonian principles of educating the common people.

The community colleges have been flexible with changing schedules, individualized lab programs, use of programmed instruction, use of audio and video tapes and extensive use of part-time faculty. They have also been diversified to reflect community needs of the areas the colleges serve and by classes and programs to serve student needs necessitating large numbers of part-time instructors. Only in this way could we provide service to the rural areas without excessive costs.

The three community college advisory boards in the state have provided valuable advice in all of the plans formulated for the community colleges. At their suggestion the University of Nevada System has adopted a uniform course numbering system that should be helpful to students transferring from the community colleges to the universities. The problems of transfer from community colleges to the universities are now minimal but the numbering system should make the problems even less.

Charles R. Lam alley, President