PRESENTATION
TO THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY EDUCATION

From V. James Eardley, President
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The state's system of community colleges was established in 1971 to fill specific educational needs. We are doing this. But today I want to talk to you about the needs of Truckee Meadows Community College.

One of the primary ways the community college differs from other types of learning institutions is in the demographics of its students. To illustrate this difference, your packet contains a student profile based on statistics compiled over the last three years.

First, the average age of a Truckee Meadows Community College student is 31. We are teaching adults. These students are working members of the community. Eighty-two percent hold jobs, 73% work more than 35 hours a week. Two thirds of our students are supporting dependents.

Our students are practical and highly motivated. They know why they are enrolled--70% are taking classes related to their jobs.

Since TMCC opened its doors in 1971, over 60,000 individuals have attended classes. This figure does not include the number of persons who’ve benefitted through workshops, speaker series, and other services. Each year TMCC directly affects over 12,000 residents of the Reno/Sparks service area.

The education these persons need is directly related to the economic development of Nevada. TMCC students live and work here. Their technical skill and personal improvement directly benefit the community.

National statistics cite that only 20% of the available jobs in this country require baccalaureate or higher degrees. Thirty percent of the jobs are for unskilled workers.

Fifty percent require technical or clerical training.

TMCC and the other community colleges fill that 50%. We’re talking about half the working population.

Our top priority is to provide the training needed by this large--and growing--group.

To accomplish this, we need, first, an improved funding ratio. TMCC, along with Clark County Community College, is currently at the bottom of the list at 26:1 for general classes. Of the 39 colleges in the mountain states, TMCC has the highest student--faculty ratio. We are irrationally deprived of funds needed to support existing programs let alone to develop new training needed by the community. We request a ratio of 22:1, which is competitive to that of the other institutions in the University of Nevada System. Fifty percent of our TMCC funding goes directly into instruction.
Secondly, we need space. Truckee Meadows Community College is the third largest of the mountain state colleges, yet our physical facility is third from the bottom of the list in area. Some programs which could be offered during the day—we have a student demand for them—are limited to evening hours because we have no facilities available during the daytime. The college currently holds courses such as auto body repair, diesel mechanics, and auto painting in various locations throughout town, but these facilities are utilized by others during the normal working day.

Data processing is another example. We don't have space to install an adequate number of terminals for student practice.

Another instance: our Learning Resources Center, or library, provides study space for 40 persons. Forty out of a current enrollment of 8388. The disparity is ludicrous.

Because our student population is composed largely of adults who have been out of the classroom for several years, developmental education is also a top priority. Our developmental math, and English classes are scheduled from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. yet we cannot enroll all the students who request them. Evening developmental math classes invariably fill the first day of registration. As you can see by the ACT scores on the student profile—our students are significantly below the national average in math: 11.7 to 17.3.

For whatever reason, it is undeniably true that many adults lack basic skills in reading and math. But they can learn. The community colleges are the most feasible institutions for this skill building. Once proficient in basic skills, these committed individuals go on to complete their courses of training and improve the labor pool of Nevada. Again—the impact is direct.

With adequate funding, TMCC can also add appropriate training programs to support local industry: an expanded diesel program, food service and hospitality science, computerized drafting, broadcast engineering, data processing, etc. The state's concern for continuing education in engineering will fall flat if local community colleges can not provide the training needed by technicians—the largest group of support employees in any high tech industry.

At TMCC, excellence in education impacts directly on excellence in Nevada business and industry. We affect a large segment of the resident population.

To help the thousands of adults relying on us for quality training and education, we need

1. An improved funding ratio to ensure maximum learning and adequate physical facilities.

2. Expanded developmental program.

3. Funding for training programs in areas most needed by local businesses.
TMCC gives opportunities to the 80% of Nevadans who do not attend universities. Community colleges serve the largest number of taxpayers—these people deserve a return on their money, and Nevada deserves the benefit of well trained employees.