



March 31, 2011

Dr. Milton Glick
Dr. Marc Johnson
President's Office
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV 89557-001

Dear Drs. Glick and Johnson,

I recently learned that the University of Nevada-Reno has announced a drastic budget cut for the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG). While I understand that this is being considered in the context of severe budget cuts from the Legislature, I think it would be a terrible, and expensive, mistake. I write this letter as a long-time member of the faculty at the University of Alaska, where I am part of the Geophysical Institute, a large research institute that bears a number of similarities to NBMG. I am a former President of the American Geophysical Union's Geodesy section, a current member of the US National Committee for IUGG (and designated US national representative to the International Association of Geodesy), and the Chair of the Southern California Earthquake Centers external Advisory Council.

Nevada has a lot in common with my own state of Alaska, with a concentration of mineral and geothermal resources and public safety concerns related to active geologic processes. NBMG also has a lot in common with the Geophysical Institute, the unit within the University of Alaska where I work. NBMG is a research engine, and its scientists conduct research focusing on the economic development, public safety, and other concerns of direct importance to the State of Nevada. As it is here in Alaska, the engine is actually powered more by Federal funds than by state funds. NBMG scientists bring in about \$2 of Federal money for each dollar of state funds, and you should expect to lose future Federal funds in the same ratio. The future UNR budget can be expected to drop by \$3 for every \$1 you cut from NBMG. The external funding NBMG scientists bring in depends on a solid base of funding from the state.

A state like Nevada absolutely must have a healthy state geological survey; without it, who will address geologic resource and hazard issues with the State's interests in mind? NBMG is the State of Nevada's knowledge resource for these problems and opportunities. Federal agencies have their own perspectives and priorities, and given the importance of geologic resources and the hazards posed by earthquakes and other geologic processes, Nevada will suffer for the long-term if it abandons these areas entirely to the Federal government.

Many scientists at NBMG have built nationally or internationally respected research programs, and UNR stands to lose these people if the budget cut stands. If they are not laid off directly, you will lose people due to rapid attrition as your best scientists abandon the sinking ship for more viable and secure jobs elsewhere, taking their knowledge, research capabilities, and external funding elsewhere. What has been built over many years can be destroyed very quickly, even within a single year. I have to emphasize that you are likely to lose people off the top – your best scientists will be in demand elsewhere, if they decide they need to leave because colleagues or research group members they rely upon have lost their jobs or left, or because UNR no longer provides an attractive environment for their research.

I am most familiar with the work of the Nevada Geodetic Laboratory, led by Dr. Geoffrey Blewitt. Dr. Blewitt and his co-workers have been amazingly productive, both in terms of scientific achievements and external funding success. They are one of the most respected and successful research groups in the country, and participate actively in, and lead, national and international programs and activities. I have been impressed for many years by the scope and depth of their activities. Their success has been enhanced by synergy – the scientists in the group work both independently and collaboratively, and achieve more as a group than any of them could by working by themselves or in a smaller group. They are leaders in the study of active faulting in Nevada and elsewhere, contributing directly to hazard assessments and mitigation locally and internationally. Budget cuts that reduced the size of the group, either directly or through some members seeking more secure positions elsewhere, could cost UNR one of their most successful research teams. That would be a serious loss for UNR, although I have no doubt that other universities would be quick to capitalize on your misfortune by hiring away your most productive and respected scientists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Freymueller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Freymueller
Professor of Geophysics
Geophysical Institute
University of Alaska Fairbanks
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