

# WORKforce

## Nevada

### Higher Education & the Workforce

In 2006 a good education is no longer just a way for an individual to get ahead. It is also, and increasingly, the best way a state can get ahead – and therefore a real economic priority. A college degree confers specific, calculable benefits on a state’s citizens: the average lifetime income of an individual with a bachelor’s degree is \$2.1 million, compared to \$1.2 million for those with just a high school diploma. But the benefits realized by the state are just as impressive as those that an individual sees. Not only does a state with a well-educated populace see increased tax revenues from its (better-paid) citizens, it is also able to use the education level of its citizens as a powerful lure for business and industry – a way to build its economy overall.

For that to happen, however, a state must make sure that all of its citizens have access to a college education. Businesses are no longer simply looking for a small, well-educated elite but instead need to be able to draw upon a labor pool that’s both broadly educated and diverse. In fact, a report from the Business-Higher Education Forum, a coalition that includes some of the country’s top corporate CEOs, states that an educated and diverse population is an essential competitive asset in today’s global economy.

In Nevada, the demand for well-educated employees will only increase over the next several years. In the decade leading up to 2012, healthcare occupations will see growth of 47 percent. Teachers will be in demand: over 1,100 new primary and secondary educators will need to be hired each year. Managers will see their ranks swell by 44 percent, with high growth in top jobs, like CEO and general manager; about 24,000 new openings will need to be filled in all. The growth of these sectors is good news for Nevada’s citizens, since wages for jobs in these areas are significantly higher than the average for Nevada in general. But entry into these jobs comes with a price tag: most positions in these fields will require a bachelor’s degree or higher. The question for Nevada and other states is how, in a time of tight budgets, to meet the increasing demands on higher education and thereby meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated economy.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has had workforce issues at the top of its agenda since its creation in the 1950s. In fact, WICHE was launched specifically to address the shortage of workforce-training opportunities in medicine, dentistry, and other professional fields. Today, WICHE offers a slew of undergraduate, graduate, and professional options that help the West’s states educate and train their citizens, building their economies in the process.

### Nevada’s Occupational Outlook

Employment in Nevada (including hourly and salaried jobs and self-employment) is projected to grow by 41 percent from 2002 to 2012, adding over 478,000 new jobs to the state’s economy and growing the workforce from 1,174,930 to 1,653,555. The rate of growth is higher than the 15 percent increase projected for the nation as a whole.

Growth will occur in most sectors of Nevada’s economy, with the largest number of new jobs being generated in lower-paying fields such as retail sales, food preparation and service, and carpentry. However, Nevada’s “top jobs” – those with the strongest employment outlook and high earnings – are all professional positions (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Nevada’s Top Jobs\***

Registered Nurses	Environmental Engineers
Personal Financial Adv.	Database Administrators
Network/Computer Anal.	Loan Officers
Respiratory Therapists	Radiation Therapists
Sales Managers	Pharmacists
Credit Analysts	Computer Sfwr. Engineers

\* Jobs with the strongest employment outlook (2002-12) and high wages.

**Source:** Nevada Department of Employment, Workforce & Rehabilitation.

All of the top jobs listed on Table 1 require considerable education and training. Three (registered nurse, respiratory therapist, radiation therapist) require an associate's degree, while all the rest demand a bachelor's degree or higher.

Nevada will see strong growth in a variety of sectors in the decade leading up to 2012. Two of the state's top jobs – pharmacist and registered nurse – are in the healthcare field. The number of pharmacists will increase by a whopping 72 percent, and the state will need to fill almost 1,400 new positions. The demand for registered nurses will see a 51 percent increase: Healthcare facilities will have to hire over 1,100 R.N.s each year to fill new slots and retirements. And Nevada will see strong competition for those nurses: the top five states needing the largest numbers of nurses are all in the West.

Overall, healthcare will see big increases: more than 19,400 new jobs will be created in a variety of fields, from dentistry to vet med. Physician assistants will see a 51 percent increase in their ranks, with some 200 being hired for new and replacement positions. Occupational therapists will log growth of 52 percent, while physical therapists will experience a 46 percent increase. Nevada will also experience a strong demand for new nutritionists, speech pathologists, and respiratory therapists. One reason for the increase: over a 10th of the state's population is now over 65. In 2003, 11 percent, or over 250,000, of its citizens were retirement age.

Two other essential professionals, managers and teachers, will also see a large number of hires in the decade leading up to 2012, due to new job creation and the need for replacement workers. Some 24,000 new jobs will be created for managers of all types – from CEOs and operations managers to supervisors. Large numbers of teachers at every level from kindergarten through college will be needed. At the primary and secondary levels, more than 11,600 new jobs will be created, with the biggest chunk (over 4,800) slated for elementary school teachers. Over 3,200 new slots in postsecondary education are projected to open up during the decade. In all, some 6,500 hires will have to be made each year to cover all of education's new job openings and retirements.

As Nevada's economy changes, so do the kinds of jobs available to Nevadans. The projections indicate that plenty of jobs will be available for those without formal training beyond high school. However, wages in the sectors hiring those workers – retail sales and food service will be top employers – fall significantly below the statewide average (\$35,090 a year), and many positions don't provide even a living wage. Over the next several years, workers who have the most education and training will have the best opportunity for high-paying jobs in growing sectors. In addition, a number of professions requiring education beyond the bachelor's degree are expected to see moderate to strong growth (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Nevada Professional Employment Projections, 2002-2012**

Profession	Number		% Change	Total Openings*
	2002	2012		
All professions	1,174,930	1,653,555	41%	776,710
Architects	644	1,011	57%	440
Dentists	1,339	1,576	18%	460
Librarians	644	846	31%	360
Occupational Therapists	357	541	52%	230
Optometrists	266	302	36%	110
Pharmacists	1,903	3,281	72%	1,750
Physical Therapists	2,341	3,636	55%	1,295
Physician Assistants	2,341	4,178	78%	1,837
Physicians and Surgeons	971	1,415	46%	540
Podiatrists	59	67	14%	20
Registered Nurses	15,359	23,217	51%	1,107
Veterinarians	431	614	43%	290

\* Includes new jobs and replacements, rounded.

Source: Nevada Workforce Informer.

## NEVADA & WICHE's Student Exchange

In 2002, 44 percent of Nevada's new high school grads enrolled in college — and 23 percent of them went to school out of state, according to WICHE's just-updated Policy Indicators for Higher Education ([www.wiche.edu/Policy/FactBook](http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/FactBook)). One of the most economical ways for them to do that: our Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), which allows students to enroll in out-of-state institutions at a reduced tuition level (150 percent of resident tuition). Over 750 Nevada students enrolled in WUE in 2005, saving almost \$3.5 million and working toward degrees in fields that are essential to Nevada's economy. Some of the most popular fields of study for Nevada's students: education, engineering, biology, business, and political science.

WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) offers students opportunities to train outside of their home state in 14 highly competitive fields: architecture, dentistry, graduate library studies, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, public health, and veterinary medicine. In Nevada, employment projections in all these fields are on the rise (see Table 2). Through PSEP, Nevada students are studying to be veterinarians, optometrists, pharmacists, and physician assistants. In general, at least 60 percent of PSEP students return to their home state to practice.

Nevada students also participate in the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers them the chance to engage in graduate studies and includes 175 distinctive programs in 14 states, such as education, nursing, and business. On the horizon is a distance learning option, NEON (the Northwest Educational Outreach Network), which will provide electronically delivered degree programs in high-demand disciplines, such as a Ph.D. in nursing and a graduate certificate in supply chain management.

## Six Fast-Track Fields

### The Outlook for Nevada & the Nation

From 2002 to 2012, the economy in Nevada and the nation will continue generating jobs for workers at all levels of education and training. But there will be an increasing demand for employees with at least some postsecondary education, preferably a bachelor's degree. Nationwide, during a decade that will witness large numbers of baby boomers moving into retirement, 21.4 million new jobs will be created, an increase of 15 percent. However, in some fields, the increase will be more than triple that. Across the country, competition will be especially stiff for physician assistants, who will see their ranks grow by 49 percent, as well as for physical and occupational therapists (whose fields will experience growth of 35 percent) and pharmacists (30 percent). More than 620,000 new nurses will be needed (an increase of 27 percent) and some 14,500 new veterinarians. Below is a debriefing that focuses on trends in some of Nevada's — and the nation's — fast growing professions.

**Registered Nurses.** Nursing is #2 in terms of growth among occupations requiring some postsecondary education: it will make more new hires in the decade leading up to 2012 than almost any other job in that category. Working in the largest healthcare profession, registered nurses held 15,359 jobs in 2002 in Nevada; that number will grow to 23,217 by 2012, a 51 percent increase. Demand for R.N.s is expected to be high for a number of reasons, including the need to replace experienced nurses who leave the field, especially as the median age of the R.N. population continues to rise; a growing elderly population; and an imbalance between the supply of and demand for qualified R.N.s. Nationally, employment of registered nurses is expected to grow by 27 percent in the decade leading up to 2012. Median annual earnings of registered nurses were \$59,350 in 2004; the top 10 percent earned \$73,550 and up (nationally, that number was \$77,170).

**Pharmacists.** In Nevada, this is the third fastest growing profession among all occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher. Pharmacists held 1,903 jobs in 2002, a number slated to jump to 3,281 in 2012, a 72 percent increase. Competition for pharmacists is expected to be steep over the 2002-12 period due to the increased pharmaceutical needs of a larger and older population. In addition, the number of degrees granted in pharmacy is expected to be lower than the number of job openings created by employment growth and replacement needs. Nationally, the number of pharmacists is expected to grow by 30 percent. Median annual earnings of Nevada's pharmacists in 2004 were \$91,430; the top 10 percent earned \$112,770 and up (nationally, that figure was \$112,530).

**Physician Assistants.** Physician assistants held 304 jobs in 2002; that number is projected to grow by over 50 percent to 459 in 2012. Demand will be strong for P.A.s, particularly in places that have difficulty attracting physicians, such as rural areas and inner city clinics. In addition, physicians and institutions are expected to employ more P.A.s to provide primary care and assist with medical and surgical procedures. Nationally, the number of physician assistants is expected to grow by 49 percent: over 4,000 new physician assistants will be needed each year. Median annual earnings of physician assistants in Nevada were \$59,100 in 2004; the top 10 percent earned \$82,660 and up (nationally, that figure was \$94,840).

**Occupational Therapists.** Occupational therapists will see their numbers grow by 52 percent in the decade leading up to 2012. O.T.s held 357 jobs in 2002 in Nevada; that number is projected to grow to 541 by 2012, a 55 percent increase. The baby boom's movement into middle and old age and the resulting rise in the incidence of heart attack and stroke, as well as age-related disabilities, will increase the demand for therapeutic services. Nationally, the number of occupational therapists is expected to grow by 35 percent. Median annual earnings of occupational therapists in Nevada were \$62,530 in 2004; the top 10 percent earned \$93,760 and up (nationally, that figure was \$83,150).

**Physical Therapists.** This is another fast growing health profession in Nevada. Physical therapists will increase their numbers by 46 percent: they held 971 jobs in 2002, a number that will climb to 1,415 in 2012. Thanks to a rapidly growing elderly population that's particularly vulnerable to chronic conditions requiring therapeutic services — as well as to the use of physical therapists at the workplace, to evaluate worksites, develop exercise programs, and teach safe work habits to employees — the demand for P.T.s will be strong throughout the 2002-12 decade. Nationally, the number of physical therapists is expected to grow by 36 percent. In Nevada, median annual earnings of physical therapists were \$67,000 in 2004; the top 10 percent earned \$92,300 and up (nationally, that number was \$89,830).

**Teachers.** The number of new teaching jobs in Nevada is slated to grow by 42 percent at the K-12 level and 48 percent at the postsecondary level. Primary, secondary and special ed teachers held 27,439 jobs in 2002 in Nevada; that number will grow to 39,082 by 2012. In the decade leading up to 2012, Nevada will also have to find 3,250 new postsecondary teachers for its colleges and universities. In fact, the state's schools will have to hire over 12,000 educators at all levels to cover all openings, including retirements

and separations. Every year, in other words, about 1,000 new and replacement teachers will need to be hired in Nevada. Nationally, the demand for teachers will vary, ranging from 38 percent for postsecondary teachers down to 9 percent for middle school teachers. Median annual earnings were \$34,070 for the state's elementary school teachers in 2004; the top 10 percent earned \$53,390 and up (nationally, that figure was \$68,930).

### The Regional Outlook

Seven of the top 10 states in terms of projected job growth are in the West: Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. In the 15 WICHE states, an additional 5.9 million jobs will be added in the decade leading up to 2012. While California has the greatest numerical growth in the region, with some 270,000 new jobs being created each year, the states seeing the fastest job growth are Nevada (41 percent), Utah (31 percent), Idaho (24 percent), and Arizona and Colorado (23 percent). Most of the region's fastest growing professions are in the health and computer sectors.

### Sources: Workforce Report Data

All information used in the text and tables of this report is available from the Nevada Workforce Informer ([www.nevadaworkforce.com](http://www.nevadaworkforce.com)) and the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov/emp](http://www.bls.gov/emp)).

## WICHE

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WICHE and its 15 member states — Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming — work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.

For more information on WICHE's Student Exchange Programs, contact Margo Schultz at 303-541-0214 or [mschultz@wiche.edu](mailto:mschultz@wiche.edu) or write to:

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