
LAS VEGAS SUN

Nevada State College kicks off \$54 million building project

By [Paul Takahashi](#) ([contact](#)) 

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Nevada State College broke ground today on two new campus buildings, which for the first time in state history will be financed mostly with student fees.

More than 100 people, including Gov. Brian Sandoval, Nevada higher education regents, state legislators and Henderson Mayor Andy Hafen and other city officials, attended the ceremony.

The school is building a new academic building and student center at its main campus in Henderson.

The \$54 million project, slated for completion in fall 2015, is the first capital project for students built since the recession.

“In a few years, we’re going to see a place where the future of Nevada resides,” Sandoval said. “This is part of the evolution of a great college.”

Nevada State College President Bart Patterson called the groundbreaking a historic day for the four-year, public college, which has struggled in recent years to meet the demands of its growing student body.

When it was founded in 2002, Nevada State College had just 177 students, who attended classes in a former vitamin warehouse.

Its enrollment has skyrocketed to nearly 3,400 students, who now have a dedicated campus located at 1125 Nevada State Drive in Henderson.

To accommodate student influx, [the college built a 43,000-square-foot liberal arts and science building in 2008](#) and leased several office buildings in downtown Henderson, creating a satellite campus five miles away from its main campus. But enrollment continued to climb as the demand for trained nurses and teachers grew.

“Increasingly, students have come here notwithstanding these challenges,” Patterson said.

The student center and academic building, which will house the nursing, science and education departments, will triple the size of building space at the main campus. Each building is about 65,000 square feet.

After the buildings are finished, students will have access to new amenities, including a food court, 250-seat auditorium and expanded library.

“I’m just really thrilled for our students,” Patterson said “(The new buildings) will give them the experience they deserve.”

Nevada State College has embarked on an unconventional path to pay for the buildings.

Traditionally, construction of new academic buildings has been the responsibility of the state.

Amid the recession, however, Nevada froze its capital funds, forcing Nevada State College to think creatively about how to finance campus expansions.

“We were at a crossroads,” said Buster Neel, Nevada State College’s senior vice president of finance and administration. “The state was having a real challenge, so we went to the students, and they really stepped up. It’s all because they care about the future of the institution.”

Students will bear the brunt of the cost for the new buildings, paying a little more than half of the \$54 million cost.

The [remaining debt on the new buildings](#) will be paid with existing state money used to lease office space in downtown Henderson — a cost of about \$1.6 million a year. The state is also kicking in \$1.26 million from estate tax funds.

Nevada State College will begin charging a \$150-per-semester building fee, starting in 2015.

UNLV and UNR have levied student fees to pay for student centers in the past, but no Nevada college or university has charged a student fee for new classrooms.

The fee will be applied to students taking more than two courses per semester. Students will pay the fee on top of about \$21 per credit in existing fees for campus improvements.

A campus survey, which had a 25 percent response rate, showed 75 percent of students approved of the fee.

“We wouldn’t have moved forward if two years ago, students hadn’t supported this,” Patterson said.

Students at the groundbreaking ceremony seemed excited about the new buildings but were mixed about the new fee.

“The college needs it,” said 19-year-old sophomore and student body Sen. Karl Falkenstein. “As long as it’s spread evenly, I’m OK with it. We’re still spending less (than other colleges) in tuition.”

Other students were less enthusiastic.

Andrew Page, 26, a former student body senator and president of the chess club, said he opposed the student fee.

“The student fees all add up. I just don’t want students to pay \$150 extra,” Page said, watching as community leaders in hard hats ceremoniously shoveled dirt. “That’s a lot of money that could go to my textbooks.”



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