

BROOKINGS MOUNTAIN WEST: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS, AND THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

The Initiative

The Brookings Institution and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are collaborating to bring Brookings' high-quality, independent and impactful research to the issues facing the dynamic and fast-growing Mountain West region: the states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Every year, Brookings will send scholars from each of its five research programs to spend three weeks at UNLV to conduct research, meet with faculty, and deliver lectures and seminars. The project begins September 8, 2009, with presentations on national and local trends.

The new initiative builds upon the work of Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program, which focuses on helping metropolitan areas like Las Vegas grow in robust, inclusive, and sustainable ways. But Brookings Mountain West will go farther by bringing to the region the perspective of Brookings experts on domestic and international economic policy, foreign policy, and governance.

The Issues

Building on work already done by the Metropolitan Studies Program in its "Mountain Megas" report on the metropolitan areas of the region, the collaboration will focus on the burgeoning population and growing political importance of the region as a whole, including key policy questions surrounding:

- Strategies for growth through innovation:
 - o Human capital issues, including health care and immigration
 - o Poverty and income inequality
- Energy development issues, including:
 - o climate change and conservation
 - o the nexus between energy and water
 - o advancing green technologies
 - o infrastructure issues, including transportation and mass transit
- Governance practices, ranging from state and local to the national and global
- International security and cooperation, ranging from local air bases to local nuclear safety and security challenges.

Why Las Vegas?

Brookings has an institutional interest in understanding the changes facing Las Vegas and the entire Mountain West region. Las Vegas truly is a "world city." Its role as a convention city makes it a critical commercial center, and its water and energy issues and economic issues put it squarely in the middle of global policy questions such as climate change, migration, and the effort to recover from the global financial crisis.

The state needs to generate new, higher-paid, diverse jobs in emerging fields like alternative energy. Las Vegas is projected to be at the center of a significant urban megalopolis in the next 30 years. Work must be done to create high-quality, sustainable, well-designed urban places instead of sprawl. Even if astounding growth projections prove a little high, significant growth is anticipated and must be absorbed and shaped in a healthy way.

The region has a strong need for careful study of regional and metropolitan transportation. Southern Nevada has consolidated service structures that make for interesting models to study and test new ideas. Examples include Clark County, the Clark County School District, the Regional Transportation Commission, the Regional Flood Control District, and the Southern Nevada Water Authority. The city has an increasing number of immigrants, which makes it ripe for new studies. The City of Las Vegas is deeply committed to sustainability issues and is now ranked at #25 on the list of large population green cities. Through the energy and creativity of local business, civic, and government leaders, Las Vegas has been able to accomplish a great deal on its own; however, individual metros (even “megacities”) cannot go it alone at a time of rapid, unsettling change.

Why UNLV?

UNLV already has a wide array of existing research initiatives that complement the interests of Brookings Institution scholars. UNLV’s commitment to serving the needs of the community, state, and region – formally acknowledged in the university’s recent strategic planning process – has been demonstrated for many years in the form of myriad research and outreach projects. In particular, UNLV has research strengths in four areas that will provide rich potential for collaboration with the Brookings Institution: energy innovation, human capital investment, urban sustainability, and building science and urban planning.

UNLV also has active research centers focused on transportation, public lands, business indicators, immigration, and renewable energy – as well as many centers devoted to social and cultural concerns of metropolitan areas. UNLV is part of a single statewide organization of public colleges and universities, including UNR and DRI, thereby expanding the access Brookings will have to faculty in a variety of specialties throughout the state.

The Products

A significant portion of the work of Brookings Mountain West will consist of research, convening, briefs, and commentary on the emergence and prosperity of new urban forms in Nevada, the Intermountain West, nationally, and globally. Scholars from all five Brookings research areas – Metropolitan Policy, Economic Studies, Governance Studies, Foreign Policy, and Global Economy and Development – will each spend three weeks per year in residence at UNLV. Ten have already scheduled their visits. They will conduct research, deliver lectures, hold seminars, and meet with the university’s faculty and community leaders.

Second, Brookings Mountain West will produce top-quality comparative trend data, policy frameworks, and recommendations influenced by and building on Brookings “MetroPolicy” agenda. At least two useful, regionally aimed metro trends reports will be issued:

- A new metro economic-recovery tracking activity, the “MountainMonitor,” that will provide comparative, metro-specific data on the largest dozen or so mountain region metros as they hopefully begin to recover from the current economic crisis.

- An Intermountain West-focused application on the Metro Program's forthcoming "State of the Nation's Metros," a more in-depth cross-sectional survey of demographic, social, and labor force trends in the region's larger metros.

Third, Brookings Mountain West will seek to connect community leaders from Southern Nevada and the Intermountain West to the federal "MetroPolicy" reform network that Brookings and its Metropolitan Policy Program have been constructing at a strategic level.

While the initiative itself will be housed physically at UNLV, Brookings Mountain West will address the full multi-state mountain region and support ongoing work and discourse. In this fashion, the staff will arrange meetings in the other intermountain states and will consider formal and informal ways to bolster partnerships with key institutions and organizations in all of these states. The initiative will tailor its work to regional needs and will communicate its work in concert with these diverse metros.

The Partners

[The Brookings Institution](#) is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., which conducts independent research and provides innovative, practical recommendations to advance public policy. Brookings is proud to be consistently ranked as the most influential, most quoted and most trusted think tank. The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program – the nation's premiere research and policy institution dedicated to promoting the productivity, sustainability, and inclusivity of U.S. metropolitan areas – chronicles the dynamic demographic, economic, social, and cultural forces sweeping the country and interprets what these forces mean for cities and metropolitan areas.

[UNLV](#) is a doctoral-degree-granting institution of 28,000 students and 3,300 faculty and staff. Founded in 1957, the university offers more than 220 undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. UNLV is located on a 332-acre campus in dynamic Southern Nevada and is classified in the category of Research Universities (high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

For more information about the Brookings Mountain West Initiative, please visit:

<http://brookingsmtnwest.unlv.edu>

09/08/09