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UNLV Launches Nevada's First Cannabis Policy Institute

Institute, led by industry expert Riana Durrett, will drive public policy surrounding cannabis legalization and explore related implications for medicine, research, and business.

LAS VEGAS – November 15, 2023 – Cannabis legalization is among the fastest-growing and most watched public policy topics in the nation, and Southern Nevada is an emerging epicenter for the industry with roughly \$1 billion in annual legal cannabis sales.

Despite the industry's rapid national explosion, public policy research and scholarship have lagged. UNLV intends to change that with its new Cannabis Policy Institute (CPI).

The CPI at UNLV will generate thoughtful and reliable cannabis policy and research guidance, and expand education and community engagement opportunities – including microcredentials and executive training. Within the next year, the CPI at UNLV will also launch a panel discussion series and plans to host the nation's first cannabis policy summit.

"There are so many unanswered questions related to cannabis legalization here in Nevada and nationwide, and we believe UNLV – with its vast network of faculty experts and partners – is well-positioned to become a national leader in public policy research and development," said UNLV President Keith E. Whitfield.

Leading the CPI at UNLV is Riana Durrett, J.D., a well-known figure in Nevada's cannabis law and policy space who currently serves as vice chair on the state's Cannabis Compliance Board, teaches cannabis law at William S. Boyd School of Law, and was director of the Nevada Dispensary Association from 2015 to 2020.

"I am excited to work with the president, provost, and our CPI partners to advance cannabis policy discussions, education, compliance, and research implications as the impacts of cannabis legalization continue to unfold and take shape," said Durrett, who joined the university as the institute's director in August 2023.

In addition to Durrett, CPI at UNLV advisory board members include Chris Heavey (executive vice president and provost); Dr. Marc J. Kahn (dean of the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine), Robert Ulmer (dean of the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs), David Hatchett (interim vice president for research), Leah Chan Grinvald (dean of the William S. Boyd School of Law), Andrew Woods (director of the Center for Business and Economic Research), Clark County Commissioner Tick Segerblom, and cannabis cultivation business owner and operator Judah Zakalik.

“Although Nevada has seen significant changes since cannabis was legalized in 2013, I think the biggest changes are yet to come,” said CPI advisory board member and Clark County Commissioner Tick Segerblom.

The CPI at UNLV is committed to communicating its efforts in cannabis policy research and education as they continue to unfold. Learn more at unlv.edu/president/initiatives/cannabis-policy-institute

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