

**Aqua Element, LLC**  
3/4/2016 Interview

Aqua Element, LLC is a **100% woman owned and operated business** and has been serving the Las Vegas area since 2011. UNLV Purchasing and Contracts met with one of the managing partners, Traci Rigano, to discuss the company's background and their commitment to providing UNLV departments with pure safe drinking water. The following is a summary of that interview:

*(Q1) Tell us about your company. How did you get started? What are your annual sales? Staffing levels? What products and/or services do you provide?*

**Aqua Element is a community advocate for pure safe drinking water primarily in the Las Vegas area. They focus on eliminating plastic bottles, reducing carbon emissions and energy reduction. Aqua Element has put together a program for UNLV that accomplishes all of these goals and in most cases saves your departments money.**

**Traci and her business partner, Cindy Woldanski, lived in San Diego for many years. During that time, they worked for a company that represented unique water purification systems. The products were so amazing that in 2011, they jumped at the opportunity to bring Aqua Element to Southern Nevada. They now have a staff of ten (10) including Licensed Plumbers, equipment technicians and expect annual sales will be around \$500,000 this year.**

**Aqua Element's stand-alone water dispensers take city water, place it through a highly effective filtration/purification process, and produce the safest possible drinking water. NO bottles to store or lift, NO BPA and NO running out of water!**

**For more information on Aqua Element, LLC, visit their website at:**

**<http://www.aquaelement.com>**

*(Q2) How did you become familiar with business opportunities with UNLV? Why did you choose UNLV as a potential business partner?*

**Tracy said "In San Diego, we had the opportunity to place hundreds of our units in UCSD, USD and SDSU. All of these universities have an initiative to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic bottles on campus. We knew that UNLV had a similar commitment and approached the Athletic Department first. We are proud to say that our equipment is being used in the Mendenhall Center, Thomas and Mack and in the Wrestling, Tennis and Football training areas. Go Rebels!"**

*Agreement information and supplier contact information can be located on UNLV Purchasing and Contract's campus contracts website:*

**<http://www.unlv.edu/purchasing/agreements6909>**

*(Q3) Regarding the process of becoming a supplier and competing for business, did you find it accommodating? Was UNLV staff helpful and engaged? What are some of the things UNLV did right?*

**According to Traci, UNLV has made the process of becoming a supplier easy and thorough. They receive support from the purchasing staff and work closely with facilities to be sure that the equipment is installed according to code.**

*(Q4) In your opinion, what are the major obstacles for small and disadvantaged businesses in Las Vegas and how can UNLV be a part of the solution?*

**Traci said “Small and disadvantaged business in Las Vegas are often perceived as “too small or inexperienced” to provide great customer service and technical support. That could not be farther from the truth, yet it still remains a challenge to overcome. We are proud to say that some of our clients include SW Gas, Zappos, Switch, Opportunity Village and McCarran Airport. Having clients like this certainly help our credibility and we have wonderful references from all of them.”**

*(Q5) Are you a certified small, woman, or minority owned business? What are the advantages/obstacles with certification requirements for small/disadvantaged business?*

**Aqua Element is a local, woman-owned, small business enterprise. They are in the process of becoming certified and should be fully certified by this summer. Traci thinks certification adds credibility. Many government offices will only recognize a woman-owned business that is certified.**

*(Q6) When the economic climate in Southern Nevada improves, what are some of your business drivers for continuing a relationship with UNLV and what do you expect to be the benefits?*

**Aqua Element will continue to represent the most advanced, safest drinking water solutions and will continue to be budget friendly for UNLV.**

*(Q7) The Nevada System of Higher Education published a Supplier Inclusion statement below. What does it mean to you and how do you think it will impact the business community serving UNLV?*

*“The Nevada System of Higher Education supports equal opportunity for minority owned, women-owned, and other small disadvantaged business concerns (MWDBE) to compete for contracts awarded by NSHE. NSHE also supports efforts to encourage local businesses to compete for NSHE contracts. In some situations, MWDBE and local business concerns may not have the depth or full capability to meet all of the requirements of large contracts. Nevertheless, NSHE supports finding opportunities for such MWDBE and local business concerns to participate as subcontractors or Tier 2 suppliers in large contracts.”*

**For Traci, all small businesses appreciate the opportunity to compete with larger companies. She believes that if a small business can provide the same professionalism, pricing and service as our larger counterparts, we should be given a chance. Aqua Element is very grateful to UNLV for giving them this chance.**

(Q8) Lastly, what do you want the UNLV campus community, your potential customers, to know about your business?

**Traci stated:**

***“Aqua Element sincerely CARES about all our clients. After all, people ingest our products and we are totally committed to the safety of our water and systems. There is not always a lot of thought concerning the selection of a water provider, however, we ask that you allow us to show you our technology and how it can work for your department. You will be amazed!*”**

***Aqua Element is excited to introduce our newest generation of water purification systems that not only REMOVES contaminants, biohazards, etc. but actually REPLACES healthy minerals such as Potassium, Magnesium, Sodium and Calcium, taking the PH to an alkaline level and increasing electrolytes. These additions are crucial to providing healthy water that hydrates like crazy!”***