

Reno calls for change to be able to compete

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette Journal

Nevada must improve its struggling education system and develop a skilled workforce if it wants to attract business and create new opportunities for long-term economic growth and diversity, those at an economic forum hosted by UNR on Wednesday said.

The forum, held as part of the Reno Gazette-Journal's Reno 2020 project, convened a panel of experts that will lead teams charged with formulating action plans for four issues deemed crucial to improving the local economy.

The four areas are education, innovation, green energy and the state's fiscal structure. Each team will present its findings Feb. 2, during the second part of the forum.

"We have a dropout epidemic," said Heath Morrison, Washoe County School District superintendent and leader of the 2020 education team. "The vast majority of Nevadans looking for work today don't have a high school diploma. And by 2020, 50 percent of people looking for work will need education higher than a high school diploma."

Young educated people, as well as a business-friendly environment, are important in developing imaginative, cutting-edge startups that eventually grow as billion-dollar enterprises, said Darik Volpa, Understand.com CEO and leader of the 2020 economic innovation team.

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