

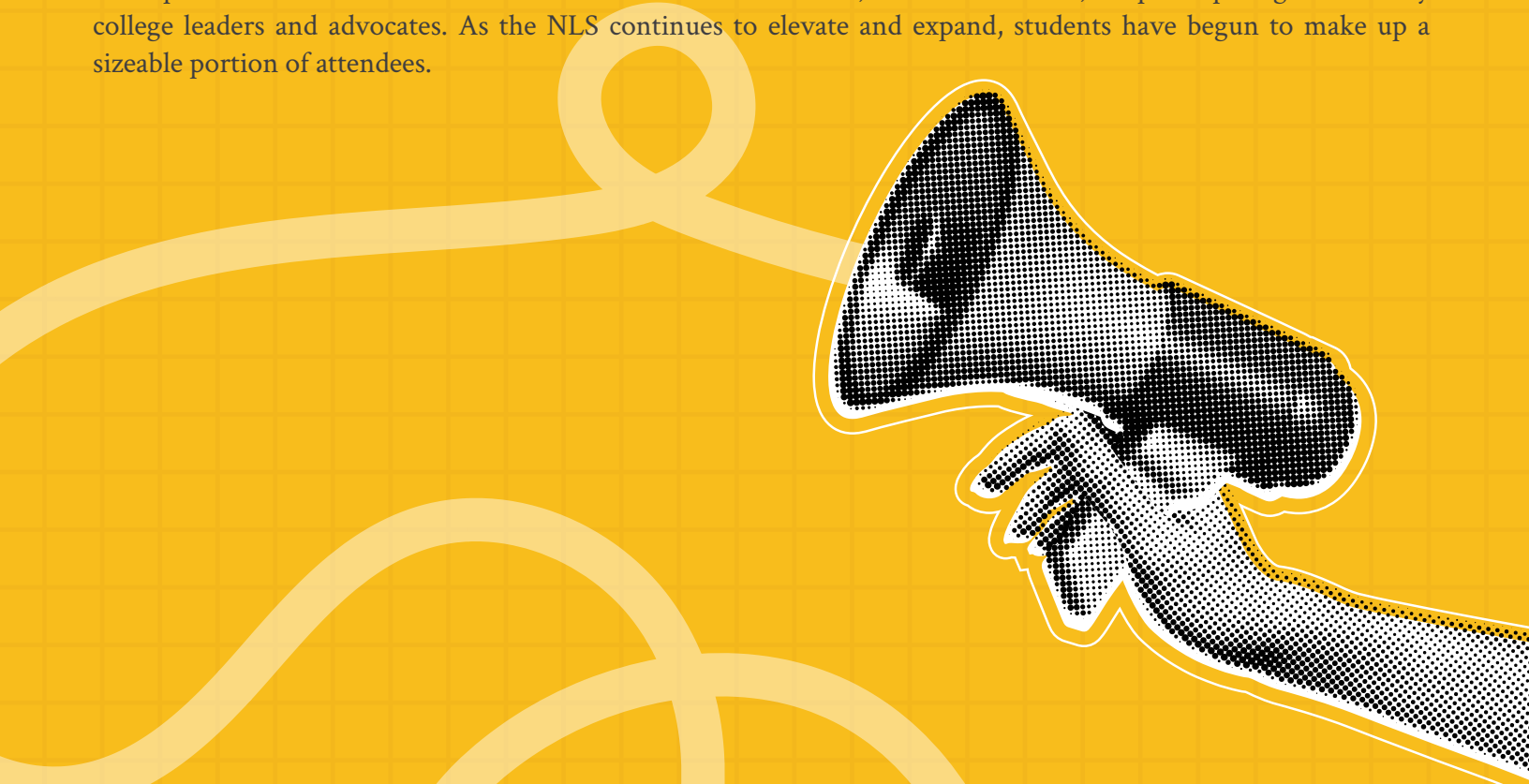
Mikhaelle Pablico's Intro to Advocacy

The College of Southern Nevada student put advocacy into action in Washington, D.C.

By Kali Woods

AMERICAN NOVELIST KEN KESEY ONCE SAID, “YOU DON’T LEAD BY POINTING AND TELLING people some place to go. You lead by going to that place and making a case.” Mikhaelle Pablico, a senior at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) in Las Vegas, was charged with putting those words to the test, as she traveled across the country to advocate for herself and her fellow peers during ACCT’s 2025 National Legislative Summit (NLS).

The annual National Legislative Summit is the premier advocacy event for community college trustees in Washington, D.C. Trustees from around the world get the opportunity to network with each other, hear speeches from leading journalists and political experts, and engage in intimate discussions with their state’s representatives on Capitol Hill. The 2025 NLS was one of the best attended ever, with more than 1,300 participating community college leaders and advocates. As the NLS continues to elevate and expand, students have begun to make up a sizeable portion of attendees.





Mikhaelle Pablico, a thriving project management major in her senior year, was tagged to help represent the College of Southern Nevada at this year's NLS. While pursuing her degree, professors and administrators quickly identified Pablico as a leader among peers, introducing her to opportunities designed to further develop her natural gifts. Pablico is actively

serving as a student senator for CSN's Henderson campus. She serves as a catalyst for change, connecting the dots between the student body and upper administration.

"It has basically opened up my eyes into different ways I can be a leader. It helps me be a good listener," she says. "And it's been really fun honestly [...] As a senator, we do outreach. We try to talk to students directly and ask them what their needs and wants [are]."

As an Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada (ASCSN) senator, Pablico has worked to implement several ideas designed to bolster student success, including a "study snacks" initiative which provides free snacks to students during stressful midterm and final exam periods, as well as convincing CSN to invest in prayer mats for the college's prayer and meditation room. She's also held conversations with administrators after hearing concerns from veterans and international students regarding a reduction in the availability of in-person classes following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We noticed there's an opportunity, so we just brought it up to the department chairs and they were able to help us...even the NSHE, to help [them] recognize that there are changes that need to be made," Pablico says. (The NSHE is the Nevada System of Higher Education.)

While Pablico is relatively new to the role of campus senator, she says the responsibility of the job feels all too familiar.

"Honestly, I feel like advocacy kind of came natural to me," she says. "From a young age [...] I would always have to speak up or say something if I see something and also speak on behalf of those that can't save themselves."

Her position as senator served as a training ground to help her advocate for even greater change on the federal level. As a first-time attendee at the NLS in Washington, D.C., Pablico had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to discuss policy issues with her state's Congressional representatives — Sen. Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-Nev.), Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev. 1st District), and Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.), alongside board members from the NHSE. While she was initially intimidated by the thought of meeting with such high-powered political figures, Pablico said her anxiety melted away as soon as she caught a glance of Nevada paraphernalia.

"It definitely felt like a home away from home, especially stepping into some of their offices," she says. "We see the Nevada stuff, the Welcome

to Las Vegas sign. We see Elvis! Their staff did an amazing job in making us feel welcome."

In preparation for her trip to the Hill, Pablico attended ACCT's Student Trustee Advocacy Academy, which was hosted by Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society President & CEO Lynn Tinchler-Ladner. The session was designed to give students practical tips for advocating for their institutions through interactive activities that mimicked real-life meetings on the Hill. "It was basically to teach us how we could present ourselves and how we could have our voices come across to the Congress [representatives] that we were going to meet," Pablico says.

During the session, students paired up and were given the responsibility to pitch legislative priorities such as the expansion of the Pell Grant and access to childcare facilities on campus, to a practice congressperson. The students were instructed to use statistics to make their case while infusing relatable stories from their own personal experiences to garner empathy. The session left Pablico feeling energized about her upcoming Hill visits. "Talking to them really just felt natural," Pablico says.

The opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate for students would likely not have surfaced if Pablico hadn't made the decision to attend CSN. But prior to enrolling, she admits the stigmas around community colleges caused her to think harder about the decision she was making. Looking back on her years invested in the institution, she made it clear that her experience did not match the negative stereotypes.

"I've been enjoying my time here at community college. I wouldn't talk negatively about it because at the end of the day, it's given a lot of students opportunity [...] It's definitely a very open and non-judgmental feeling every time I do come here," she says.

Pablico's family fully supports her decision to attend community college — her grandmother being one of her biggest supporters along this academic journey. For as long as she can remember, Pablico's grandmother has encouraged her to reach her highest potential. "She is always saying, 'If I am able to get my master's, you should be able to aim higher.' So that's definitely one thing I go by," she says.

With one year left before officially attaining her bachelor's degree, Pablico is already thinking about the future ahead. She said she hopes her degree will give her the leverage needed to enter the project management workforce, and she is currently eyeing opportunities within the IT field. However, after this year's impactful NLS conference experience, she said, for the first time, she is also thinking about pursuing a career in advocacy. "I am not closing myself off to any opportunities out there," Pablico says.



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