

A photograph of a man from behind, walking up a set of metal stairs. He is wearing a plaid shirt, dark pants, and a backpack. The background is a warm, golden sunset. The overall composition has a blue tint.

The College of Southern Nevada Presents

no greater odds

a film by Patrick Wirtz



about community colleges, for community colleges, by a community college

*From the students featured in the film, to the director and crew,
everyone involved in No Greater Odds is a current student, graduate or
faculty/staff member of the College of Southern Nevada.*



the film synopsis

No Greater Odds follows the inspirational stories of five community college students at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). Barbara, Carlos, Jaklin, Monique and Tyrone each struggle with complicated family issues, financial difficulties and other personal obstacles as they seek to better their lives and futures through higher education.

Each of their stories is unique – and yet, theirs are the stories of millions of students who enroll in the more than 1,100 public community colleges around the nation every year. There, they too can find strength, support – and ultimately, success – as a result of the care and concern of the faculty, staff and administration at their institution.

In a time when the nation is looking to its community colleges to educate its future workforce and to make higher education more affordable and accessible, the mission of the community college is more important than ever before.

Told from the perspective of the students, their families, and the faculty, staff and administrators who guide and inspire them along the way, this documentary underscores the important relationship between a college and its community. For learners and leaders alike, it is a reminder of how integral community colleges are in the context of higher education.

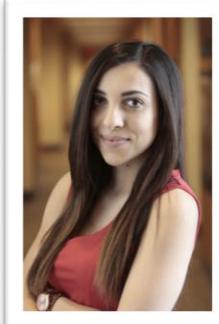
No Greater Odds challenges misconceptions, ignites passion for higher education and inspires audiences to understand how community colleges lead the way with commitment, purpose and a charge to educate future generations. By sharing these stories of struggle and triumph, college students will understand that the way their story ends depends on how it begins – because for them, there are *No Greater Odds*.

meet the cast



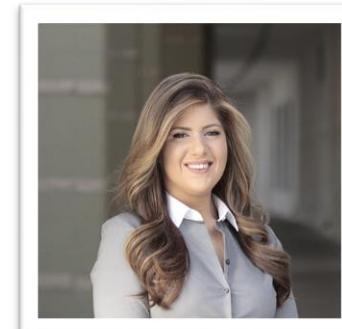
Barbara Ayarza has lived a life filled with challenges. From failed marriages, to health concerns, to being a single mother of six children, she felt like she never deserved a chance at education. After being accepted to the College of Southern Nevada, yet another challenge emerges that makes her realize that she won't be able to go to college after all. She attends the orientation day anyway, knowing that she can't stay but wanting just for one day to have felt like a college student. Who she ends up meeting on that day ultimately changes her college journey – and her life.

Jaklin Guyumjyan had one birthday wish as a child – to move to the United States from Armenia with her family to have a better life. They arrived to the United States full of hope on September 10th, 2001. What happened the next morning not only changes the course of her family, but also that of the entire nation around her – leaving her to struggle to find both her place and her future with a family whose culture is very different from everyone else around her.



Tyrone Foster, a sexual assault victim also diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder Type II, walked out of a college classroom one day and never looked back – breaking a promise to his mother that he would be the first in his family to graduate from college. Twelve years later, he decided to go back to school to become a victim advocate. While facing the challenges of working full-time and battling a mental disorder, his life would be changed – by six words written on a piece of paper.

Carlos Holguin faces family hardships that culminate with the realization that a semester before graduation, he is pursuing a degree that doesn't align with his passion for music. With the encouragement of an instructor, he decides to change his path right before graduation. When an unfortunate turn of events leaves his future career hanging in the balance, the help that comes from unexpected sources ensures Carlos can still make his dreams come true.



Monique Makhlof began working at the age of fifteen after her mother broke her back while on her way to see Monique in her first play. Even while working multiple jobs to try to help her mother and save enough for school, she struggled to make ends meet. Foreclosure, bankruptcy, and family health issues led to days of missed school, threatening to derail Monique's future after graduation...until a conversation – and a visit from faculty and administration at her job – ultimately change the direction of her life.

share our vision

The need is real. The time is now.

Today, only 40% of American adults age 25 or older have earned an associate degree or higher.

By 2025, 60% of the nation's jobs will require at least a 2-year degree or higher.

Of the 8 million or more Americans who will need higher education,
5 million of them will be educated a community college.

But for these 5 million, college may seem out of reach.

Now more than ever, it is up to community colleges to educate these students.
Because for them...there are no greater odds.

Research compiled from U.S. Census Bureau, Lumina Foundation and the American Council on Education.

We believe their stories need to be told.

No Greater Odds is changing both the position and perception of the community college, shedding light on the incredible impact that their people and programs have on their students. This film – shared in colleges, at conferences and film festivals, and with community and political leaders – is changing the landscape of higher education in a time when the nation is looking to the future of affordable and accessible higher education for college students.

No Greater Odds is more than a documentary.

It is a catalyst for change...for our nation, for ourselves, and for our students.

share our vision

The purposes are many.

This film highlights:

- The important, growing function of community colleges in higher education
- The contributions community colleges make to their students and community
- The struggles students face while attending community college
- The impact of faculty, staff, and administration upon student success
- How, with the right programs and people, students can flourish despite their circumstances

The outcomes are meaningful.

- **Recruitment** - *No Greater Odds* will be a valuable student recruitment tool for community colleges nationwide.
- **Advocacy** – To further the cause of - and highlight the need for - additional funding and legislation, advocacy can help continue student success initiatives.
- **Awareness** – By shedding light on current student issues, we can continue to create and develop programs and partnerships to help students achieve their academic goals.
- **Conferences & Film Festivals** – By taking *No Greater Odds* around the nation, we are igniting a conversation that unifies the mission of the community college and highlights the importance of creating opportunities and changing lives.

the national conversation

President Obama noted in his address to the nation in January of 2015:

“For millions of Americans, community colleges are essential pathways to the middle class because they’re local, they’re flexible. They work for people who work full-time. They work for parents who have to raise kids full-time. They work for folks who have gone as far as their skills will take them and want to earn new ones, but don’t have the capacity to just suddenly go study for four years and not work.

Community colleges work for veterans transitioning back into civilian life. Whether you’re the first in your family to go to college, or coming back to school after many years away, community colleges find a place for you. And you can get a great education.”

the national conversation

Who are community college students?

- Average Age: 28
- First Generation to Attend College: 36%
- Single Parents: 17%
- Students with Disabilities: 14%
- One in three community college students have family incomes of less than \$20,000, putting them near or below the poverty line.
- 69% of community college students work while in college, with 33% working 35 or more hours per week. Yet, only 2% of community college students receive any Federal Work Study aid, compared to 25% of students at private four-year colleges.
- 72% of community college students who transfer with an associate's degree complete a bachelor's degree within six years.

Research compiled from the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Center for Education Statistics.

**There are more than 1,100 public community colleges in the United States.
The College of Southern Nevada is one of the largest.**

join our conversation

Who are we talking to?

- **College Students** – to inspire dreams, and make education a reality
- **Faculty** – to remind them of the difference they make in their students' lives
- **Administration** – to encourage additional advocacy on behalf of the colleges they serve
- **Legislators/Activists** – to support community colleges legislatively and financially
- **Partners in Education** – to inspire those who work in and with higher education
- **Donors** – to show how their generous donations and gifts can fuel student success
- **Conference Attendees** – to build conversations about future initiatives for success
- **Film Festivals** – to highlight the struggles and celebrate the success of college students
- **Community** – to empower community engagement in a mutually beneficial relationship

meet the co-creators



James R. McCoy is the Co-Creator and Executive Producer of the acclaimed documentary *No Greater Odds* and currently serves as the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at the College of Southern Nevada. Since joining the institution in 2003, he has served as the Associate Vice President for Academic Success, as Chair and Lead Faculty for the Department of Communication, and is a tenured Communication Professor. James has also taught at several community colleges in California where he taught many different communication courses. Prior to working in academia, he worked in radio broadcasting as a radio morning show host and radio station program director. A highly sought after keynote speaker and presenter, James often talks about the important work that community colleges do in the United States. Additionally, James presents on such topics as leadership, conflict management, team building, strategic enrollment management, student success strategies, and a host of other motivational topics.

Charlene S. Gibson is Co-Creator and Associate Producer of *No Greater Odds*. She currently works as a tenured professor in the Department of Communication and serves as the Faculty Initiatives Coordinator for Achieving the Dream at the College of Southern Nevada. Known as an incredibly passionate, dynamic, and engaging instructor, Charlene challenges her students – known as #TeamGibson – to find their passion and reach their fullest potential through excellent public speaking that opens doors and changes lives. Charlene also shares her passions for public speaking and excellent teaching as a motivational speaker and trainer. Frequently asked to speak to students and train faculty and corporate clients, her inspirational specialties include the art of creating community in the classroom, fostering student engagement and success, creative teaching methods, customer service, relationship building, and of course, *No Greater Odds*. Additionally, Charlene loves sharing her stories of teaching and working overseas in Japan, Germany and the Netherlands while traveling all over Asia and Europe, which she did for eight years before joining the College of Southern Nevada.



meet the producer & director



John C. Aliano is the Producer and one of the Cinematographers for the documentary *No Greater Odds*. He is an experienced filmmaker, instructor and Program Director for the College of Southern Nevada's Videography & Film Program. He is the founder and producer of the annual CSN Short Film Showcase, a compilation of the highest quality CSN student films in a competitive festival. His students have won numerous awards, including five Student Production Emmy Awards in 2015. John has been nominated twice for Emmy Awards and won an Emmy Award for Location Lighting. In 2014, he was honored with the Faculty of the Year award at CSN.

Patrick Wirtz has a background in academia, urban planning, and photography, and entered filmmaking four years ago at the College of Southern Nevada. While working in production on studio films, television commercials, and a feature documentary, Patrick has directed several short films and has produced for other rising directors many shorts which are currently screening at film festivals around the country. *No Greater Odds* is his first major project as director. He is grateful for this experience to use the filmmaker's craft to tell an important story of equal access to education and the opportunities it inspires in individuals. He was nominated for an Emmy for Best Director for *No Greater Odds*.



the film credits

COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN NEVADA PRESENTS A JOHN C. ALIANO PRODUCTION "NO GREATER ODDS"
MONIQUE MAKHLOUF JAKLIN GUYUMJYAN TYRONE FOSTER CARLOS HOLGUIN AND BARBARA AYARZA
NGO COMMITTEE MEMBERS JAMES R. MCCOY CHARLENE S. GIBSON ERIC GARNER MONIQUE MAKHLOUF
RICK MARKS AARON TUTTLE AND RANDY BECKER
MUSIC BY JOHN JACOBSON AND DICK MCGEE PRODUCTION MANAGER LONNIE MAJESTA EDITED BY CHES OWEN
CINEMATOGRAPHERS OMAR MARTINEZ, GEORGE MARIA AND JOHN C. ALIANO
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JAMES R. MCCOY PRODUCER JOHN C. ALIANO ASSOCIATE PRODUCER CHARLENE S. GIBSON DIRECTED BY PATRICK WIRTZ

LANGUAGE: English/Stereo COLOR/NTSC APPROX. 56 Min. 16:9 WIDESCREEN

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for more information

no greater odds Contact Information

Thank you for contacting us. Join the *No Greater Odds* movement!

It is our mission to create lasting, impactful change for community colleges and the future of our nation through screenings and professional development for students, faculty and staff.

Should you have further questions or need additional information, visit nogreaterodds.com and click on the 'Contact Us' link, or call/email us directly. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Follow the *No Greater Odds* movement on social media:

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