



WICHE & COLORADO

Partnering for Over Six Decades

WICHE



ACCESS • COLLABORATION • INNOVATION

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success. Colorado has been a member of WICHE since 1953.

Benefits to Colorado

- ▶ Tens of thousands of students from Colorado have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE's Student Exchange Program. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Colorado students have saved \$273.1 million since 1988, when the program was founded.
- ▶ Colorado has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Colorado has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: Colorado's Return on Investment

- ▶ In 2017-18 Colorado, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in **\$29.8 million** through WICHE and spent \$149,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **177-fold return on investment**.
- ▶ In the last five years, Colorado students' savings from WUE alone have added up to **\$100.3 million**, yielding a **143-fold return** on the state's investment in WICHE.

WICHE's Student Exchange & Related Programs

Colorado is active in WICHE's **Student Exchange Program**, which includes the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2017-18 Colorado's students and families saved **\$26.3 million**. Colorado saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Colorado students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Colorado's borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2017-18, 3,010 students from Colorado were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving more than \$24.2 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$8,000. In the last 10 years, students have saved **\$175.9 million**.

Colorado benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Colorado's institutions can choose how many out-of-state slots to offer and in which areas, allowing them to make the best use of their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There's a workforce benefit for the state, too, as students often stay in Colorado after graduating. In 2017-18 Colorado received 4,341 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Colorado has sent 354 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with 23 students currently studying optometry. Historically, 85 percent of PSEP students return to Colorado to pursue their professional careers. In addition, in 2017-18 the state received 123 students and some \$3.5 million in support fees from other Western states.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Colorado's postgraduates also enroll in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to 435 high-quality programs at 60 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, resource-management, and healthcare fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2017-18 Colorado sent 110 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 434.

Interstate Passport is a program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education based on learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It includes learning outcomes for nine knowledge and skill areas developed by faculty at institutions in multiple states as well as an academic

progress tracking system for Passport transfer students designed by registrars and institutional researchers. The goal of the Interstate Passport is to eliminate transfer students’ unnecessary repetition of learning previously achieved.

WICHE’s Added Value

Colorado gains added value from WICHE’s programs in policy, workforce development, technology, mental health, and other areas.

WICHE’s 9th edition of *Knocking at the College Door* high school graduate projections, released in December 2016 (and updated in September 2017 with additional data), describes how the nation and many states have entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates through about 2025—with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations—before entering a period of fewer high school graduates related to a recent “baby bust.” The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but less so based on trends with White youth and more due to a projected 20 percent increase of Hispanic high school graduates through 2024 and then decrease by about the same amount between 2025 and 2032.

There is an abundance of information on knocking.wiche.edu, including projections of high school graduates for Alaska and a state profile, which indicates that:

- ▶ Colorado is projected to produce 58,000 high school graduates per year, on average, between school years 2012 and 2032. The total number of graduates in Colorado will increase by about 19% by 2025, and then decline about 8% by 2032.
- ▶ Non-White public high school graduates are currently about 36% of all of Colorado’s public high school graduates, and will increase to 41% of the total in 2025, before falling back slightly to 38% in 2032.

Policy & Workforce Development. Colorado has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision-making at the state level. In conjunction with the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California, WICHE

was commissioned by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) to conduct an audit and analysis of equity policies in the state. The Equity in Excellence project assisted state leaders with the implementation of Colorado’s education reform agenda by providing detailed information about current policy and practice in an effort to help achieve the goals laid out in the state’s master plan and make those policies equitable for all students.

In 2016, WICHE worked closely with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) as a thought partner and consultant on its Close the Gap initiative, which has at its core the goal to close the attainment gap by at least half by 2025. As part of this collaboration, WICHE staff led a comprehensive planning and execution process for the initiative, supported planning infrastructure, worked with CDHE senior leadership to refocus efforts in key areas, and provided leadership and guidance on outreach efforts. This work continued through FY 2017 and expand its focus to include keeping college affordable and better serving adult students.

Regional Academic Leadership Initiatives. Colorado State University, Colorado State University-Pueblo, and Metropolitan State University of Denver are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum** (the Forum). Their official representatives are the chief academic leaders of the four-year institutions and their related system and state agencies, who address regional higher education issues, and engage in resource-sharing. The **Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders** (the Alliance) brings academic leaders of community colleges and technical schools and systems together with state governing and coordinating boards associated with two-year institutions to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. The Colorado Community College System office and its 13 community college campuses are members, as is Aims Community College.

Technology. Several Colorado colleges and universities are active participants in the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)**, the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. WCET is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations regarding the role of technology and innovation in higher education. Our growing membership includes more than 350 institutions, state and system-wide higher education agencies, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in nearly all U.S. states and many Canadian provinces. WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. Key WCET activities include an annual meeting, leadership summits, national webcasts, and email list-based discussions among members. Major topics of interest to the WCET membership include student success, managing e-learning, faculty success, emerging technologies, and evolving policy issues. Colorado Community

Figure 1. Colorado Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2017	
Student Savings	
WUE	\$24,213,405
PSEP	\$407,675
WRGP	\$1,727,440
Total Student Savings	\$26,348,520
Revenue to CO Institutions (PSEP)	
TOTAL	\$29,836,870



As a Colorado resident, I figured I would have to move to another state to become an optometrist, because there is no optometry school in the state. WICHE's PSEP allowed me to attend my top-choice school in Southern California. WICHE changed my life – and my mother's! She also benefited from WICHE's program when she went to Pacific University's College of Optometry years ago. Thank you, Colorado, for allowing my mother and me to pursue our dreams of becoming optometrists! We truly could not have done it without you!"

– Shelby, Colorado resident, Class of 2019,

Southern California College of Optometry at Marshall B. Ketchum University,
Photo, l-r: Shelby, Von Miller (Denver Broncos linebacker and founder of "Von's Vision"),
and Dr. Tricia Brenner, O.D. (Shelby's mother)

Colleges Online E-learning Quality Assurance Manual (2004), CU Online's Freedom (2008), Regis University's Passport to Course Development (2011), Colorado Technical University's intellipath™ for MBA prep (2014) and CTU Mobile (2016) won the WCET Outstanding Work (WOW) award, which recognizes effective and innovative uses of technology to address specific needs in higher education.

Mental Health. Colorado has been the home office location for WICHE and its mental health program since the late 1950s, although initially the program was located within the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Utah. WICHE has been actively engaged in Colorado for several years supporting needs assessment, planning efforts for the statewide crisis response system, and behavioral health workforce development. The Mental Health Program's activities in Colorado over the past year include the following projects:

- ▶ Development of a comprehensive suicide-prevention strategy for veterans and their families residing in rural areas in partnership with the Veterans Administration Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research Education Clinical Center.
- ▶ Updates to the Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Rural Primary Care and associated patient management tools as well as to localize the tool for efficient use in Colorado, funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
- ▶ A study of behavioral health funding in Colorado, including the state agencies providing services and the services clients receive, funded by the Colorado Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting.
- ▶ The Mental Health Program is currently creating a toolkit for advocates to use to improve school-based mental health and substance misuse services for students. This project is funded by Mental Health Colorado.
- ▶ The Mental Health Program is developing the methodology for a study to assess the community-based behavioral health service array for children, youth, and young adults with behavioral health challenges in Colorado. This project is for the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health and is funded by a federal System of Care Expansion and Sustainability Grant.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that makes distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and makes it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The effort initially was funded by \$3.2 million in grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is now supported by fees paid by institutions. The initiative is administered by the country's four regional higher education compacts – the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) – and overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states, and better resolution of student complaints. Colorado was among the first WICHE states to become a member of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

Other Initiatives. Colorado School of Mines, The Colorado College, and the University of Northern Colorado participate in the **Master Property Program (MPP)**, which helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes more than 160 campuses with total insured values of \$93.4 billion. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer **MHECare**, a new health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans. The University of Colorado System participates along with Metropolitan State University of Denver. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of **MHECTech** to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase off competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs on a range of hardware and software products and services.



“WRGP made it possible for me to attend one of the most prestigious academic and clinical audiology training programs in the United States. Audiology has been a passion of mine, and I knew that once I completed my undergraduate training that I wanted to continue advancing my knowledge and career opportunities. WRGP enabled me to pay in-state tuition, thereby opening my academic program options. Without it, I wouldn’t have been able to attend the University of Washington! Thank you, WRGP, for supporting students and promoting academic success!”

— Shanece, Colorado resident, Class of 2016,
University of Washington,
Clinical Doctorate of Audiology
(Now serving as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Medical
Service Corps, in the Occupational Audiology Department
at U.S. Naval Hospital, Yokosuka, Japan.)

Colorado & WICHE’s Leadership

The **WICHE Commission**, with three commissioners from each state, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Colorado’s commissioner is: Antwan Jefferson, clinical assistant professor, University of Colorado Denver; two appointments are pending.



Antwan Jefferson

WICHE also seeks assistance and advice from policymakers, educators, administrators, and legislators. WICHE’s **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**, composed of legislator-members from each state—including Rep. Janet Buckner and Sen. Kevin Priola—has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep WICHE’s Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and advises staff on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serve the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff

The WICHE Commission includes three gubernatorial selected representatives from each member: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

WICHE and its staff are headquartered in Boulder, Colo., and operate out of the State Higher Education Policy Center, which WICHE owns with the State Higher Education Executive Officers association and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Staff leadership includes:

David Longanecker, president

Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET

John Lopez, special assistant to the president and chief administrative office, and director, W-SARA

Demarée Michelau, vice president, policy analysis and research

Jere Mock, vice president, programs and services

Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health

Jeremy Simon, director of strategic communications

How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at wiche.edu or contact 303.541.0200.

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