Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 3, 2015
8:00 – 9:00 am
Calypso
Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Christopher Cabaldon (CA), chair
Dave Buhler (UT), vice chair

Susan Anderson (AK)
Chris Bustamante (AZ)
Committee chair (CA)
Joe Garcia (CO)
Sharon Hart (CNMI)
David Lassner (HI)
Tony Fernandez (ID)
Franke Wilmer (MT)
Mark Hagerott (ND)
Barbara Damron (NM)
Vic Redding (NV)
Ryan Deckert (OR)
Robert Burns (SD)
Committee vice chair (UT)
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA)
Karla Leach (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Christopher Cabaldon, committee chair

Staff:
Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis
Brian Prescott, director of policy research
Laura Ewing, administrative manager
Patrick Lane, MLDE project manager
Sarah Ohle Leibrandt, project coordinator
Christina Sedney, project coordinator

Action Item  
Approval of the May 11, 2015 Issue Analysis and Research Committee meeting minutes 4-3

Information Items:

WICHE’s Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange

Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates

Benchmarks: WICHE Region 2015

Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West 2015-16
Discussion Item:
Legislative Activity in the West

- Policy Insights. Targeted Recovery: Recapping 2015 Higher Education Legislative Activity in the West
- Legislative Advisory Committee Annual Meeting – What We Heard

Other business

Adjournment
Chair Cabaldon (CA) convened the Issue Analysis and Research Committee meeting on May 11, 2015, at 10:55 am. Demarée Michelau called roll, and a quorum was established.

**ACTION ITEM**
Approval of the Issue Analysis and Research Committee meeting minutes of November 10, 2014

Chair Cabaldon asked committee members to review THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2014, COMMITTEE MEETING and then asked for a motion to approve. Commissioner Burns moved for approval, which was seconded by Commissioner Wilmer. The minutes were approved with two abstentions, from Commissioner Anderson and Commissioner Damron, who were not present at the November 2014 meeting.

**ACTION ITEM**
Discussion and Approval of the FY 2016 Workplan Sections Pertaining to the Policy Analysis and Research Unit’s Activities

Discussion of the FY 2016 workplan was moved up on the agenda in order to provide better context for discussion of the proposed projects. As the workplan is core to WICHE’s mission, Demarée Michelau and Brian Prescott described the Policy Analysis & Research Unit’s previously commissioner-approved projects for which staff is seeking funding, in order of priority.

First, Prescott explained that a concept paper related to the project “Hitting the Ground Running: Leveraging Work-based Learning to Improve Educational Outcomes and Meet Workforce Demands” has been under review by interested parties, with mixed reviews to this point. WICHE now needs to see how the concept as originally conceived fits into the current funding climate and policy landscape and revise it in order to shop it around to additional potential funders. Commissioners Anderson and Skogen asked Prescott to clarify the current status of the project. Prescott explained that the original funder that expressed interest is now uncertain, so WICHE needs to find other alternatives. Chair Cabaldon emphasized that even without immediate funding, approval of the idea is still something the committee needs to consider so that WICHE can “hit the ground running” when resources eventually become available. This prompted Commissioner Garcia to ask how WICHE transitions from one grant to another and ensures consistent funding for projects and staff. Prescott and Michelau used the Knocking at the College Door, Adult College Completion Network (ACCN), and College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) programs as different examples and approaches of how to engage existing and prospective funders to keep the work afloat. The College Board and ACT have traditionally supported the Knocking work...
and will be asked to continue to do so in the future. In the case of ACCN, WICHE is working with Lumina to submit an extension at an appropriate time. Since 2014-15 was the last official year of the CACG program, it will be up to officials in participating states whether they want to continue in WICHE’s consortium during the carryover year.

Next, Michelau explained that the recidivism project has been under discussion for several years and had somewhat fallen as a priority, largely due to ongoing difficulties with the targeted funder. Another meeting with the foundation’s project officer is scheduled for May 18. If funding is secured, the Policy Unit would partner with WICHE’s Mental Health unit.

Moving on, Prescott explained that through the “Streamlining Implementation of Outcomes-Based Funding Models” prospective project, WICHE will try to create a meeting of the minds regarding effective implementation of performance funding systems. Commissioner Damron asked if WICHE communicated or collaborated with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) regarding this topic. Prescott responded that NCSL would likely be engaged in the work in some way, should funding become available.

Michelau briefly described the Serving Student Soldiers of the West project and asked for some guidance as how to best make it a reality. Commissioner Leach commented that there have been a number of new initiatives related to veterans education at the state and national levels that are worthy of investigation. Commissioner Skogen asked if the project’s focus was active military members or veterans. Michelau responded that both were under consideration and the project needs to be aligned in such a way to ensure that the concerns and needs of both populations are being met. Skogen suggested narrowing the focus since the two groups are quite different. An exclusive focus on the veteran student population would open up the possibility of working with groups like the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other organizations. Commissioner Burns asked if this project initially came about because of residency and tuition issues. Commissioner Leach clarified that it resulted from attempts to align state policies with federal laws. Commissioner Wilmer noted the preponderance of best practices that already exist, including a list of the best institutions for veteran students. She further commented that a new study outlining how states and institutions can do better with what already exists in relation to veterans education would be of great value. Commissioner Garcia also commented that the Post 9/11 GI Bill presents additional opportunities to inform the work.

Chair Cabaldon once again stressed that going through both “New Directions” and “Potential Future Projects” in the larger context of the workplan will help to focus future efforts, avoid conflicts, and help prioritize what has been proposed and approved. The purpose of the workplan discussion is to help the Policy Analysis and Research Unit prioritize certain projects, enable them to go in different directions, or even fall off the “New Directions” list altogether. The ultimate goal of the workplan discussion is to consider staffing, resources, and chance of success in an effort to help the unit prioritize its work.

The committee next addressed items in the “Potential Future Projects” section of the workplan.

- Ideas Proposed from the Survey of Commissioners. What does the IAR Committee consider important based on the survey results of all commissioners? Student demographic changes in the West? Federal engagement? Commissioner Anderson suggested a link to the “minority-majority” project that has already been proposed.
- The Impact of Dual and Concurrent Enrollment on Student Success in Postsecondary Education. There are always questions and concerns regarding the quality and effectiveness of dual credit programs, and detailed analysis needs to be done. Attention to a renewed effort on dual and concurrent enrollment is a timely issue where WICHE’s expertise could be helpful.
- Changing Direction 2.0. Have already had early but productive conversations about a new look at states’ efforts to address ATFA (appropriations, tuition, and financial aid) finance policies, perhaps with an emphasis on the role of residency. Prescott stated this proposed project would likely be among the next to come back to the committee as an action item.
- Informing Career and Technical Education and Economic Development Programs to Meet State Workforce Demands.
- Assessing the State Landscape on State Policy and Student Learning Outcomes. Michelau stated that the policy unit is still looking for the right niche for this project. Commissioner Damron expressed her desire to keep this issue on the radar, as it is a pressing issue in New Mexico.
• Strategies for Improving the Delivery of Remedial and Developmental Education Policies and Practices. Commissioner Damron stressed the need to investigate how to improve remediation in New Mexico and other states.

• Addressing Workforce Needs with the Emerging Majority-Minority. Prescott stated this was another issue that has been under consideration for a long time. Commissioner Anderson stated that the project fits nicely with the “Impact of Western Demographic Changes on Student Success and Services” issue identified in the recent Survey of Commissioners. Commissioner Damron also identified this as a pressing issue for states like New Mexico that already have a “majority-minority” population.

Commissioner Cabaldon asked for a motion for approval of the workplan with the amendment that items of lower priority in the “New Directions” section would be shaded. Commissioner Burns moved TO APPROVE THE WORKPLAN and Commissioner Leach seconded. The motion was adopted.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of a Proposed Project: The Implementation of the Common Core State Standards and Assessments: Finding Solutions to Cross-State Challenges (Expansion)

Michelau provided some project background by summarizing a Gates-funded meeting that WICHE held in 2014 during which Western states discussed the implementation of common academic standards and assessments, particularly in relation to how students move across state lines. Four areas of challenges were identified: data and reporting, admissions, readiness, and communications. Following the meeting, admissions was dropped as a focus area because this issue thus far is mostly limited to Colorado.

Michelau asked the committee for permission to approach Gates and other funders, if necessary, to support expansion of this work. Commissioner Garcia expressed his support of the idea, but also his concerns about how fluid the topic seems to be and how states keep changing their approach. Commissioner Kohl-Welles noted the considerable controversy and backlash against the standards in most states, including Washington. She further noted that resistance is coming from the far left and far right and that the majority of teachers in her state do not want the high-stakes testing that goes along with the standards. Commissioner Wilmer agreed that there is a major teacher backlash and that the issue is going to become even more politicized in light of the upcoming presidential election. She stated that if WICHE can address these concerns, clear up misinformation, and alleviate the tension around the standards, this project would be a significant contribution. David Longanecker noted that WICHE possesses the unique capacity to help guide this particular discussion and build energy around the Smarter Balanced consortium and assessments in general. He additionally noted that the West has not pushed back on the standards as much as some other regions have, and this creates a further opportunity for WICHE to establish the network and facilitate conversations between postsecondary and K-12 stakeholders. Chair Cabaldon urged caution and argued for a concentration on the cross-state challenges. WICHE cannot allow this project to come across as a Common Core State Standards (CCSS) promotion. Instead, states need to move beyond the rhetoric and implement reciprocity agreements and other strategies. Commissioner Burns asked if the project will address the lack of uniformity that exists from state to state. Longanecker answered that WICHE can help “translate” the debate across the region and help everyone understand the variation between state approaches.

Commissioner Skogen suggested changing the name and focusing exclusively on the second part – the cross-state challenges. Commissioner Anderson suggested referring to “cross-state opportunities” instead of “challenges” to further remove any negative connotations related to the standards, and also suggested eliminating reference to the CCSS in particular by retitling the project as “Cross-State Opportunities Related to Improving Common Academic Standards.”

Commissioner Burns wondered how WICHE will know if this project succeeds in fostering a national conversation. Longanecker suggested looking at the SARA project as an example of how WICHE molded the discussion and moved the state authorization agenda forward.

Commissioner Garcia moved TO APPROVE THE PROJECT. Commissioner Damron seconded. The motion was adopted unanimously.


**ACTION ITEM**

Approval of a Proposed Project: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and WICHE Initiative (Fueling the Race 2.0)

Michelau provided background on a previous CAEL study that showed prior learning assessment (PLA) students were more likely to complete a degree. She then suggested the time has come to revisit this research. Towards this end, Lumina approached CAEL and WICHE to partner and launch a “Fueling the Race 2.0” that includes looking at the return on investment, and if the landscape has changed in the intervening years since the report was released. Initial funding opportunities to support this project might have dwindled, but it is still a valid and important opportunity for WICHE and the advancement of the adult learning agenda. Commissioner Garcia stated that he was wholly supportive and that further investigation was needed to address the concerns of provosts or institutional leaders. Commissioner Burns agreed that more validation would be valuable.

Commissioner Burns moved TO APPROVE THE PROJECT. Commissioner Bustamante seconded. The motion was adopted unanimously.

The meeting was recessed at 12:10 pm and reconvened at 5:15 pm by Chair Cabaldon.

Commissioner Burns moved TO APPROVE THE FY 2016 WORKPLAN. Commissioner Leach seconded and suggested an amendment to “shade” the lower priority items for future reconsideration, and committee members agreed before seconding the motion. The FY 2016 workplan was unanimously approved.

Michelau reported that Christina Sedney has been hired as project coordinator on the ACCN project, replacing Patrick Lane, who became project manager of the MDLE project.

Prescott announced the release of the latest *Policy Insights* brief, which reported on WICHE’s annual survey of published tuition and fees amounts.

Next, Prescott discussed the initial results of a new survey that sought to gather data on the amount of net tuition revenue contributed by resident and non-resident students, as well as to capture their number within the overall student body. He shared a two-page summary of the preliminary data, noting there are substantial gaps in the data, and reported that the policy unit will continue to work on an analysis of the responses to be shared at a later date.

As there was no other business, Chair Cabaldon adjourned the IAR Committee at 5:45 pm.