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. Idaho has been a member of WICHE since 1953.

Benefits to Idaho

- Tens of thousands of students from Idaho have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE’s Student Exchange Program, saving millions of dollars, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Idaho students and their families have saved more than $159.3 million since 1988, when Idaho began participating in the program.
- Idaho has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- Idaho has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: Idaho’s Return on Investment

- In 2016-17 Idaho, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in over $16.1 million through WICHE and spent $145,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 112-fold return on investment.
- In the last five years, Idaho students’ savings from WUE alone have added up to $57.2 million, yielding an 84-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs

Idaho is active in two of three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2016-17 Idaho’s students and families saved over $16.1 million. Idaho saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Idaho students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Idaho’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2016-17, 1,789 students from Idaho were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $14.9 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $8,664. In the last 10 years, students have saved $91.5 million.

Idaho benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Idaho’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 Idaho after graduating. In 2016-17 Idaho received 1,932 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Idaho sent 850 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) in past years. In addition, in 2016-17 the state received four students and $52,775 in support fees from other Western states.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Idaho’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to some 450 high-quality, distinctive programs at 61 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, and resource-management fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2016-17 Idaho sent 79 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 62.

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

One of WICHE’s most widely known publications is the *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates* series, which for almost 40 years has provided strategic data about how high school graduates are likely to change in the years ahead. The 9th edition of *Knocking at the College Door*, released in December 2016, describes how the nation has entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates, with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations. After about 2025, the nation and most states will produce fewer high school graduates than in recent years, due to a recent “baby bust”. The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but it will be less impacted by the contraction of White youth and more influenced by 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 the publication and other reports, projections data, interactive data dashboards, recorded webinars and presentations, and Idaho’s state profile, which indicates that:

- Idaho is projected to produce 21,000 high school graduates per year, on average, between school years 2012 and 2032. Idaho will experience rapid increase in the number of high school graduates through 2026 — about 6,000 more graduates by 2026 — and then decline about 10% by 2032.
- Non-White public high school graduates are currently about 18% of all of Idaho’s public high school graduates and will increase to 26% of the total by 2032. The number of Hispanic and Black public high school students is projected to almost double.

Policy & Workforce Development. Idaho has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. In addition, WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues. Former WICHE President David Longanecker testified before the Idaho Legislature’s Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee in early 2016 on higher education policy issues and key benchmarks related to Idaho. WICHE stays connected with Idaho on pressing issues by sponsoring staff members from the Office of the State Board of Education to attend grant-supported meetings such as the State Financial Aid Design Studio and College and Career Readiness, Common Academic Standards, and Assessments: Finding Solutions to Cross-State Challenges meetings.

Idaho was one of four original states participating in the Gates-funded Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange (MLDE) pilot project, which attempts to enable a more comprehensive regional view of the creation of human capital and its flow among multiple states by exchanging data across K-12 education, postsecondary education, and the workforce. WICHE held one of its working group sessions in Boise, which allowed a larger number of Idaho officials to attend and participate. The success of that pilot led Gates to fund a second phase in which the MLDE project will expand to other states.

The Adult College Completion (ACC) Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, was an 800-member learning network that united organizations and agencies working to increase college completion by adults with prior college credits but no degree. Activities included an annual workshop, a webinar series, publications, a listserv, and other resources. The ACC Network and WICHE became national leaders in the area of adult learners and continue to be an important resource to those who strive to better serve non-traditional students.

The State Higher Education Policy Database (SHEPD) is WICHE’s online searchable database. It provides state and national policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, and education consumers with an inventory of state-level policies and resources in key issue areas related to access and success in higher education. It contains a blog and an electronic SHEPD alert distribution list to keep subscribers current on important updates. A related resource is the Policy Publications Clearinghouse, a depository of publications, reports, and briefs related to higher education.

**Figure 1. Idaho Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Savings</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WUE</td>
<td>$14,961,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRGP</td>
<td>$1,174,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,136,494</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue to ID</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions (PSEP)</td>
<td>$52,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,189,269</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, Boise State University, Idaho State University, and the University of Idaho are members of the Western Academic Leadership Forum (the Forum), 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. North Idaho College and the College of Southern Idaho are members.

**Technology.** Several Idaho 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.

**Mental Health.** The state of Idaho behavioral health system has been systematically moving transformation forward across the state. WICHE played a role early in the evolution of the effort, through completing a comprehensive and participatory process of evaluating the existing system and collaboratively identifying recommendations for improvement. Idaho has utilized the WICHE-developed Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Rural Primary Care Settings to strengthen primary care-behavioral health integration. WICHE has also conducted an evaluation of gaps in behavioral health services for adult probationers and parolees as part of the Idaho Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a partnership between Corrections and Behavioral Health.

**State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).** SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make 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. Idaho was among the first WICHE states to become a member of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

**Other Initiatives.** Another initiative, the Master Property Program (MPP), 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 $106 million. The College of Idaho is a member institution. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer MHECare, a health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of MHECtech to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase hardware and software products and services from competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs.

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**“WRGP has made it financially possible for me to obtain my graduate studies from a highly respected institution in the field of healthcare informatics. I’m learning from some of the best professionals in the field, and I hope to contribute to the field of nursing informatics in my current location. This opportunity has already helped me advance in my nursing career. WRGP gives students the opportunity to choose the best programs in their field and get their graduate education for an affordable price.”**

– Tatiane, Idaho resident, Class of 2017, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Healthcare Informatics

After completing my undergraduate degree at Boise State University, I was really looking forward to attending a graduate school where I could expand upon my knowledge and gain more credibility. The greatest potential roadblock I faced was paying for tuition. Fortunately, WRGP significantly reduced the cost and I was able to enroll in Utah State’s management information systems program for my master’s. USU’s program is a perfect fit for me, and I am very grateful for WICHE’s WRGP!”

– Promise, Idaho resident, Class of 2016, Utah State University, Management Information Systems
Idaho & WICHE’s Leadership

The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each state, molds the organization’s mission and sets its priorities. Idaho’s commissioners are J. Anthony Fernandez, president, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston; Matt Freeman, executive director, Office of the State Board of Education, Boise; and Julie VanOrden, state representative, Pingree.

J. Anthony Fernandez  Matt Freeman  Julie VanOrden

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. Wendy Horman, Sen. Dean Mortimer and Rep. Ilana Rubel – 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 serves the LAC, by informing its members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff

The WICHE Commission’s 16 members include representatives from 15 Western states – 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 (the various entities can decide to participate), Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

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

Staff leadership includes:

Joseph A. Garcia, president
Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET
John Lopez, special assistant to the president and chief administrative officer, 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 www.wiche.edu or contact President Joseph A. Garcia at 303.541.0201.

June 2017

“Idaho resident, Class of 2016, Eastern Washington University, Masters in Speech Language Pathology

“I live in North Idaho and studied speech-language pathology at Eastern Washington University (EWU) in Spokane. I am married with a young child, and my husband’s academic job required that we not leave the North Idaho/Eastern Washington area. The cost of out-of-state tuition for two-year programs at the two nearby schools looked prohibitive, but once I realized I could compete for a tuition reduction through WICHE’s WRGP program, I applied to EWU. I am now back in Idaho working at the local nonprofit hospital where I completed my internship. EWU’s program is first-rate, and the skills and education I obtained prepared me well, academically and clinically. Now I am able to bring the most up-to-date, evidence-based practice to the rural community I love. I am grateful for the support.”

– Jeanne, Idaho resident, Class of 2016, Eastern Washington University, Masters in Speech Language Pathology

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