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. North Dakota has been a member of WICHE since 1984.

Benefits to North Dakota

- Thousands of students from North Dakota 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, North Dakota students and their families have saved more than $35.3 million since 1988, when the state joined the program.
- North Dakota has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- North Dakota has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: North Dakota’s Return on Investment

- In 2016-17 North Dakota, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some $3.1 million through WICHE and spent $145,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 22-fold return on investment.
- In the last five years, North Dakota students’ savings from WUE alone have totaled more than $6.3 million, yielding a 9-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs

North Dakota is active in all three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2016-17 North Dakota’s students and families saved over $2.7 million. North Dakota saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. North Dakota students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond North Dakota’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2016-17, 462 students from North Dakota were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $1.6 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $3,518. In the last 10 years, students have saved over $12.6 million.

North Dakota benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. North Dakota’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 North Dakota after graduating. In 2016-17 North Dakota received 2,083 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. North Dakota has sent 434 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including dentistry, optometry, and veterinary medicine. In addition, in 2016-17 the state received 19 students and $377,800 in support fees from other Western states.

Western Regional Graduate Program. North Dakota’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 North Dakota sent 25 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 27.

**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**

North Dakota 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](http://knocking.wiche.edu), including the publication and other reports, projections data, interactive data dashboards, recorded webinars and presentations, and North Dakota’s state profile, which indicates that:

- North Dakota is currently producing about 7,400 high school graduates per year, but is predicted to have rapid increase throughout the projected years, increasing to about 9,800 by 2025 and then to 12,000 by 2032.
- Non-White public high school graduates are currently about 12% of all North Dakota public high school graduates and are projected to become 32% of the total by 2032. The very strong increases predicted for high school graduates is indicated by recent strong growth among younger students, and could change depending on what unfolds with North Dakota’s energy industry.

**Policy & Workforce Development.** North Dakota has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues, including the state’s workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio.

WICHE staffers have worked with North Dakota in a variety of areas. Former WICHE President David Longanecker testified before the Legislature on performance-funding activities around the country and opportunities in this area for the state.

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

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**Figure 1. North Dakota Savings and Revenue through WICHE in 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student Savings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Revenue to ND Institutions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WUE</strong> $1,625,465</td>
<td><strong>PSEP</strong> $377,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSEP</strong> $799,109</td>
<td><strong>Total Savings &amp; Revenue</strong> $3,174,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WRGP</strong> $371,750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong> $2,796,324</td>
<td><strong>Total Savings &amp; Revenue</strong> $3,174,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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“I am currently studying veterinary medicine at Colorado State University through WICHE’s PSEP. There is no veterinary school in my home state of North Dakota, so going out-of-state was my only option to achieve my dream of becoming a large animal veterinarian. That said, going to veterinary school as a nonresident is financially overwhelming. PSEP made my education at one of the top veterinary colleges in the United States very affordable! My plan after graduation is to come back to North Dakota and practice large animal medicine. I encourage legislators to continue supporting this wonderful program, for it has allowed me to follow my lifelong goal – and help my state – which is in need of large animal practitioners.”

– Shannon, North Dakota resident, Class of 2019, Colorado State University, Veterinary Medicine
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 policy 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.

Additionally, Mayville State University, Minot State University, the University of North Dakota, and Valley City State University 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. Williston State College is a member.

Technology. Several North Dakota 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. WCET’s 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, adaptive learning and its innovative pilots across the nation, the implications of accessibility across campus, interesting statewide technology collaborations, evolving policy issues, and the high school to higher education transition.

Mental Health. WICHE has worked with the Area Health Education Centers in North Dakota around improving community providers’ capacities to meet the needs of Veterans, Guard, and Reserve military and their families. In April, WICHE participated in training co-sponsored by the South Dakota and Nebraska AHECs to build community partnerships to serve our Veterans.

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

“With rising education costs and the difficulties of finding federal loans, I am glad I found out about North Dakota’s WICHE partnership. I’m grateful for the Professional Student Exchange Program because it has helped me reach my goal of becoming an optometrist. Without it, I would not have been able to afford optometry school. I encourage our legislators to continue funding this vital program that brings well-qualified optometrists back to our state!”  
– Ryan, North Dakota resident, Class of 2018, Midwestern University, Glendale, Arizona College of Optometry
institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states and better resolution of student complaints. North Dakota was among the first WICHE/MHEC states to become a member of SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

North Dakota & WICHE’s Leadership
The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization’s mission and sets its priorities. North Dakota’s commissioners are: Mark Hagerott, chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck; Ray Holmberg, senator, North Dakota State Senate, Grand Forks; Kari Reichert, vice president, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), and member, North Dakota State Board of Education, Bismarck.

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 Senator Holmberg, Representative Bob Martinson, and Representative Mark Sanford from North Dakota – has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep the commission’s Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and advises on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serves the LAC, informing members about emerging Western policy issues.

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 association 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