



COLORADO & WICHE

Working Together for Over a Half Century

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Western Interstate
Commission for Higher
Education

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Since 1953 Colorado has been a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a 15-state commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success.

In the five-plus decades since Colorado joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- ▶ 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 over \$157 million** since 1988, when the program was founded. (See "Doing the Math," below, for Colorado's return on investment.)
- ▶ 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.

WICHE and Colorado have shared a remarkably fruitful history. But their prospects for the future are even more exciting.

WICHE's Student Exchange

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 2011-12 Colorado's students and families saved over **\$16.9 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, **saving on 33,443 annual tuition bills**. In 2011-12, 2,312 students from Colorado are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving more than \$15.5 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings

Doing the Math: Colorado's Return on Investment

In 2011-12 Colorado, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in more than **\$21.6 million** through WICHE and spent \$125,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **172-fold return on investment**.

In the last 5 years, Colorado savings from WUE alone have topped **\$74.6 million**, yielding a **121-fold return** on the state's investment in WICHE.

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amounted to \$6,737. In the last dozen years, students have saved **over \$137.5 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 2011-12 Colorado received 2,912 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Colorado has sent **319 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with 26 students currently studying optometry. In addition, in 2011-12 the state received 177 students in seven professional schools and some \$4.8 million in support fees from other Western states. Historically, some 71 percent of PSEP students return to Colorado to pursue their professional careers.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Colorado's postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to over 250 high-quality, distinctive programs ("distinctive" meaning that they're offered at only four or fewer institutions in the WICHE region) at 47 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 2011-12 Colorado sent 67 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 210.

Internet Course Exchange (ICE). Regis University is a member of WICHE's newest exchange, ICE, an alliance of member institutions and systems with a set of policies, procedures, and support systems for sharing distance-delivered courses among two- and four-year institutions in the 15-state WICHE region.

The Colorado Community Colleges and the Colorado School of Mines are partners in a new ICE initiative, the **North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO)**. Funded by a grant from Next Generation Learning Challenges, NANSLO is adding a powerful new component to online science courses: students will have access to a remotely located science lab and the ability to control remote instrumentation, allowing them to perform experiments, practice scientific observation, and conduct data analysis, as students in classroom-based courses do.

WICHE's Added Value

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

Policy & Workforce Development. Colorado has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. WICHE experts often work with the state on such vital issues as the state's workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio between grants, loans, and scholarships, as well as between merit- and need-based aid. WICHE cosponsored a meeting in Denver with the College Board to encourage state leaders to become involved in increasing college graduation rates. WICHE President David Longanecker worked with the Higher Education Coordinating Board on unique challenges facing Colorado higher education and on possible opportunities for future policy to address these challenges.

WICHE was commissioned by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) to conduct a comprehensive **evaluation of the College Opportunity Fund (COF)** legislation and its implementation. The evaluation was required under the legislation and included an analysis of enrollment patterns before and after COF's implementation, along with interviews and focus groups with key architects of the policy and with institutional officers in financial aid, admissions, and registrar's offices. WICHE presented its results to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and to the institutions' presidents.

Colorado is one of four Western states participating in the **Adult College Completion Network** (Nevada, North Dakota, and South Dakota are the others). The ACC Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, is a nationwide collaborative learning network that shares promising

Figure 1. Colorado Savings & Revenues through WICHE, 2011

Student Savings	
WUE	\$15,576,191
PSEP	\$395,000
WRGP	\$896,874
Total Student Savings	\$16,868,065
Revenue to CO Institutions (PSEP)	
TOTAL	\$21,680,283

WORKING TOGETHER *for* OVER a HALF CENTURY

“WRGP enabled me to participate in one of the only graduate-level rehabilitation counseling programs in the country that really engages students with deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) issues. For this I feel very fortunate; it has helped me grow as a deaf individual both inside and outside of the classroom. Students who are themselves deaf/HOH or have an interest in working with this population will greatly benefit from similar opportunities. Such unique resources are scarce in some areas of the country.”

— Jesse, Colorado resident,
Class of 2011, Rehabilitation Counseling: Deafness, Western Oregon University

strategies among institutions, organizations, state agencies, and others working to increase completion rates for adults with prior college credit. The network offers a listerv and webinars on issues related to adult completion, and an annual meeting of large-scale projects working in this area. Colorado was also chosen for an earlier, related Lumina-funded project: *Non-traditional No More*. WICHE worked with state leaders to identify the “**ready adult**” population – those who have almost enough credits to graduate but who have not yet returned to college – and help them earn their degrees. Over two years the state received \$65,000 and technical assistance.

The state was also a member of the **Western Consortium for Accelerated Learning Opportunities**, funded by the Department of Education and designed to build capacity among the Western states to better serve students, principally low-income and underrepresented students, with **advanced placement** courses and tests. Colorado was allotted \$442,000 for online advanced placement enrollment, teacher training, test-fee reimbursement for low-income students, and other work. Low-income student participation increased, as indicated by advanced placement test-fee reimbursements to them, which climbed by over 230 percent within four years. WICHE also helped convene a state roundtable focused on accelerated learning.

WICHE’s Lumina-funded project *Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid* promoted informed decision making and the alignment of higher education **appropriations, tuition, and financial aid** policy by state legislators, to improve student access and success. WICHE sent copies of the project’s eight policy briefs to all members of the Colorado Legislature.

Colorado also participated in another Lumina project, *Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems*, which seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their **articulation and transfer** programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions, focusing on strategies that increase access to and success in higher education.

Colorado attended a 2009 meeting organized by WICHE and the Sullivan Alliance aimed at improving the production of graduates in **high-demand health-related fields**. The state also participated in a 2008 Gates-funded meeting that brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 WICHE states for discussions around linking data internally and with other states.

Colorado State University, Colorado State University-Pueblo, and Metropolitan State College are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum**, whose members address regional higher education issues and engage in resource sharing. The 2011 Forum meeting was held in Fort Collins. A new WICHE initiative, the **Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders**, will bring 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 the 13 community college campuses are members.

Technology. Several Colorado colleges and universities are active participants in the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)**, a membership cooperative that accelerates the adoption of effective practices and policies to advance excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education. Denver was the host city for the 2011 WCET annual conference, a four-day event that drew some 400 attendees from across the country.

WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. WCET provides access to peers, colleagues, common interest groups, experts, and decision makers; communications tools that enable members to stay informed about developments affecting technology-enabled teaching and learning; and information about key developments affecting e-learning providers, such as new federal rules pertaining to distance education. WCET also manages multi-institutional projects, including one aimed at adult online learners and another

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at large-scale student data aggregation and predictive analytics to improve student outcomes.

Mental Health. A nucleus for researching mental health policy and a provider of technical assistance in such areas as service innovation, system reform, workforce development, program evaluation, and other areas, WICHE's **Mental Health Program** is another well-used resource. The program completed a comprehensive behavioral health workforce study, funded by the Colorado Health Foundation. It also supported a community-based training initiative for health and behavioral health providers to enhance their ability to identify and serve the needs of returning service members and their families. Additionally, WICHE is partnering with Mental Health America of Colorado to improve awareness of mental health with college and university student services and support staff. Two Colorado higher education campuses participated in a research study funded by the National Institute for Mental Health that focused on campus mental health and the effects of mental health first aid training for campus residence life staff.

Other Initiatives. Colorado College participates 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 50 member institutions with total insured values of \$78.9 billion. It has generated some \$65.4 million in savings for the participating institutions while expanding their insurance coverage.

Colorado & WICHE's Leadership

In 2011 Colorado Lieutenant Governor Joseph Garcia, who also serves as the executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, chaired the **WICHE Commission**, whose members mold the organization's mission and set its priorities. As immediate past chair and a member of the Executive Committee, Garcia continues to shape WICHE's direction. Colorado's other two commissioners are: D. Rico Munn, partner, Baker Hostetler, Denver; and Dene Kay Thomas, president, Fort Lewis College, Durango.



Joseph Garcia



Dene Kay Thomas



D. Rico Munn

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 Representative Tom Massey, Poncha Springs, and Senator John Morse, Colorado Springs – 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 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** includes 45 members from 15 Western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

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:

David Longanecker, president

Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program

Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis

Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services

Dennis Mohatt, director, Mental Health Program, and vice president, behavioral health

Brian Prescott, director of policy research

Pat Shea, director, Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, WICHE ICE, and Western Academic Leadership Forum

Ellen Wagner, executive director, WCET

How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at www.wiche.edu or contact President David Longanecker at 303.541.0201.

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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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