



MONTANA & WICHE

Working Together for Over a Half Century

WICHE

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Western Interstate
Commission for Higher
Education

www.wiche.edu

Since 1952 Montana 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 Montana joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- ▶ Tens of thousands of students from Montana 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, Montana students have saved **more than \$86.4 million on over 26,000 annual tuition bills** since 1988, when the program was founded. (See “Doing the Math,” below, for Montana’s return on investment.)
- ▶ Montana has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Montana has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

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

WICHE’s Student Exchange

Montana 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 2011-12 Montana’s students and families saved some **\$8.3 million**. Montana saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Montana students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Montana’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988, **saving on 26,034 annual**

Doing the Math: Montana’s Return on Investment

In 2011-12 Montana, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some **\$8.3 million** through WICHE and spent \$125,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **65-fold return on investment**.

In the last 5 years, Montana savings from WUE alone have totaled over **\$28 million**, yielding a **45-fold return** on the state’s investment in WICHE.

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"I am so grateful to have received help from WICHE's PSEP so that I could attend medical school at the University of Arizona–Phoenix to become a physician. I will soon enter a residency program in internal medicine, likely to be followed by a fellowship in oncology. After my fellowship I look forward to returning to Montana and caring for patients."

- Marisa, Montana resident, Class of 2011, University of Arizona, College of Medicine

tuition bills. In 2011-12, 1,273 students from Montana are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving \$5.6 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$4,528. In the last dozen years, students have saved **\$66 million**.

Montana benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Montana'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 Montana after graduating. In 2011-12 Montana received 2,097 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Montana has sent some **1,474 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including dentistry, medicine, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, podiatry, and veterinary medicine. Historically, half of PSEP students return to Montana to pursue their professional careers.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Montana's students also enroll in graduate and certificate 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 Montana sent 35 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 45.

Internet Course Exchange (ICE). Montana State University (MSU), Bozeman, Montana Tech of the University of Montana, and the Montana University System are members 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.

MSU Bozeman and MSU Great Falls Community College are partners in an exciting new ICE initiative, the **North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO)**. Funded by a grant from Next Generation Learning Challenges, an initiative working to improve U.S. college readiness and completion, especially among low-income individuals, NANSLO's consortium of institutions in the Western U.S. and Canada is adding a powerful new component to online courses in biology, chemistry, and physics: 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

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

Policy & Workforce Development. Montana 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. In addition, 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 between grants, loans, and scholarships, as well as between merit- and need-based aid. Montanans also keep current on pressing policy issues developing all over the nation through WICHE's extensive network.

Figure 1. Montana Savings & Revenues through WICHE, 2011

Student Savings	
WUE	\$5,764,046
PSEP	\$2,072,001
WRGP	\$468,516
Total Student Savings	\$8,304,563
Revenue to MT Institutions (PSEP)	
TOTAL	\$8,347,096

WORKING TOGETHER *for* OVER a HALF CENTURY

“Montana does not have a veterinary school, and out-of-state tuition is typically \$30K more than in-state. Without WICHE funding I may not have been able to attend vet school. If I had had to take out student loans, I would have finished with \$250K in debt. I cannot express how thankful I am that WICHE has PSEP, and I fully support its continued funding. Once finished I plan on doing an internship and a residency in equine medicine. Then I’ll return to Montana to pursue my career and raise my family.”

- Nicole, Montana resident,
Class of 2012, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

In 2010 WICHE staff participated in a conference at the Burton K. Wheeler Center in Bozeman on educational policy and practice, introducing the keynote speaker and engaging in dialogue with key state officials. In 2008 staff delivered an invited presentation on demographic change and growing racial/ethnic inequalities at the “Reach Higher, Montana” conference in Billings. Staff has also consulted with the Montana University System’s director of transferability initiatives to identify next steps and possible funding opportunities concerning a multistate effort to create a way of transferring a set of core general education courses as a block to institutions in the involved states.

Montana participated in a Gates-funded meeting in 2008 that brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 of the WICHE states for discussions around linking data internally and with other states. A central topic of conversation was how to address the challenges to **data sharing** presented by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The state also participated in a 2009 meeting organized by WICHE and the Sullivan Alliance aimed at improving the production of graduates in **high-demand health-related fields**, especially among those from underrepresented backgrounds. Another major meeting was the **Western Summit on Workforce Certification and Higher Education**, held in response to the national demand for more highly skilled workers in a host of fields, from healthcare to high tech. Participants explored how states might use a workforce certification system – which would allow business and higher education to communicate with a common language about workforce demand and supply – to better prepare individuals for productive careers and strengthen their economies.

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 Montana Legislature.

Montana 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.

Additionally, the Montana University System, MSU Bozeman, MSU Northern, and the University of Montana are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum**, whose members address regional higher education issues and engage in resource sharing. 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 Montana University System, University of Montana College of Technology, Flathead Valley Community College, and six other Montana institutions are members.

Technology. Several Montana 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. University of Montana and Montana State University administrators have held leadership positions within WCET, contributing ideas and direction to the organization’s services and programs ensuring their relevance and value to their own institutions and the higher education community at large.

WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful adoption of 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

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informed about developments affecting e-learning providers, such as new federal rules pertaining to distance education. WCET also manages multi-institutional projects, one aimed at adult online learners and another on 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 did a report for Montana on the prevalence of serious mental illness, helping to gauge the need for services so the state can develop a solid behavioral health system. It's currently working on planning a community-based training for health and behavioral health providers to enhance their ability to identify and serve the needs of returning service members and their families.

Other Initiatives. The **Master Property Program (MPP)**, helps institutions in the West 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.

Montana & WICHE's Leadership

The **WICHE Commission**, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization's mission and set its priorities. Montana's commissioners are: Clayton Christian, commissioner of higher education-elect and CEO, Stewart Title, Missoula; Kim Gillan, state senator, Billings; and Sheila Stearns, commission of higher education, Helena.

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 Montana's

Sen. Gillan and Sen. Bob Lake, Hamilton – 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 Programs

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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