



# NORTH DAKOTA & WICHE

## Working Together for Over 25 Years

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Western Interstate  
Commission for Higher  
Education

[www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)

Since 1984 North Dakota 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 two-plus decades since North Dakota joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- ▶ 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 over \$29 million** since 1988, when the state joined the program. (See "Doing the Math," below, for North Dakota's return on investment.)
- ▶ 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.

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

### WICHE's Student Exchange

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 2011-12 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, **saving on 9,299 annual tuition bills**. In 2011-12, 394 students from North Dakota are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent

### Doing the Math: North Dakota's Return on Investment

In 2011-12 North Dakota, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some **\$2.9 million** through WICHE and spent \$125,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **22-fold return on investment**.

In the last 5 years, North Dakota savings from WUE alone total more than **\$6.5 million**, yielding a **10-fold return** on the state's investment in WICHE.

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of resident tuition), saving more than \$1.8 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$4,591. In the last dozen years, students have saved over **\$21 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 2011-12 North Dakota received 1,876 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** North Dakota has sent **379 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.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** North Dakota’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 North Dakota sent 15 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving nine.

**Internet Course Exchange (ICE).** Bismarck State College and the North Dakota University System Online 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.

North Dakota is one of five partner states participating in the **Interstate Passport Initiative**, which seeks to improve graduation rates, shorten time to degree, and save students money by addressing the two-year to four-year institution transfer problem at an interstate level. The two-year pilot project will focus on forging general education core transfer agreements based on learning outcomes between 28 institutions, including North Dakota State College of Science, University of North Dakota, Valley City State University, Williston State College and seven other state institutions.

## WICHE’s Added Value

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

**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 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.

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

North Dakota participated in WICHE’s **College Access Challenge Grant (CACG)** Network, a federally funded formula grant program designed to increase the number

**Figure 1. North Dakota Savings & Revenues through WICHE, 2011**

| Student Savings              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| WUE                          | \$1,809,000        |
| PSEP                         | \$740,609          |
| WRGP                         | \$200,793          |
| <b>Total Student Savings</b> | <b>\$2,750,402</b> |
| Revenue to ND                |                    |
| Institutions (PSEP)          | \$212,631          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>\$2,963,033</b> |

## WORKING TOGETHER *for* OVER 25 YEARS

“I recently graduated from Pacific University’s optometry program and returned to practice in a small community in my home state of North Dakota. Many of my peers who didn’t receive WICHE support were forced to stay in urban areas, where salaries are higher, so that they can afford to pay off their student loans; some of them owe staggering amounts – almost \$200,000! I am deeply grateful to WICHE’s PSEP and the State of North Dakota. WICHE support gave me the luxury of establishing my rural practice. “

– Candace Paul Hoff, O.D., North Dakota resident,  
Class of 2008, Pacific University, College of Optometry

of low-income students who enroll and succeed in college. The network provides a forum for developing, implementing, and maintaining state CACG efforts, with states sharing best practices and lessons learned and receiving current evidence-based research.

WICHE staffers have worked with North Dakota in a variety of areas. WICHE President David Longanecker testified before the Legislature on **performance-funding** activities around the country and opportunities in this area for the state, while Director of Policy Analysis Demi Michelau spoke at a North Dakota Adult Learners Council meeting on the importance of serving adult learners and how to do it more effectively. In 2008 WICHE hosted several state legislators to facilitate a discussion around how a legislative interim committee might structure its work to more intentionally engage its state’s Higher Education Roundtable to align institutions’ activities with current and future state workforce needs.

North Dakota 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**, with a particular focus on students from underrepresented backgrounds. The state also participated in a Gates-funded meeting in 2008, which brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 of the WICHE states for discussions around linking data internally and with other states. Another meeting was the **Western Summit on Workforce Certification and Higher Education** for policymakers in the West, held in response to the national demand for more highly skilled workers in a host of fields, from healthcare to high tech.

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 North Dakota Legislature.

North Dakota 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, four institutions and the North Dakota University System 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**, 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. The North Dakota University System, Williston State College, Bismarck State College, Dakota College–Bottineau, Lake Region State College, and North Dakota State College of Science are members.

**Technology.** Several North Dakota 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. The North Dakota Distance Learning Consortium tapped WCET’s expertise on federal rules impacting e-learning to keep its institutions informed; several North Dakota institutions have substantial out-of-state enrollments in their online programs and could be required to meet these new rules. WCET also consulted with officials of the North Dakota University System regarding how the services of NDUS Online compared to e-learning consortia in other states.

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

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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, 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 has been working with the chancellor of higher education to look for ways to improve campus mental health services. North Dakota schools were also included 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. The program also assisted the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division in planning related to behavioral health workforce development.

**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 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.

## North Dakota & WICHE's Leadership

The **WICHE Commission**, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization's mission and set its priorities. North Dakota's commissioners are: Duaine Espegard, member, State Board of Higher Education, Grand Forks; Bill Goetz, chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck; and David E. Nething, state senator, Jamestown.



Duaine Espegard



William Goetz



David Nething

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 Nething; Senator Ray Holmberg, Grand Fork; and Representative Bob Martinson, Bismarck – 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 & Western Academic Leadership Forum

**Ellen Wagner**, executive director, WCET

## How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at [www.wiche.edu](http://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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