



WYOMING & WICHE

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Western Interstate
Commission for Higher
Education

www.wiche.edu

Since 1953 Wyoming 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 Wyoming joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- ▶ Tens of thousands of students from Wyoming 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, **Wyoming students and their families have saved \$98 million** since 1988, when the program was founded. (See “Doing the Math,” below, for Wyoming’s return on investment.)
- ▶ Wyoming has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Wyoming has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

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

WICHE’s Student Exchange

Wyoming 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 Wyoming’s students and families saved over **\$8.9 million**. Wyoming saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Wyoming students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Wyoming’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988, **saving on 26,091 annual**

Doing the Math: Wyoming’s Return on Investment

In 2011-12 Wyoming, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some **\$8.9 million** through WICHE and spent \$125,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **70-fold return on investment**.

In the last 5 years, Wyoming savings from WUE alone have totaled over **\$25.8 million**, yielding a **41-fold return** on the state’s investment in WICHE.

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tuition bills. In 2011-12, 1,226 students from Wyoming are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving more than \$6.2 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$5,063. In the last dozen years, students have saved over **\$72 million.**

Wyoming benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Wyoming’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 Wyoming after graduating. In 2011-12 Wyoming received 1,698 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Wyoming has sent **1,891 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, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, and veterinary medicine.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Wyoming’s graduates also enroll in degree 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 Wyoming sent 42 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving two.

Internet Course Exchange (ICE). The University of Wyoming 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.

Laramie County Community College and the University of Wyoming 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

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

Policy & Workforce Development. Wyoming 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. Wyoming decision makers also keep current on pressing policy issues developing all over the nation through WICHE’s extensive network.

Wyoming participated in WICHE’s **College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Consortium**, a federally funded formula grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who enroll and succeed in college. WICHE offered assistance with grant development and management, program implementation and evaluation, and ongoing expert consultation and guidance. Wyoming was also a member of the CACG Network, which 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.

Student Savings	
WUE	\$6,207,532
PSEP	\$2,132,259
WRGP	\$562,220
Total Student Savings	\$8,902,011
Revenue to WY Institutions (PSEP)	
TOTAL	\$8,909,011

WORKING TOGETHER *for* OVER a HALF CENTURY

“As a Wyoming resident, getting admitted to medical school is challenging because we have no in-state program. WICHE’s PSEP provided me with options! The University of North Dakota’s School of Medicine has given me a strong medical education, as well as a rich cultural and personal experience. I will graduate in May and plan to pursue a residency in orthopedic surgery. The value of PSEP is immeasurable, and I would advocate that the State of Wyoming continue to support students through WICHE’s PSEP. Without it, I might not have become the future physician I am today.”

- Jared, Wyoming resident, Class of 2011,
University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Wyoming 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 Wyoming Legislature.

Wyoming 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**

“I’ve always wanted to be a veterinarian, and growing up on a small ranch in Wyoming reinforced my aspirations. But I didn’t have access to a veterinary school in Wyoming, so I would be paying out-of-state tuition at any institution I attended. Then I learned about PSEP, where I would pay in-state tuition, thanks to the support of my home state. Instead of facing tremendous student debt, I can now focus on my schooling without the looming dread of hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans to pay back! Thank you, Wyoming, for helping me pursue my dream of becoming a large animal veterinarian!”

- Pam, Wyoming resident, Class of 2013,
Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

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 University of Wyoming is a member 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. Laramie County Community College is a member.

Technology. Several Wyoming 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. A number of University of Wyoming and Wyoming community college administrators have held leadership positions within WCET, contributing ideas and direction to the organization and ensuring the relevance and value of WCET’s services and programs to the higher education community.

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, one aimed at adult online learners and another on large-scale student data aggregation and predictive analytics to improve student outcomes.

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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 is assisting in evaluating existing mental health services in Wyoming and the state's readiness to implement evidence-based practices and report on the results.

Other Initiatives. Wyoming was chosen to participate in the WICHE-managed **State Scholars Initiative (SSI)**, a national business/education partnership effort working to increase the number of students who take a rigorous curriculum in high school; its program was funded by a grant of \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

The University of Wyoming participates in another initiative, 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.

Wyoming & WICHE's Leadership

In 2010 Thomas Buchanan, president of the University of Wyoming, chaired the **WICHE Commission**, whose members mold the organization's mission and set its priorities. Wyoming's two other commissioners are Sam Krone, state representative, Cody; and Karla Leach, president, Western Wyoming Community College, Rock Springs.



Thomas Buchanan



Sam Krone



Karla Leach

WICHE also seeks assistance and advice from policymakers, educators, administrators and legislators. WICHE's **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)** is composed of legislator-members from each state. The LAC members

from Wyoming are Rep. Krone, and Rep. Robert McKim, Afton. 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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WICHE

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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