Since 1953 Wyoming has been a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success.

In the six 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 $108.4 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.

**Doing the Math: Wyoming’s Return on Investment**

In 2013-14 Wyoming, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some $8.2 million through WICHE and spent $131,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 63-fold return on investment.

In the last 5 years, Wyoming students’ savings from WUE alone have totaled more than $26.9 million, yielding a 43-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

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

**WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs**

**State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).** A new initiative, SARA addresses the critical topic of postsecondary distance education regulation. Funded by a $2.3 million Lumina Foundation grant, SARA is a national initiative spearheaded by the National Council for SARA, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, the New England Board of Higher Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and WICHE. In an era when students can take online courses from institutions based all over the country, states have been faced with the challenging task of authorizing all out-of-state institutions offering online courses to their students, while institutions have often had to pay substantial fees to the many states in which they operate. SARA offers a cost-effective, efficient, straightforward framework for authorization that institutions, states, and students can trust. The National SARA Council, housed at WICHE, coordinates SARA’s work across the four regional compacts.

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 2013-14 Wyoming’s students and families saved over $8.2 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. In 2013-14, 1,087 students from Wyoming are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $5.3 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $4,903. In the last 10 years, students have saved $58.8 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 2013-14 Wyoming received 1,862 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** Wyoming has sent 1,961 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 314 high-quality, distinctive programs (“distinctive” meaning that they’re offered at only four or fewer institutions in the WICHE region) at 56 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 2013-14 Wyoming sent 51 students to out-of-state institutions, receiving two.

**Internet Course Exchange (ICE).** The University of Wyoming is a member of WICHE 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 WICHE region.

The **Consortium for Healthcare Education Online (CHEO)**, funded (2012-2016) with a $14.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, is making use of the North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO). With WICHE as its hub, NANSLO is an international network of web-based science labs using robotic software to allow students to conduct science experiments over the Internet. NANSLO opens access to STEM fields for rural and place-bound students by making it possible for them to participate in lab courses remotely. Laramie County Community College is a CHEO partner institution.

**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.

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 that brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 of

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**Figure 1. Wyoming Savings through WICHE, 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Savings</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WUE</td>
<td>$5,329,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEP</td>
<td>$2,202,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRGP</td>
<td>$714,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,246,017</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

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, the Mental Health Program is another well-used resource. It assists 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 participated in the WICHE-managed State Scholars Initiative (SSI), a national project, 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 University of Wyoming is a member of the Western Academic Leadership Forum, whose members address regional higher education issues and engage in resource sharing. Another 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, Western Wyoming Community College, and Casper College are members.

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
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 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 58 member institutions with total insured values of $86.4 billion. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer MHECare, a new health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans.

Wyoming & WICHE’s Leadership
The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Wyoming’s commissioners are Francis Galey, dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Wyoming, Laramie; Sam Krone, state representative, Cody; and Karla Leach, president, Western Wyoming Community College, Rock Springs.

WICHÉ 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, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate). 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:

- David Longanecker, president
- Erin Barber, executive assistant to the president and to the commission
- Mollie McGill, interim co-executive director, WCET
- Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
- Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health
- Russell Poulin, interim co-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.