The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success. California has been a member of WICHE since 1955.

**Benefits to California**
- Tens of thousands of students from California 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, California students and their families have saved over $998.2 million since 1997, when the state began participating.
- California has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- California has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

**Doing the Math:**
**California’s Return on Investment**
- In 2016-17 California, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in over $180 million through WICHE and spent $145,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 1,245-fold return on investment.
- In the last five years, California students’ savings from WUE alone have totaled $687.8 million, yielding a 1,013-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

**WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs**
California is active in two of the three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2016-17 California’s students and families saved over $178.6 million. California saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

**Western Undergraduate Exchange.** California students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond California’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1997. In 2016-17, 17,515 students from California were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving over $170.4 million in tuition and fees—the average student savings amounted to $9,729. In the last 10 years, students have saved $944.9 million.

California benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. California’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 California after graduating. In 2016-17 California received 719 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** California receives professional students through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). In 2016-17 it received 90 PSEP students and over $1.86 million in support fees.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** California’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to some 450 high-quality, distinctive programs at 61 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 2016-17 California sent 556 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 20.

**Interstate Passport®** is a program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education based on learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It includes learning outcomes for nine knowledge and skill areas developed by faculty at institutions in multiple states as well as an academic progress tracking system for Passport transfer students designed by registrars and institutional researchers. The goal of the Interstate Passport is to eliminate transfer students’ unnecessary repetition of learning previously achieved.
WICHE’s Added Value

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

One of WICHE’s most widely known publications is the Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates series, which for almost 40 years has provided strategic data about how high school graduates are likely to change in the years ahead. The 9th edition of Knocking at the College Door, released in December 2016, describes how the nation has entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates, with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations. After about 2025, the nation and most states will produce fewer high school graduates than in recent years, due to a recent “baby bust”. The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but it will be less impacted by the contraction of White youth and more influenced by a projected 20 percent increase of Hispanic high school graduates through 2024 and then decrease by about the same amount between 2025 and 2032.

There is an abundance of information on knocking.wiche.edu, including the publication and other reports, projections data, interactive data dashboards, recorded webinars and presentations, and California’s state profile, which indicates that:

- California is the #1 highest producer of high school graduates nationally, with 426,400 high school graduates per year, on average, between school years 2012 and 2032. However, California is projected to have an overall decrease in the size of its graduating class of 14% by 2032, declining to 394,100 graduates.
- Non-White public high school graduates are already 69% of all of California’s public high school graduates, and will increase to 74% of the total by 2032, even though the number of Hispanic graduates will decline by 52,000 (12%).

Policy & Workforce Development. California has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, 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 workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio.

WICHE was asked by the California Legislative Analyst’s Office for its counsel on how to help the state address proposed cuts to financial aid programs. Staff also served as an expert resource at a Public Policy Institute of California meeting, addressing the changes necessary in the wake of Gov. Brown’s decision to defund the California Postsecondary Education Commission, with the goal of ensuring that CPEC’s data collection was not lost. Staff discussed how to move California’s efforts to link data statewide and across segments forward and provided a brief report of what other states are doing in terms of statewide data governance. In addition, WICHE staff worked with the Legislative Analyst’s Office on state governance and testified before legislators on university presidents’ compensation systems.

The Adult College Completion (ACC) Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, was an 800-member learning network that united organizations and agencies working to increase college completion by adults with prior college credits but no degree. Activities included an annual workshop, a webinar series, publications, a listserv, and other resources. The ACC Network and WICHE became national leaders in the area of adult learners and continue to be an important resource to those who strive to better serve non-traditional students.

The State Higher Education Policy Database (SHEPD) is WICHE’s online searchable database. It provides state and national policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, and education consumers with an inventory of state-level policies and resources in key issue areas related to access and success in higher education. It contains a blog and an electronic SHEPD alert distribution list to keep subscribers current on important updates. A related resource is the Policy Publications

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\begin{array}{|l|c|}
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\text{Student Savings} & \text{(in thousands of dollars)} \\
\hline
\text{WUE} & 170,407,368 \\
\text{WRGP} & 8,267,720 \\
\text{Total Student Savings} & 178,675,088 \\
\hline
\text{Revenue to CA} & \\
\text{Institutions (PSEP)} & 1,863,307 \\
\hline
\text{TOTAL} & 180,538,395 \\
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\end{array}
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“…"At the time I applied to graduate school, there were no master’s programs focused on human anatomy offered in California. The closest one was at the University of Colorado Denver, so I applied. Before I went to UC Denver for my interview, I told my mom that without WRGP, I’d study something else, like chemistry. But I was putting on a brave face – I knew that teaching human anatomy at a community college was my true passion. Fortunately, I was accepted and offered WRGP! I’m now in my second semester of the program, I’m learning EXACTLY what I need and my skill set will be above and beyond what I’ll need for my future career. I am so grateful for WICHE’s WRGP. Without it, this perfect match would not have been possible, and I wouldn’t be living life to its fullest!”

– Sara, California resident, Class of 2018, University of Colorado Denver, Master’s in Modern Human Anatomy
Clearinghouse, a depository of publications, reports, and briefs related to higher education.

Additionally, Azusa Pacific University; the California State University (CSU) System; CSU Fresno; CSU Fullerton; CSU Long Beach; CSU Northridge; CSU San Marcos; California Polytechnic State University; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Sonoma State University; and the University of the Western of California, San Diego are members of the Western Academic Leadership Forum (the Forum), the chief academic leaders of the four-year institutions and their related system and state agencies, who address regional higher education issues, and engage in resource sharing. The Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance) 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 California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Cerritos College, Chaffee College, and Santa Rosa College are members. California hosted the Alliance annual meeting in Long Beach, March 22-24, 2017, with the theme “The Future of Community Colleges: Thriving in a World of Flux.

Technology. Several California colleges and universities are active participants in the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. WCET is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations regarding the role of technology and innovation in higher education. Our growing membership includes more than 350 institutions, state and system-wide higher education agencies, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in nearly all U.S. states and many Canadian provinces. WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. Key WCET activities include an annual meeting, leadership summits, national webcasts, and email list-based discussions among members. Major topics of interest to the WCET membership include student success, managing e-learning, faculty success, emerging technologies, and evolving policy issues.

Mental Health. The WICHE Mental Health Program has been somewhat active in California over the past several years. During FY13, WICHE facilitated a learning community of providers engaged in integrated behavioral and primary healthcare, while in FY15 staff conducted trainings around improved community-based services to veterans in Truckee. In June 2015, WICHE facilitated a provider training focused on suicide prevention at the annual conference of the California Rural Indian Health Board.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The effort initially was funded by $3.2 million in grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is now supported by fees paid by institutions. The initiative is administered by the country’s four regional higher education compacts – the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) – and overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states, and better resolution of student complaints. California is not yet a SARA member.

Other Initiatives. The Master Property Program (MPP) helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and expanded to the WICHE region, the MPP
includes more than 160 campuses with total insured values of $106 million. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer MHECare, a health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans. California Institute of Technology and the University of South Los Angeles are participants in MHECare. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of MHECtech to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase off competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs on a range of hardware and software products and services.

California & WICHE’s Leadership
The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each state, molds the organization’s mission and sets its priorities. California’s commissioners are Christopher Cabaldon, president, Linked Learning Alliance, and mayor, City of West Sacramento; Dianne Harrison, president of California State University, Northridge; and Francisco Rodriguez, chancellor, Los Angeles Community College District, Los Angeles.

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 Assemblyman Jose Medina – 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, informing its members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE 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, the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states (the various entities can decide to participate), Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. 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 Executives Officers association and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Staff leadership includes:

- **Joseph A. Garcia**, president
- **Michael Abbiatti**, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET
- **John Lopez**, special assistant to the president and chief administrative officer, and director, W-SARA
- **Demarée Michelau**, vice president, policy analysis and research
- **Jere Mock**, vice president, programs and services
- **Dennis Mohatt**, vice president, behavioral health
- **Jeremy Simon**, director of strategic communications

How can I find out more about WICHE?
Visit our website at www.wiche.edu or contact President Joseph A. Garcia at 303.541.0201.

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