



# NewsCap

---

The bimonthly newsletter from WICHE serving Western states, students, and institutions for 66 years

---

## Notes from the President

The value of postsecondary education is a hot topic in higher education circles today. But while everyone is talking about it, most are coming at it from very different perspectives. It reminds me of a potluck dinner without guidance -- everyone brings a great contribution but it's going to take a bit of creativity and open-mindedness to see how it all fits together.



Demarée Michelau

People understandably want to know what a credential will buy them in the workplace, and the [Institute for Higher Education Policy](#) and the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#), in partnership with the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), recently launched the [Commission on the Value of Postsecondary Education](#) to help answer that question. With a team of experts, they're examining what we currently know and what we are learning about the economic value of postsecondary education.

Others, including the [Gates Foundation](#) and [HCM Strategists](#), strongly affirm the value of a postsecondary education but are putting the emphasis on how best to communicate the message and whom to communicate it to. Is it through a coordinated network of organizations relying on student voices? Do we need to convince policymakers about the value of postsecondary education? Students? Parents? Higher education leaders? Arguably most of those folks already are true believers, and the hard work undoubtedly is convincing those who are not engaged in postsecondary education that they should be.

I recently participated in a thought-provoking summer summit held by the [American Council on Education](#) in Portland, Ore., where institutional leaders talked about how market trends influence institutional decision making. This was yet another way of thinking about the value of

higher education. For them, it is about connecting with the workforce needs of their communities and their states and making wise institutional decisions that result in student success.

There are certainly other approaches that policymakers and experts are taking to assess the value of postsecondary education. A major challenge, and perhaps an opportunity, is that as leaders in postsecondary education, we haven't agreed on what we mean. We used to just assume there was value (even if not everyone could access it) and for the most part, so did everyone else. Or so we thought. The conversations that are happening now are important and necessary, particularly in the context of legitimate concerns around affordability and employability. We need to engage in this dialogue, confront our challenges, and find productive ways to move forward so that we can prepare our students, and our potential students, for success in the workplace and in society. It's for everyone's benefit.

---

## WICHE Commission approves FY 2020 budget, workplan, and new tuition policy for the Western Regional Graduate Program

Approval of WICHE's FY 2020 budget and workplan, plus fine-tuning one of the organization's fast-growing student access programs, were among the [agenda](#) items for the [WICHE Spring Meeting](#), held May 20-21 in Bismarck, N.D. The theme, "Higher Education in the West: Imagining the Future," was underscored in plenary sessions featuring valuable perspectives on various topics: a futurist's take on

societal, labor market, and technology changes influencing postsecondary education; the potential of digital resources to create new pathways for learners; an overview of the cultures, governance, and economies of WICHE's 16th and newest member, the U.S. Pacific Territories & Freely Associated States. The leaders of three accrediting agencies also addressed trends and developments shaping their efforts related to ensuring student success and institutional continuous improvement.

The WICHE Commission approved a new policy that provides more flexibility to institutions offering graduate programs to nonresident students through the [Western Regional Graduate Program \(WRGP\)](#). Beginning in summer/fall 2020, institutions can set the tuition rate for nonresidents at up to 150 percent of the resident-tuition rate, aligning WRGP's tuition policy with that of WICHE'S largest student access program, the [Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\)](#).

Some institutions may opt not to increase their WRGP tuition rate and continue to charge resident tuition. Students already enrolled in a WRGP program will be "grandfathered in" under the tuition-setting rules that prevailed when they were enrolled.

Use the WRGP Savings Finder to browse the 950 graduate programs at 58 public institutions in the West currently available through WRGP. For additional information, contact WRGP Program Director Margo Colalancia at [mcolalancia@wiche.edu](mailto:mcolalancia@wiche.edu) or 303.541.0214.

---

## WICHE Commission news

WICHE is pleased to welcome three Commissioners newly appointed in recent weeks:



Frankie Eliptico,  
*interim president of  
Northern Marianas  
College*



Rodney Jacob,  
*partner in Calvo  
Fisher & Jacob's  
Guam office*



Senator Dave Lent,  
*Idaho State Senator,  
and Idaho National  
Lab. training manager*

---

WICHE President Demarée Michelau also expressed thanks to six departing Commissioners for their service to the organization over the past several years: **Laurie Nichols**, president of the University of Wyoming; **Dave Buhler**, Utah Commissioner of Higher Education; **Vincent Leon Guerrero**, former special assistant to the governor of Guam; **Carmen Fernandez**, past president of Northern Marianas College; Idaho State Rep. **Julie Van Orden**; and former Utah State Sen. **Peter Knudson**.

## Russ Poulin leading WCET and serving as WICHE VP of technology-enhanced education

Russ Poulin has been appointed vice president of technology-enhanced education for WICHE and executive director of [WCET \(WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies\)](#), WICHE President Demarée Michelau announced at the organization's biannual meeting in Bismarck, N.D.



Russ Poulin

In his new role, which he assumed June 1, Poulin will lead WCET's team of 12 executing an array of programs and initiatives related to higher education and technology, and will oversee a network of 385 WCET-member colleges, universities, and other North American organizations encompassing 6,000 active WCET constituents.

Poulin, who has served as WCET senior director of policy, analysis, and strategic alliances for the past several years, was hired in 1994 from the North Dakota University System, where he coordinated distance education. Over the years, he has become a linchpin contributor and leader for WCET in nearly all facets of its operations and has been instrumental in building its membership network. [Read more here](#)

---

## University of Idaho honored for new faculty-productivity data tool



Forum Chair Vicki Golich congratulates Daniel Campbell,  
Director of Assessment and Accreditation, University of Idaho

---

The [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#) recently presented its [2019 Colleagues' Choice Award](#) to the University of Idaho for an innovative faculty-productivity data tool designed to reduce redundancy and administrative burden for academic deans, chairs, and other senior higher education officials. The tool was selected from a field of submissions last year to the Academic Leaders Toolkit, a best-practice-sharing clearinghouse established by

the Forum and its sister organization, the [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders](#).

The cloud-based system, which was built in-house using Qualtrics survey software, streamlines the collection, reporting, and analysis of data necessary for intra- and extra-institutional purposes that include evaluation, promotion, and tenure assessment.

In a nod to the potential broader value of the tool—and in the cross-institutional, idea-sharing spirit that characterizes the Forum’s membership—the university’s College of Education, Health and Human Sciences has made it [available free of charge on its website](#).

---

## Leaders of the nation’s four regional higher-education compacts meet in Boulder

On May 7, WICHE President Demarée Michelau hosted a get-together in Boulder of the leaders of WICHE’s counterpart organizations in the South, the Midwest, and the Northeast. The four compact presidents also met with Sally Johnstone, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and Robert E. Anderson, president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), the other organizations that are located with WICHE in the State Higher Education Policy Center. Shown during a break in their discussions are, from left, **Stephen Pruitt**, president of the Southern Regional Education Board, who took office in July 2018; **Michelau**, appointed in December 2018; **Susan Heegaard**, selected as president of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in September 2018; and **Michael Thomas**, president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education since 2013.



---

## Equipping prospective teachers to support the mental wellness of students



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

What skills and knowledge do classroom teachers need to more effectively promote the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of students? That was the question on the table at the recently held first meeting of a workgroup representing leaders of teacher-preparation programs at

a dozen universities in four Western states. The group was convened as part of the federally funded [Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center](#), co-administered by WICHE’s [Behavioral Health Program](#) and the University of North Dakota College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines.

The goal is to make formal recommendations on how to incorporate mental-health and wellness training into preparation programs so that newly minted teachers are better equipped to recognize warning signs, provide effective classroom management, and take advantage of resources for support and referral.

The four states represented in the group are Colorado (University of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver), Montana (Montana State University, University of Montana’s Missoula and Western campuses), North Dakota (Mayville State University, University of North Dakota, Valley City State University), and South Dakota (South Dakota State University, University of Sioux Falls, University of South Dakota).

---

## Reading room

- The growing influence of WICHE and other education policy organizations headquartered in the Denver-Boulder area was the subject of a feature article, "[Here's Why Colorado is Becoming One Dupont \(West\)](#)," in the May 6 issue of *Forbes*. It describes the organizations – WICHE, NCHEMS, SHEEO, the Education Commission of the States (ECS), and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) – as constituting “a hub of higher education collaboration, innovation, and problem solving – a community of thinkers uniting with a network of doers.”
- A case study of the [North American Network of Science Labs Online](#) (NANSLO), headquartered at WICHE from 2011 to 2016, is included in a new report by [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](#) (APEC) on promising practices and design principles in digital workforce-development curriculum delivery. NANSLO was an international consortium of science laboratories operated by accredited institutions in the U.S. and Canada that offered students real-world lab experience online. See the case study in [Appendix D of the APEC report](#).
- The latest edition of *WICHE Insights, Tuition & Fees in the West 2018-19: Trends and Implications*, discusses WICHE’s annual survey of 350-plus Western public colleges and universities, and spotlights trends in state appropriations, financial aid programs, and student fees. The full survey results and a set of interactive dashboards can be seen [here](#).

## Comings and goings at WICHE

- **Pat Shea**, WICHE's director of academic leadership initiatives, will retire June 30 after a 23-year career championing innovation and improvement in higher education, including development of the pathbreaking [Interstate Passport® Network](#) that facilitates friction-free transfer of lower-division, outcomes-based general education. Shea's many accomplishments include directing the [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders](#) and the [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#) – membership organizations representing chief academic officers from the two- and four-year postsecondary sectors. She previously served as associate director of [WCET](#), where she managed a wide range of projects and programs serving its higher education and corporate members in 45 states and six countries.
- **Anna Galas**, Interstate Passport program manager for the past 18 months, on July 1 will succeed Pat Shea as director of academic leadership initiatives. Affiliated with WICHE since 2014, Galas initially served as a consultant and database coordinator for the WICHE Online Course Exchange. She has more than 20 years of professional experience in program administration, project management, and team coordination in higher education at the local, county, state, and national levels.
- **Suzanne Benally** joined WICHE on May 1 as director of its [Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions](#) initiative, a Lumina Foundation-funded effort aimed at reducing the postsecondary attainment gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives. For the past eight years, Benally has served as executive director of Cultural Survival, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the rights and cultures of indigenous communities worldwide. Previously, she held several administrative and teaching positions at Naropa University in Boulder, Colo., was director of education programs at the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, and earlier she directed WICHE's Institute on Ethnic Diversity.
- **Cherie Curtin** joined the WICHE staff as an administrative assistant for the Interstate Passport initiative on June 12, following **Shelley Pluto's** recent move to another administrative assistant position within WICHE, working with W-SARA and WCET staff. **Jeanette Porter** returned to the WICHE staff in April as senior administrative coordinator. She previously worked at WICHE for six years.
- **Paulette Lawrence** recently joined WICHE's Behavioral Health Program, where she will serve as a specialist for [Together with Veterans](#), a suicide-prevention initiative aimed at veterans living in rural areas.

## Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

WICHE is seeking a motivated, eager, and collaborative communications professional with integrity, a positive attitude, commitment to higher education and behavioral health, and excellent written and verbal communications skills. Reporting to the President, this position will work closely with our experienced senior leadership team, Commission, consultants, and talented, capable staff to propel WICHE forward through communications strategy, media relations, social and digital media, and content services. WICHE provides a fast-paced, flexible environment with room for growth. The ideal candidate will be organized, able to multitask, and committed to WICHE's mission of working collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for the residents of the West. Visit <https://www.wiche.edu/about> for a link to the full position description and the application site.

---

## Regional Happenings

- Sept. 12-13: [WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee Annual Meeting](#), Portland, Ore.
- Nov. 7-8: [WICHE Commission Fall Meeting](#), Denver, Colo.
- March 25-27, 2020: [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders Annual Meeting](#), Albuquerque, N.M.
- April 22-24, 2020: [Western Academic Leadership Forum Annual Meeting](#), Juneau, Alaska

---

## On the road: selected recent and upcoming WICHE-led presentations

- [Interstate Passport](#) staff at the [NASPA Conferences on Student Success in Higher Education](#), June 17 in Orlando, Fla., and at the [AASCU 2019 Academic Affairs Summer Meeting](#), July 25 in Minneapolis, Minn.
- WICHE President Demarée Michelau at the June 6-7 [American Council on Education \(ACE\) West Summer Summit](#) in Portland, Ore.
- [Policy Analysis and Research](#) staff at a meeting of chief admissions officers hosted by [Common Application](#), May 6 at Arizona State University; the [Association for Institutional Research](#) Annual Forum, May 28 in Denver, Colo.; and the third meeting of Wyoming's [Educational Attainment Executive Council](#), May 23 in Sheridan, Wyo.