

Russell Poulin

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Leadership Roles with WCET

I have played several leadership roles during my tenure at WCET. Leading these projects taught me the importance of having a clear direction, staying true to the project's mission, and tackling sustainability from the beginning.

--Directing Grant and Contract Projects

Directed and oversaw several grant or contract-funded projects for WCET, including:

- *Western Brokering Project* – assisted institutions expand distance programs beyond their states).
- *Technology Costing Methodology* – developed definitions and processes for measuring costs.
- *EduTools* – conducted reviews of educational technologies,
- *Transparency by Design* – published open quality measures of distance learning institutions.
- *WICHE's NEON Project* – co-directed project that piloted several programs in high-demand academic fields.
- *Western Governors University* -- WCET worked on the early plans for the emerging university. I coordinated planning for student information system and information technology needs of the emerging university.

--Directing Self-funded Projects

Directed these self-funded projects for WCET:

- *WCET State Authorization Network (SAN)* – developed the concept and still supporting the Network, which provides member engagement on state authorization compliance. **SAN now includes more than 110 members representing more than 700 institutions, drawing \$515,000 in dues as compared to slightly more than \$800,000 in WCET dues.**
- *Institute for Managing and Developing E-learning* – managed the planning, logistics, program, and promotion of this five-day leadership workshop.

--Conducting Member-focused Survey and Research Projects

- Conducted surveys and research on numerous management issues in distance education, including price and cost of distance education courses, adjunct faculty support mechanisms, regulatory compliance, distance education enrollments, and overall management/organizational issues for distance education.
- Assembled the key players to conduct the first national distance education survey in Canada, which is now entering its third year.
- When the College Scorecard was released, I discovered that several community colleges were missing. In collaboration with Phil Hill (e-Literate blog), we found that **800+ colleges** were not included and jointly reported our findings through our blogs.

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--Sharing Information Among WCET Members

A cornerstone of WCET as a “cooperative” is the sharing of information among members. In furthering that goal, I have the following roles:

- Serve as editor for WCET’s *Frontiers* (wcetfrontiers.org), which was named by *EdTech Magazine* as one of their “50 Must-Read Higher Ed IT Blogs” in both 2015 and 2017.
- Supervise WCET information sharing services including the *WCETDiscuss* list (about 4,000 members ask and answer questions), *Article Digest* (compilations of the latest news), and *Announcements* (from members of general interest).
- Organize WCET’s *Elearning Consortia Group* in sharing best practices among leaders of multi-institution consortia and systems that provide services, such as shared technologies, shared enrollments, and joint exploration of educational technology innovations.

--Writing Grant Applications

Early work in my WCET career, I was often asked to work on grants, and I served as the primary author on several successful grants, including:

- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) – two grants.
- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration.
- Lumina Foundation.

About a decade ago, WCET Executive Director Ellen Wagner reduced our reliance on grants and focused my efforts on meeting and exceeding member needs. Recently, I served as principle author of the Hewlett-funded Z Initiative application and the earliest drafts of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation proposal that resulted in the Every Learner Everywhere grant.

--Consulting

For several years, WCET staff engaged in consulting projects. As membership grew, we were able to sustain our salaries and limit.

- Served as a consultant in the development of several regional or statewide distance learning/virtual university consortia in Alaska, Arizona, California, Kentucky, Oregon, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Missouri, and Wyoming
- Consulted on projects including the creation of *Western Governors University*, the creation of the *Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus)*, developing partnerships and distance education practices for interpreter for the deaf programs, Kansas State University’s *Institute for Academic Alliances* activities, and WICHE’s *Non-Traditional No More* project.

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--Making Presentations

Yes. I have made many. As an example, in 2019I have already made either virtual or in-person presentations for the Colorado community college meeting of campus presidents, Council of College and Military Educators, New Mexico state authorization meeting, California community colleges distance education leaders, SAN Coordinators meeting, SAN Workshop, UPCEA Annual Conference, OLC Leadership Workshop, OLC Innovate, and Unizin Summit.

Accomplishments That Are Difficult to Classify

The following are accomplishments of which I am proud and do not really fit into traditional resume categories:

--For WCET

- Served on the initial WCET Steering Committee and as the third chair of the Steering Committee.
- Employed as the fourth full-time WCET staff person.
- Am the only person to attend every WCET Annual Meeting. Mollie McGill is close behind having missed just one meeting.

--For North Dakota

- Forged partnerships that connected the public institutions, the tribally-controlled colleges, the Capitol, and the State Hospital to the Interactive Video Network. The partnership with five tribally-controlled colleges was unique. It required creating a new level of understanding and trust between those colleges and their public counterparts.
- Partnered with the state's Information Technology office to manage the Network jointly.
- Fulfilled several years as a member of the North Dakota Educational Telecommunications Council and one year as chair.
- Served on the North Dakota Governor's Telecommunications Task Force.

--In Service to the Distance Education/Educational Technology Community

- Selected and participated as a member of the U.S. Department of Education's negotiated rulemaking panels in 2014 and 2019.
- Served on the initial "drafting team" that developed the basis for what is now the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement. Bruce Chaloux (then of SREB), and I encouraged the regional compacts to get involved. I served on WICHE's planning team for reciprocity. I suggested the name "SARA" as a descriptive and catchy moniker.
- Reviewed applications for the U.S. Department of Education's *Distance Education Demonstration Program*, which determined which institutions were the first to obtain federal financial aid for distance education courses.

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Press

Quoted in the press this year:

- Moving Forward (at Last) on Federal Rule Changes – Inside Higher Ed, April.
- New Approaches to Online Education with Russ Poulin – The Change Leader, March.
- Study: Online Learning May Not Solve the College Affordability Problem – Campus Technology, March (mentions our research).
- What is Regular and Substantive Interaction? The Term that Defines Online Learning Still Lacks Clear Definition – Elearning Insider, March (mentions our policy papers).
- Flawed AEI Report on Online Education: The good, the bad and the ugly – e-Literate, March.
- Sharing Courses Far and Wide – Inside Higher Ed, March.
- Extend financial aid to cover more alternative education programs, groups say – EdScoop, March (mentions our policy papers).
- Higher ed groups ask for flexibility with online learning rules – EducationDive, February.
- Policy Briefs from Key Digital Learning Support Organizations – Inside Higher Ed, February.
- DeVos Wants More Bootcamp-University Partnerships. Here's a Look Inside One. – EdSurge, February.
- Some reflections on the results of the 2018 national survey of online learning – TonyBates.ca, January.
- Purdue's Online Strategy, Beyond 'Global' – Inside Higher Ed, January.

Awards

My work aims at serving members rather than seeking awards. Still, recognition by others is humbling:

- Awarded the "Nofflet Williams Service Award" by the National University Technology Network.
- Awarded the "Heavy Lifter" honor by the Presidents' Forum for national contributions to educational technology policy in higher education.
- Awarded the President's Medal for service to the higher education community by Excelsior College.

Receiving three lifetime achievement awards does not mean that I am done. I hope.

Two "awards" that really choked me up when I left North Dakota include the following:

- A North Dakota tribal college gave me a wooden statue thanking me for including them in the North Dakota Interactive Video Network.
- My distance education colleagues from each of the institutions compiled a list of statements about why they enjoyed working with me.

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Employment

WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies

1994 – Present

Currently: Senior Director-Policy, & Analysis, & Strategic Alliances

Previously: Director of Policy & Analysis; Director of several projects

North Dakota University System

1985 – 1994

Final: Director-North Dakota University System Distance Education

Previously: Directed Interactive Video Network; Research Associate

North Dakota State University

1981 – 1985

Statistical research consultant for faculty and graduate students.

Miscellaneous Facts to Know about Russ

- Appeared on the high school quiz show *It's Academic* and on the national game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. Note: I did not win a million dollars.
- Elected to the University of Colorado-Boulder's Trivia Bowl Hall of Fame.
- Attended the Telluride Film Festival several times and plan to return again this year. I am a movie buff. I have received several positive comments about my "Movie Stuff at the End" film reviews that appear after WCET's weekly Job Postings.
- Served time in jail...as a jailer. That's a story.
- Participated in an intercollegiate sport, of sorts. That is yet another story.
- Taught remedial mathematics at the Community College of Denver and introductory statistics at North Dakota State University.
- Possesses a strong love for cats.
- Married to Laurie Klusman for 31 1/3 years and we have been together for 34 3/4 years. We have a "pseudo-adopted" daughter, which is an even longer story.

Education

B.A. – Double major in Economics and Mathematics – University of Colorado at Denver

M.S. – Statistics and Research Methods – University of Northern Colorado

Professional Development – WACUBO higher education leadership institute, Stanford University