



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. Utah has been a member of WICHE since 1953.

Benefits to Utah

- ▶ Thousands of students from Utah 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, Utah students and their families have saved more than **\$80.9 million** since 1988, when the program was founded.
- ▶ Utah has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Utah has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: Utah’s Return on Investment

- ▶ In 2017-18 Utah, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in over **\$8.3 million** through WICHE and spent \$149,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **55-fold return on investment**.
- ▶ In the last five years, Utah students’ savings from WUE alone have added up to **\$27.9 million**, yielding a **40-fold return** on the state’s investment in WICHE.

WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs

Utah 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 2017-18 Utah’s students and families saved over **\$8.1 million**. Utah saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Utah students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Utah’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2017-18, 919 students from Utah were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving \$6 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$6,500. In the last 10 years, students have saved **\$50.1 million**.

Utah benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Utah’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 Utah after graduating. In 2017-18 Utah received 1,648 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Utah has sent **753 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including optometry, podiatry, and veterinary medicine. Historically, some 48 percent of PSEP students return to Utah to pursue their professional careers. In addition, in 2017-18, the state received nine students and \$197,950 in support fees from other Western states.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Utah’s postgraduates also enroll in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to 435 high-quality programs at 60 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, resource-management, and healthcare fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2017-18 Utah sent 91 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 126.

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

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

WICHE's 9th edition of *Knocking at the College Door* high school graduate projections, released in December 2016 (and updated in September 2017 with additional data), describes how the nation and many states have entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates through about 2025—with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations—before entering a period of fewer high school graduates related to a recent “baby bust.” The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but less so based on trends with White youth and more due to 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 projections of high school graduates for Utah and a state profile, which indicates that:

- ▶ Steady increase in the number of high school graduates is projected for Utah, increasing about 37% from around 34,000 graduates in 2012 to 45,000 in 2026. The number of high school graduates will then decrease about 8% between 2026 and 2032.
- ▶ The number of Hispanic high school graduates in Utah will increase rapidly through 2026 but then drop substantially by 2032, while the number of White graduates steadily increases. So, the non-White portion of public high school graduates increases only slightly, from 18% to 21%, between 2012 and 2032.

Figure 1. Utah Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2017

Student Savings

WUE	\$6,032,211
PSEP	\$659,425
WRGP	\$1,429,064
Total Student Savings	\$8,120,700

Revenue to UT

Institutions (PSEP)	\$197,950
TOTAL	\$8,318,650



“As a current graduate student, I am very appreciative of WRGP. It gives me an affordable tuition rate to pursue my master’s in Public Health and stay relatively close to home during my studies. Without WRGP, earning my degree and working towards my future career as a hospital infection control coordinator would have been put on hold. Thanks to this program, I have been able to brush shoulders with outstanding professionals, make lifelong friends, and be part of an incredible program at the University of Arizona.”

– Jordan, Utah resident, Class of 2017,
University of Arizona,
Master of Public Health Epidemiology

Policy & Workforce Development. Utah has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision-making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Helmsley Charitable Trusts, the Ford 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 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. Utah decision-makers also keep current on pressing policy issues developing all over the nation through WICHE’s extensive network.

Regional Academic Leadership Initiatives. Dixie State University, the Utah System of Higher Education, the University of Utah, and Utah Valley University are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum** (the Forum). Their official representatives are 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. Utah hosted the Forum annual meeting in Salt Lake City, April 26-28, 2017, with the theme “Designing for Quality in Higher Education Facet by Facet.” 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. Salt Lake Community College is a member.

Technology. Several Utah 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

“WICHE’s PSEP made it possible for me to attend Pacific University College of Optometry. I have the privilege of having a family while in school, but with that comes monetary responsibility. Had I not been awarded the PSEP scholarship, it would be extremely hard (almost impossible) to pay off student loans after I graduate. It’s allowed me to provide for my family and pay tuition without taking out as many loans. PSEP has made my career possible and my studies a little less stressful.”

– Brayden, Utah resident, Class of 2019,
Pacific University, Optometry

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. In 2016, Western Governors University won the WCET Outstanding Work (WOW) award, which recognizes effective and innovative uses of technology to address specific needs in higher education, for the Responsible Borrowing Initiatives.

Mental Health. In March 2017, the Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, retained the WICHE Mental Health Program to provide technical assistance to reduce the average length of stay at the Utah State Hospital for forensic patients at the Utah State Hospital being restored to competency to stand trial. The project also includes funding for a Lean Rapid Improvement Event to assist the Utah State Hospital in reducing forensic length of stay.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that makes distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and makes 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. Utah is among the WICHE states that are members of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

Other Initiatives. Utah’s Westminster College 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 more than 160 campuses with total insured values of over \$93.4 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. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of **MHEctech** to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase from competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs on a range of hardware and software products and services.

Utah & WICHE’s Leadership

The **WICHE Commission**, with three commissioners from each member, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Utah’s commissioners are David Buhler, commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City; Patricia Jones, CEO, Women’s Leadership Institute, Salt Lake City; and Peter C. Knudson, state senator, Brigham City.



David Buhler



Patricia Jones



Peter Knudson

“With all of the talk about new healthcare policies, I was worried about the amount of debt that I would accumulate by the time I graduated from optometry school. I moved forward with the process, hoping that I would be able to get a good job afterwards. However, I found out about the WICHE program and decided to apply. So much of my stress was relieved when I learned that I was awarded the PSEP scholarship. It has allowed me to fully focus on my schooling. Thanks to PSEP, I will be a better doctor and will be able to provide better care to my future patients.”

– Jason, Utah resident, Class of 2017,
Pacific University, College of Optometry



“I am from Utah and would have never been able to afford out-of-state tuition. Thanks to WUE, I am studying accounting at MSU Denver and have loved every minute of it. I have met amazing people and have grown to love this city and state. I am so grateful for the opportunity I have to go to school here and the experiences it’s given me. “

– Kailey, Utah resident, Class of 2017,
Metropolitan State University of Denver, Accounting

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 Rep. Keith Grover, Sen. Peter Knudson, and Sen. Evan Vickers—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 serve the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff

The WICHE Commission includes three gubernatorial selected representatives from each member: 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, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

WICHE and its staff are headquartered in Boulder, Colo., 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, interim 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 wiche.edu or contact 303.541.0200.

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