WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs

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 2016-17 Wyoming’s students and families saved over $8.5 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 2016-17, 1,181 students from Wyoming were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $5.6 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $4,807. In the last 10 years, students have saved $52.1 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 2016-17 Wyoming received 1,543 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Wyoming has sent 2,058 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 some 450 high-quality, distinctive programs at 59 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 Wyoming sent 56 students to out-of-state institutions, receiving 18.

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
Wyoming 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 Wyoming and a state profile, which indicates that:

- Steady increase in the number of high school graduates is projected for Wyoming, increasing about 24% from around 5,700 graduates in 2012 to 7,000 in 2026. The number of high school graduates will then decrease about 6%, with about 6,500 graduates per year between 2027 and 2032.
- Non-White public high school graduates are currently about 14% of all of Wyoming’s public high school graduates and will increase slightly to 19% of the total by 2032.

Policy & Workforce Development. Wyoming 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. Wyoming decision-makers also keep current on pressing policy issues developing all over the nation through WICHE’s extensive network.

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 Sen. Fred Baldwin and Sen. Paul Barnard—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.

Regional Academic Leadership Initiatives. The University of Wyoming is a member 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. 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. Eastern Wyoming College, Laramie County Community College, and Western Wyoming Community College are members.

Technology. Several Wyoming 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

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### Figure 1. Wyoming Savings through WICHE, 2016

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student Savings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WUE</td>
<td>$5,676,687</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSEP</td>
<td>$2,022,899</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRGP</td>
<td>$832,720</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,532,306</strong></td>
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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 Division of Behavioral Health in Wyoming has engaged WICHE in support of a range of program evaluation and workforce development efforts over the past decade.

WICHE was the evaluator of its federally funded suicide prevention grant. Beginning in late FY 2015 and continuing in FY 2016, WICHE developed a series of webcasts focused on enhancing providers’ capacities to meet the needs of persons with first-episode psychosis disorders.

**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. Wyoming is among the WICHE states that are members of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

**Other Initiatives.** 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 more than 160 campuses with total insured values of over $93.4 billion. 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 off competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs on a range of hardware and software products and services.

**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 Fred Baldwin, senator, Wyoming State Senate, Kemmerer; Karla Leach, president, Western Wyoming Community College, Rock Springs; and Laurie Nichols, president, University of Wyoming, Laramie.

“WRGP has given me a future. Without it, I would have had to start over with a different career. There is no graduate program in audiology in my home state of Wyoming, and one can’t practice audiology without a doctoral degree. WRGP gave me the opportunity to obtain the necessary education to become an audiologist.”

– Devin, Wyoming resident, Class of 2018, University of Utah, Audiology

“I dreamed of going to physical therapy school for a long time, and would not let anything get in the way of that goal. But with rising tuition costs, this presented a stressful challenge. I wondered how I could possibly afford to go to graduate school and pay out-of-state tuition. WICHE’s PSEP program gave me the opportunity to go to a great school at a more reasonable price, so that I can focus on what counts: learning and getting the most out of my educational experience. Thanks to WICHE’s program, I am able to go to an incredible PT school and pursue my lifelong goal of becoming a physical therapist – a career that will eventually allow me to give back to the state that I love. “

– Cossette, Wyoming resident, Class of 2019, University of Utah, Doctor of Physical Therapy
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. Robert McKim, and Sen. Paul Barnard – 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, by informing its 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:

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 wiche.edu or contact 303.541.0200.

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