

WICHE

Annual Report 2015

WICHE



Alaska
Arizona
California
Colorado
Hawai'i
Idaho
Montana
Nevada
New Mexico
North Dakota
Oregon
South Dakota
U.S. Pacific Territories &
Freely Associated States
Utah
Washington
Wyoming





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The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and its 16 member states and territories work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life.

This report recaps WICHE’s work during fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015).

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A Message from WICHE Chair Michael Rush

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) was developed out of a time-tested practice in the West – neighbors helping neighbors to deal with the harsh realities of living and thriving in a vast frontier. The need for collaboration has not lessened in today's world.

This past year as WICHE chair has given me a unique perspective to reflect on the value of our organization. I began the year as a Commissioner from Idaho and finished as a Commissioner from South Dakota. I discovered that WICHE provided a robust platform to deal with the challenges that are common among us, but that are also unique to each state. I was able to benefit from national expertise informed by the latest research in higher education policy. I was able to see first-hand how WICHE's various student exchange programs strengthened and expanded our ability to meet critical needs with limited resources. I was also able to draw from the wisdom of my colleagues, each dealing with similar issues in a variety of complex settings.



This past year as WICHE chair has given me a unique perspective to reflect on the value of our organization.

Another unique experience that has informed my perspective has been the selection process for a new president. When Dr. David Longanecker announced his retirement earlier this year, he graciously agreed to stay on as long as it took to hire an able replacement. The announcement of his retirement resulted in a wave of unsolicited comments from people across the country about how much they valued and respected the role WICHE has played in higher education policy and delivery. It also resulted in a number of highly qualified candidates applying for the job of president. As of this writing, we are still in the process of deciding on a new leader.

The events of this year have allowed me to reflect on how blessed this organization has been under the stewardship of David Longanecker. His insights and leadership have put a permanent positive stamp on higher education in this country and beyond. He has accomplished this through his willingness to lead where others have shied away, his commitment to helping states wrestle with tough problems, his wisdom, his tireless and generous use of time for constant travel and just-in-time problem solving, and his unflappable good humor and ability to put people from all political persuasions at ease. He leaves an organization that is well respected, on sound financial footing, and positioned for continued effective leadership in higher education. He will be missed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mike Rush". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael Rush
Executive Director, South Dakota Board of Regents

A Message from WICHE President David A. Longanecker

The comments that follow will be my last Annual Report message, as I will be retiring from WICHE this coming year after 16 wonderful years with this exceptional organization.

Much has happened at WICHE and within higher education in the West since the beginning of the new millennium 15 years ago. Higher education has moved from an era of plenty to a new normal of frugal funding. The 20th century focus on increasing access has expanded into a national preoccupation with student success, most often reflected in efforts to increase completion, particularly for students attending access-oriented institutions. The concept of assuring affordability has shifted from eliminating barriers for low-income students who simply cannot attend without financial assistance to reducing the financial burden for middle-income families and students. Our focus has expanded to include not just recent high school graduates, but also returning adult students. And higher education has



significantly transformed the ways in which we educate today's students, relying much more on technology-enhanced learning opportunities than was the case in the last century.

Not surprisingly, therefore, WICHE has changed significantly since the turn of the century. Our programs and services have grown both in size and number. The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) has increased from serving fewer than 10,000 students in 2000 to more than 34,000 today, currently saving students about \$300 million a year. And the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) has grown from a modest number of programs serving even fewer students at the turn of the century to serving more than 1,300 students in nearly 380 programs, saving these students almost \$20 million a year. And our original core student exchange program, the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), remains a staple for the organization and the West, serving more than 660 students in 10 medical professional fields.

Our partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) now provides substantial services and financial savings to many institutions via the Master Property Program for insurance and risk management, the MHECtech collective purchasing contracts for computer

hardware and software (available to K-12 entities, postsecondary institutions, and local, county and state agencies), and the MHECare student health insurance collective. Through WICHE's engagement with senior academic officers of two- and four-year institutions, systems, and higher education agencies throughout the West, we have developed the Interstate Passport to establish a competency-based, assured lower-division general education block transfer process across state lines, an Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE) to allow students greater access to a wider variety of courses than they can find on their primary campus, and the North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO) to provide high-quality lab experiences to students studying at a distance from a consortium of institutions' on-campus labs.

More recently, working with the other three regional higher education compacts, WICHE helped create the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which provides the venue for states that feel comfortable trusting one another to accept other states' authorization of institutions to operate. Through the SARA program, students from participating states who take online courses outside their state of residence can be assured that there is reasonable oversight and consumer

protection, and institutions providing such services can avoid the excessive administrative burden of having to be authorized in potentially 50 states, plus territories. Now just two years into its existence, more than half the states have joined one of the four regional SARA entities.

Our policy analysis and research efforts have been no less aggressive and innovative. We began the new millennium with a program we called *Changing Direction*, which was intended to inform and encourage states to adopt evidence-based financial decision-making by synchronizing their three primary sources of funding – appropriations, tuition, and financial aid – in ways that enhance both increased completion and increased quality. This effort laid the groundwork for major policy shifts within states over the past decade, including both the movement to performance funding and the reinvestment of many states in performance-oriented, need-based financial aid.

We also were early in the game with a project known as *Escalating Engagement: State Policy to Protect Access to Higher Education*, which had two thrusts: first, to encourage greater collaboration between states' higher education and workforce development efforts; and, second, to foster greater appreciation within states of the need to move the most at-risk students into educational programs and jobs that assure them a living wage. These efforts also preceded the federal focus on enhancing vocational education to meet both individual and national needs, and helped place the Western states in an advantaged position to respond to the new federal focus.

WICHE also initiated a major effort to focus more state and institutional efforts on attracting back to higher education much larger numbers of students who have some college but no degree.

Through our Non-Traditional No More (NTNM) project, we initially focused attention on a set of “willing” states that sought ways to address the most significant barriers to adult student success, and followed that effort by managing the Adult College Completion Network (ACCN), a Lumina Foundation-funded national peer network for professionals in various spheres of influence and action who are engaged in improving college completion among older adult students.

At the urging of Western State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEOs), we also increased our focus on database development and utilization. Of course, we continued and enhanced the *Knocking on the College Door* work – our national projections of high school graduates – which has become a staple for admissions personnel around the country. But we also developed the *Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange*, which helps participating states better understand the progression and success of their students – from high school, through college, and into the workforce – thus substantially enhancing the capacity for evidence-based decision-making at both the institution and state levels.

Through the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) we also have been on the forefront of the brave new world of technology-enhanced education, which is transforming and improving higher education in America, and will be an essential component in providing more-affordable higher education in the years ahead. Early in the new century, WCET was there to help as more and more institutions and states struggled with how to adopt technology, whether via online learning or blended learning strategies, in ways that assured quality, accountability, and financial viability. As technology-enhanced

learning became ubiquitous throughout higher education, WCET's efforts shifted to include greater focus on transparency, quality assurance, and the sharing of resources. These efforts transitioned into creating one of the first and most prominent pilot efforts in providing predictive analytics to institutions so they have the information they need to enhance student learning. As is often the case under our business plan, WCET incubated this innovation in a project known as the Predictive Analytics Reporting Framework and once the proof of concept had been established, we spun the activity off as its own nonprofit organization. Currently, WCET is leading efforts to enhance technology-mediated learning, establish new valid credentialing processes, explore processes and quality assurance methods for competency based learning, and provide individualized learning that is adapted to each learner's needs.

WICHE's Mental Health Program has also been breaking new ground in the area of behavioral health. Having developed highly regarded tools for both Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention, WICHE has attracted support and partnership from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the Institute of Mental Health, the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, most state departments of health throughout the West, and many institutions of higher education. Active both within the West and at the federal level, WICHE's mental health unit has become a highly regarded and utilized national treasure in behavioral health circles. The recent creation of a partnership with the American Psychology Association to provide accredited clinical internships for recent doctorates in clinical psychology is helping to address the dearth of practicing clinical psychologists in the rural West.

As the West has changed, so too has WICHE. It has been an exciting and personally very rewarding time to be associated with an organization with such an ambitious, intellectually gifted, and committed staff. And the staff has had the unique pleasure of working with a tremendously supportive and creative board of 48 members (three gubernatorial appointees from each state and territory) who have contributed greatly to both the vision and quality of this enterprise. We have also benefited greatly over the past 15 years from generous philanthropic support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

I have come to treasure this ride into the new millennium. I often proudly claim credit for the accomplishments of WICHE. But in truth, it has been the exceptional staff, outstanding board, and supportive donors that have made WICHE the great organization it is today, and I'm just proud to have been associated with it.



David Longanecker
President, Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education



PROGRAMS and SERVICES

WICHE's Programs and Services unit expands access to higher education through three student exchange programs: the Professional Student Exchange Program, the Western Regional Graduate Program, and the Western Undergraduate Exchange along the WICHE Internet Course Exchange. Staff also foster collaboration and resource sharing in higher education through regional initiatives; convene and partner with academic leaders throughout the West; and work to help institutions and states reduce operating costs through innovative programs. The unit also develops and disseminates WICHE electronic and print publications, including: NewsCap, factsheets, annual reports, state briefings, commission agenda books, the annual workplan, and others, as well as managing the WICHE website, social networking media, and media relations.

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

The [Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\)](#), WICHE's signature undergraduate tuition reciprocity program and the largest of its kind in the nation, saved almost 34,300 students an estimated \$279.4 million in tuition during academic year 2014-15 by allowing them to pay 150 percent of resident tuition instead of full nonresident tuition through enrollment at 156 public two- and four-year institutions in 15 states and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Colleges and universities can tailor their participation, including admission requirements and available programs of study, to individual campus needs.

The [Professional Student Exchange Program \(PSEP\)](#) provides affordable access to 10 professional healthcare fields for students in 10 WICHE states. In academic year 2014-15, 657 students enrolled through PSEP and states invested \$14.7 million in their future healthcare providers' educations. Some 15,000 professionals have received their education through PSEP, most in the healthcare professions. They include dentists, occupational therapists, optometrists, pharmacists, physical therapists, physician assistants, physicians (allopathic and osteopathic), podiatrists, and veterinarians.

The [Western Regional Graduate Program \(WRGP\)](#) allows students who

are WICHE region residents to enroll in 380 master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral programs at 59 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2014, 1,345 students enrolled through WRGP and saved an estimated \$19.9 million in tuition.

The [Western Academic Leadership Academy](#) is a year-long professional development program aiming to expand the pipeline of qualified chief academic leaders for four-year institutions in the West. The Academy, through a series of activities, focuses on the context of academic leadership, the development of academic goals and priorities, and specific skill sets that are required of chief academic officers. Its first cohort of 15, nominated by Western Academic Leadership Forum members, was formed in spring 2015. They began the program with an intensive three-day face-to-face seminar at WICHE's headquarters and throughout the rest of their term they will participate in a series of webinars with Academy faculty, consisting of active and retired members of the Western Academic Leadership Forum.

The [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#) brings together academic leaders at institutions with chief executives and chief academic officers for related systems and state coordinating and governing boards to exchange ideas and information, share resources and ex-

partise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. The Forum conducted its annual meeting, themed “Calibrating Your Leadership through New Landscapes” in April in Boise. The forum is funded primarily via membership dues, with additional funding provided by sponsors of the annual meeting.

The [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders](#) convenes academic leaders at community

ACCOUNTABILITY

The [Interstate Passport Initiative](#) is a new framework for block transfer of lower-division general education, based on student-learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It is being developed by faculty, registrars, institutional researchers, and advisors in the West. When Phase II work concludes in the summer of 2016, the completed framework will be ready for scaling to institutions across the country. Fewer unnecessary or duplicated courses means greater motivation for students to complete, faster time to degree, lower cost, less debt, and lower foregone earnings. More completions and faster time to degree improves institutions’ performance metrics, while a transfer system based on learning outcomes instead of course-by-course articulation allows greater curricular flexibility and less negotiation of equivalencies. During Phase I, funded by a \$550,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, faculty at institutions in five WICHE states developed the Passport Learning Outcomes and Transfer-Level Proficiency Criteria for three content areas: oral communications, written communications, and quantitative literacy. In Phase II, which was launched in October 2015 with \$2.8 million in grant funds (\$1.6

FINANCE

The [Master Property Program](#) (MPP) developed by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) has been available to colleges and universities in the West since 2004, through a WICHE partnership with MHEC. The MPP enables participating institutions to benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage at rates below industry averages, while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. Available to two- and four-year public and private institutions, the program currently has more than 150 campuses participating, with total insured values of more than \$106 billion; it has generated \$94.7million in savings for the participating institutions since its inception in 1994. The program is currently underwritten by [Lexington \(AIG\)](#), with administration led by [Marsh USA Inc.](#) and supported by [Captive Resources Inc.](#) under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the insured institutions. Nine institutions and two systems (with 14 campuses) in the WICHE region participate in the

colleges and technical schools and related systems and state agencies to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives for the two-year higher education sector. The Alliance’s annual meeting was in Rapid City in April. The theme was “Leaders Facing Change: Asking the Right Questions.” Like the Forum, the Alliance is funded from membership dues and annual meeting sponsorships.

million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and \$1.2 from Lumina Foundation), institutions in seven WICHE states will develop the learning outcomes and proficiency criteria for six additional content areas involving the physical and natural sciences, creative arts and humanities, intercultural knowledge (social science and history), information literacy, teamwork and problem solving, and critical thinking.

The [Academic Leaders Toolkit](#) is a joint project of WICHE’s Alliance and Forum. The Toolkit is a searchable, web-based depository of decision-making tools, contributed by academic leaders. Tools in a broad range of categories – such as program evaluation, creation and elimination, faculty recruitment and retention, and student outcomes assessment – help academic leaders address increasing responsibilities. The Toolkit is searchable by category, state, and type of institution or organization. The University of Arizona’s Peer Review of Teaching Protocol and South Dakota’s Mitchell Technical Institute’s Technical Education at a Distance (TED) Model and were named winners in Academic Leaders 2015 Tool of the Year competition.

program. Representatives from member campuses are invited to an annual MPP Loss Control Workshop to focus on topics relevant to risk management and asset protection strategies.

[MHECare](#) is another WICHE partnership with MHEC, offering institutions and systems a student health insurance plan that MHEC created in 2012-13 through a grant from Lumina Foundation. Working with the program administrator, Mercer, an independent human resources and benefits consulting firm, MHEC and its Student Health Benefits Advisory Committee developed the plan design and selected UnitedHealthcare StudentResources (UHCSR), a national health care provider, to underwrite the program. MHECare offers both standard and customized Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act-compliant plans, depending on the size of the institution and number of students enrolled. UHCSR specializes in student health insurance plans and is known for its

national network of providers, web-based enrollment and support tools. Mercer and UHCSR were selected through a competitive bid process led by MHEC; consequently, prospective member institutions do not need to conduct a formal request for proposal to obtain a MHECare quote, saving institutions time and resources. Mercer brings

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

[MHECtech](#), a third collaboration with MHEC, extends the benefits of MHECtech to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to reduce costs on hardware and software products and services by acquiring these items from competitively bid purchasing agreements. WICHE region institutions are eligible to purchase computers and servers at discounted rates under the MHECtech contracts with Dell and HP, Dell and Xerox printers and peripherals, and Cienna multiplexing from Walker and Associates Inc. Other contracts provide preferred pricing on products including Arrow Electronics VMware for virtualization licenses and support, consulting and training advisory services for IT challenges from Info Tech Research Group; and creative software for design, print, media, and web from Corel. Cloud services are offered by Campus EAI Consortium for storage, virtual machine

WORKFORCE AND SOCIETY

The [North American Network of Science Labs Online \(NANSLO\)](#), an alliance of cutting-edge science laboratories based at higher education institutions that use software and robotics, allows students to conduct high-quality, openly licensed lab activities for introductory biology, chemistry, and physics online. NANSLO’s master scheduler, based at WICHE, allows institutions to reserve time in the labs on a fee-for-service model and for students to schedule their lab activities at times convenient to them.

The [Consortium for Healthcare Education Online \(CHEO\)](#), a U.S. Department of Labor-funded project with Pueblo Community College in Colorado as the fiscal agent, unites eight community colleges in five WICHE states in an initiative to create or transform existing allied health courses for delivery in an online or hybrid format, incorporating NANSLO web-based lab experiments. WICHE conducted professional development workshops in March and August for CHEO career coaches and in May for faculty using NANSLO experiments. Work on a business plan is currently underway to ensure NANSLO’s sustainability and expansion.

its broad understanding of health care to the student program along with compliance resources, providing independent underwriting and negotiations to assure that rates are competitive and also conducts financial analytics of the claim utilization.

hosting, and web hosting; SAS provides statistical and analytical software; and eTranscript services are available to states, systems, and institutions from Parchment. Several of the purchasing agreements are also available to K-12 organizations; local, county, and state governments; and nonprofit organizations. The agreements aggregate volume purchases to lower product costs and reduce the time institutions must spend developing and conducting bids themselves.

[WICHE Internet Course Exchange \(ICE\)](#) enables students, through their home institutions, to seamlessly access online courses and programs offered by other two- and four-year institutions. This robust web-based platform supports a range of consortia aimed at providing more online course choice to students while using institutional resources more effectively.

The [Bridges to the Professoriate](#) initiative managed by WICHE provides the National Institute of General Medical Sciences-Minority Access to Research and Careers’ predoctoral fellows with opportunities to participate in the annual Compact for Faculty Diversity Institute on Teaching and Mentoring. This helps the fellows gain skills needed in doctoral programs and academic careers.

The [National Research Mentoring Network \(NRMN\)](#) awarded a two-year, \$499,719 grant to WICHE and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to support the work of the [Compact for Faculty Diversity Research Mentoring Institute](#). A newly created consortium funded by the National Institutes of Health, the NRMN is designed to enhance the training and professional development of individuals from diverse backgrounds who aspire to careers in biomedical research. The primary focus of the WICHE-SREB initiative will be mentor training as well as mobilizing the extensive cross-disciplinary network of mentors and mentees developed over the 22-year history of the Compact for Faculty Diversity.



POLICY ANALYSIS and RESEARCH

The Policy Analysis and Research unit offers a variety of policy and information resources to support better-informed decision making, principally at the state level. The unit is involved in a number of research projects and collaborative initiatives that focus on projections of enrollment demand, college completion, adult learners, multistate data sharing to support educational planning and workforce development, and other areas. WICHE staff serves as a resource on higher education issues, including state and federal financial aid, finance, articulation and transfer, common academic standards, and various college completion initiatives. Its periodic publications, *Policy Insights* and *Western Policy Exchanges*, explore a range of significant policy issues. The unit also undertakes major, long-term grant-funded projects, collaborates with other regional and national organizations, and provides short-term technical assistance to states in the region.

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Knocking at the College Door is WICHE's well-known high school graduate forecasts produced for more than 30 years and used by policymakers, enrollment managers, college counselors, schools and school districts, researchers, and the media. In 2013, WICHE released a supplement to the 8th edition of *Knocking at the College Door, Projections of High School Graduates by Sex and for Major Metropolitan Areas*, that disaggregated projections into male and female graduates by state and race/ethnicity and estimated the portion of projected graduates in the 25 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, and discussed projections in light of educational disparities. WICHE staff continues to be consulted on issues of demography and enrollment demand and has made numerous presentations in 2015. WICHE is actively planning the next iteration of the projections, which is targeted for release in late 2016.

The Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) informs the WICHE Commission and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education, and WICHE staff serves the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West. LAC members are appointed by the commission and meet annually. Twenty-four legislators from 14 states participated in the 2014 annual meeting that was held in September in Phoenix, Arizona. The

meeting, titled "Striking the Balance: College Affordability, Cost, and Quality," featured national experts and LAC members speaking on legislative trends in the West, state authorization, higher education finance, degree attainment goals, data, MOOCs, and more.

The Adult College Completion (ACC) Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, is a learning network that unites organizations and agencies working to increase college completion by adults with prior college credits but no degree. The number of network members continues to grow and is now over 750 individuals from state higher education agencies, colleges and universities, community organizations, and other entities. Over the last fiscal year, WICHE staff conducted webinars, gave several presentations, wrote timely and relevant blog posts, and published a *Policy Exchanges* titled "Collaboration and Coordination to Improve Adult College Completion Efforts." The brief explores research on the common characteristics of effective multi-stakeholder collaborations, with a particular focus on initiatives working to tackle complex social challenges. It includes examples of collaborative efforts that are uniting diverse stakeholders to support adult degree completion at the state and local levels. The ACC Network and WICHE have become national leaders in the area of adult learners and continue to

be an important resource to those who strive to better serve nontraditional students.

The College Access Challenge Grant program is a federally funded formula grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. To assist states in the Western region with their grants, WICHE manages the [College Access Challenge Grant \(CACG\) Consortium](#). Alaska and Idaho currently take part, with WICHE assisting with program administration.

[Equity in Excellence](#), funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation, is a WICHE partnership with the Center for Urban Education at the University

ACCOUNTABILITY

In January 2015, the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents sought to explore and analyze the current structure of the University of Hawai'i system. Specifically, they wanted to address whether the Board of Regents should reconsider the 2001 separation of roles of the president of the University of Hawai'i system and the chancellor of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa or seek other changes in the management and leadership structure of the system in order to better serve the state and its citizens. To accomplish this, the Board of Regents engaged the services of David Longanecker, president of WICHE, and Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis for WICHE, to lead a research effort that included reviewing historical documentation; reviewing relevant literature and research; and conducting interviews with past and present stakehold-

FINANCE

"Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West 2014-15" is the latest update of WICHE's annual *Tuition and Fees* report (<http://www.wiche.edu/pub/taf>), focusing on public institutions in the WICHE region. It includes an institution-by-institution historical review of tuition changes from year to year, as well as those from one, five, and 10 years ago. A related *Policy Insights* publication, "[Tuition and Fees in the West 2014-15](#)," summarizes the report's findings and discusses state budget levels, higher education appropriations, state financial aid programs, and other state finance policy innovations.

A *Policy Insights* brief, "[Affordability and Student Success: Recapping 2014 Higher Education Legislative Activity in the West](#)," summarized the key topics and trends addressed during the 2014 legislative sessions and highlights other new and emerging issues to watch in the region. After reaching a low point in 2012, state investment in higher education increased for the second year in a row in 2014 – something that had not happened since the Great Recession of 2008 began. With greater stability in some, though certainly not all, state budgets, many Western legislatures in 2014 looked for new ways to contain college costs for students. In fact, affordability was the key theme

of Southern California that supports the implementation of Colorado's higher education reform agenda. With a focus on metropolitan Denver, the project is working to align the state's higher education policy measures with equity-focused actions within community colleges and four-year institutions. Specifically, WICHE wrote and published a policy audit titled "[Equity in Excellence for Colorado's Future: A Policy Audit and Analysis](#)," which is intended to provide an external, objective perspective, with the goal of assisting Colorado's state and institutional higher education leaders in designing or redesigning policies to achieve the goals in the state's master plan and to make those policies equitable toward all students.

ers, national experts on leadership and governance, and leaders in other state higher education systems similar to that of Hawai'i. In April 2015, WICHE produced a report that outlined the findings and recommendations of that research effort, and in May 2015, presented the findings to the Hawai'i Board of Regents.

[Benchmarks: WICHE Region 2014](#) presented information on the West's progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education. The information is updated annually to monitor change over time and to encourage its use as a tool for informed discussion in policy and education communities, focusing on demographics related to access, success, and finance in the West. Beginning in 2013, the Benchmarks indicators were made available online as downloadable data tables and graphics.

of this year's sessions. In an attempt to address affordability, legislators in the WICHE region passed bills freezing or limiting tuition increases and created new scholarships and other financial aid opportunities for students. Many Western states also increasingly looked to higher education as the driver of economic growth, as their legislatures focused more on community colleges and career and technical education, while others sought to encourage partnerships between business and postsecondary institutions. Issues to watch include undocumented students, guns on campus, military and veterans education, and the ongoing implementation of common academic standards that prepare students for college and careers.

Building on WICHE's *States in the Driver's Seat: Leveraging State Aid to Align Policies and Promote Access, Success, and Affordability* report, WICHE staff were engaged in numerous meetings among national thought leaders during FY15 concerning affordability and the appropriate roles for the state and federal government in financing aid for students. Additionally, the framework for state aid programs laid out in the report, reinforced through an accompanying convening WICHE hosted for state financial aid administrators in September, was at the heart of a new program enacted in Nevada during the 2015 legislative session.



WORKFORCE AND SOCIETY

In 2015, the [Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange \(MLDE\)](#) project completed its pilot phase. In its initial phase, the MLDE developed legal agreements among four pioneering states to exchange data on the students each served, in order to better understand their educational and employment outcomes while accounting for their movement across state lines. This was a substantial step forward given how increasingly important such information is to policymakers and to students and their families on the cusp of choosing an educational program or institution to attend. WICHE produced two reports and a policy brief as the first round of funding came to an end. *Beyond Borders* provided a comprehensive overview of the MLDE, offered a glimpse of some of the findings, and addressed lessons learned. *A Glimpse Beyond State Lines* went into greater detail on WICHE's analyses and findings arising out of the work and covered the methods used. Finally, a *Policy Insights* publication entitled "[Building Capacity for Tracking Human Capital Development and Its Mobility Across State Lines](#)" offered condensed information about the project and lessons learned. The MLDE effort stands as one of the most

ambitious efforts currently underway to provide a tool for states and institutions to gather relevant information about how education and economic and workforce development are linked, and has ensured that WICHE staff are deeply engaged in national conversations about our data infrastructure for postsecondary education and workforce development. WICHE's success in the initial phase also led to substantial new funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation under which WICHE is applying the lessons learned and expanding coverage to new states.

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

The [Policy Publications Clearinghouse](#) is a depository of publications, reports, and briefs related to higher education.



MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Mental Health Program provides technical assistance, education, consulting, and research services for WICHE's member states, the federal and local governments, health care providers, funders, and universities. Staff provides evaluation services, prevention and recovery program development and dissemination, and training and workforce development. The program's training efforts include professional continuing education and pre-professional training, as well as providing community trainings to support prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. The program works to continually improve the capacity of the behavioral health workforce and the effectiveness of the public behavioral health system.

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

WICHE recently completed a behavioral health needs assessment for the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health that includes data, analysis, and recommendations about increasing access to behavioral health services in Colorado.

The Suicide Prevention Toolkit and Training in Primary Care provides training on implementing suicide prevention in primary care settings across the region. During the year,

WICHE was engaged in numerous suicide prevention planning and education efforts with multiple partners across the country and developed the [Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Rural Primary Care Practices](#).

The Mat-Su Behavioral Health Needs Assessment is a multi-partner effort to identify behavioral health and planning needs in the Mat-Su area of Alaska and to develop strategies for individuals with behavioral health needs to obtain access to services.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In FY15, and ongoing in FY16, WICHE will be engaged in supporting the Idaho Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a state corrections-behavioral health partnership, through data analytics.

Beginning late in FY15 and ongoing into FY16, WICHE is conducting a treatment-needs study of the South Dakota Drug Courts for the Department of Judicial Services. In FY16, WICHE will continue to support program evaluation, and additionally begin a focused review of the state's six IMPACT Programs (Assertive Community Treatment) and their fidelity to evidence-based standards of care. Finally, during a transition of leadership at the state

psychiatric hospital (HSC-Yankton) we will provide support and mentoring to interim leadership.

The WICHE-led Alaska Outcomes Identification and System Performance Project developed self-reported outcome measures used in clinical care and to monitor the performance of behavioral health treatment providers.

WICHE analyzes the results of the annual survey of clients conducted by the South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health. The results are used to monitor access to care, quality of care, outcomes, and satisfaction with treatment services.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The [Western States Decision Support Group](#) provides a platform for collaboration and learning related to improving the capacity of WICHE member states to measure system performance and outcomes, and to use data as a tool in planning and public policy development.

WICHE provides technical assistance to the [Colorado Office of Behavioral Health's Data Integration Initiative](#) to align mental health and substance use data with each other, Medicaid, and new health information technology.

WORKFORCE AND SOCIETY

The successful partnership between WICHE, the [Hawai'i Children's Mental Health Division](#), the [Hawai'i Department of Education](#), and the [Hawai'i Public Safety Department](#) achieved contingency accreditation by the American Psychological Association in FY15. WICHE also provides administrative support, technical assistance, and data collection to the [Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium \(HI-PIC\)](#). During FY15, WICHE and the [Hawai'i Department of Education](#) are launching a partnership to recruit a range of behavioral health professionals to fill vacant positions.

WICHE is working collaboratively with the [Oregon State Hospital](#) to build an APA-accredited psychology internship program. In 2015, OSH will matriculate its first cohort of psychology interns. During the next year, WICHE will support the completion of an internship self-study and prepare the program for an accreditation site visit in the 4th quarter of FY16.

The [Nevada Psychology Internship Consortium](#), which matriculated its first cohort of interns in summer 2015, is a unique partnership between the WICHE Mental Health Program, Nevada WICHE, and the state's Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH). Nevada WICHE has committed funds for internship stipends during the development phase, while DPBH has funded WICHE to develop the internship and support for gaining accreditation. As DPBH achieves the ability to self-fund the internship stipends, Nevada WICHE has expressed a commitment to redirect its funding support to new behavioral health professional education and training initiatives.

The [Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium](#), developed and supported by WICHE over the past three years, expands available training slots and builds the workforce in the state.

The [South Dakota Division of Community Behavioral Health Data Systems Improvement Project](#) helps the division review its data collection and reporting procedures with the goal of modernizing and updating its data infrastructure, data collection, and data analysis and performance monitoring based on multi-stakeholder input and needs.

The [Alaska Pacific University Doctoral Program Accreditation Project](#) was begun by WICHE staff this year to facilitate the accreditation of a doctoral program in psychology aimed at serving students across the state using a blended education model.

The [Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers \(APPIC\)](#) is a two-year collaboration between WICHE and APPIC to conduct a nationwide evaluation of doctoral psychology internship programs, currently not accredited by the American Psychological Association, to determine the barriers to accreditation and develop a tool to assess accreditation readiness.

The [Arizona Evidence-Based Practices Project](#) implements four evidence-based practices in Phoenix's Maricopa County. In its final year, the project will include the evaluation of service providers of Assertive Community Treatment, supported employment, permanent supportive housing, and consumer-operated services, in an effort to facilitate the behavioral health system and service improvements.

The [Arizona Behavioral Health Workforce Recruitment Initiative](#) is one example of WICHE's efforts to assist several states with the recruitment of individuals to fill vacant behavioral health positions across state public mental health systems.

The [Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands \(CNMI\) Children's System of Care](#) called on WICHE to provide technical assistance for the preparation of a grant application for the CNMI behavioral health system. The Child and Family System of Care Planning Grant has been funded and additional assistance to that planning effort will be provided during FY16.

The [Guam Technical Assistance Initiative](#) provides a range of training and technical support by WICHE staff and consultants for system improvements in the public behavioral health system serving Guam.

STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROcity AGREEMENT (SARA)

The [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\)](#) is a national initiative that makes distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines, as well as making it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. WICHE, as fiscal agent on behalf of its partners – the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) – was

awarded \$3 million in grants from Lumina Foundation and \$200,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to launch the initiative.

States within the WICHE region can join [W-SARA](#), and the states that have done so include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. Institutions in these states are eligible to participate if they are approved by their home state's SARA portal agency and pay annual fees to NC-SARA.





WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES (WCET)

The [WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies \(WCET\)](#) is the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. Its 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 is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations regarding the role of technology and innovation in higher education.

Sponsors and partners for WCET's annual meeting, leadership summit, and other initiatives include: Ace Learning Company, Acrobatiq, Blackboard, Cengage Learning, Career Education Corp., CogBooks, Instructional Technology Council, Internet2, Jones & Bartlett Learning, McGraw-Hill Education, Mediasite by Sonic Foundry, M-SARA, Online Learning Consortium, Pearson Learning Solutions, RealizeIT, Smart Sparrow, Soft Chalk, SREB, StraighterLine, UPCEA, VitalSource, and zyBooks.

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Connecting Communities of Broadband and Learning Innovation bridges the expertise of e-learning and distance leaders with the technology innovators of broadband to generate resource-rich learning in both the physical and the virtual classroom. WCET membership includes many leading universities that are active in the deployment of broadband networks. WCET initiated several strategic alliances with other higher education and technology organizations to begin a national dialogue about the Internet of Things (IoT) relative to education. IoT will be a major focus for WCET in FY16. WCET also serves as WICHE's representative to the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium.

The [Predictive Analytics Reporting \(PAR\) Framework](#) is a nonprofit provider of analytics, delivering actionable institution-specific insight to member institutions, including two- and four-year, public, proprietary, traditional, and progressive institutions. PAR offers education stakeholders a unique multi-institutional lens for examining dimensions of student success from both unified and contextual perspectives. PAR member institutions collaborate on identifying points of student loss and identifying effective practices that improve student retention in U.S. higher education. During FY15, WCET, WICHE, and the PAR Framework leadership collaborated to support PAR's becoming a 501(c)3 nonprofit entity.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

[e-Learning Policy](#) is a source of information on state and federal policies that affect U.S. online and distance education providers. Among the issues tracked are Title IV federal financial aid policies including state authorization of distance education, regulations for military students, the Higher Education Act reauthorization and financial aid fraud. Information about institutional-level policies – including academic integrity, online student preparedness, providing student services, tuition and fees for distance students, and the use of adjunct faculty in online education – is gleaned from the WCET membership and the Managing Online Education survey.

[“Busting the Myth: Distance Education Enrollment,”](#) a three-part series written by WCET Policy and Analysis Director Russ Poulin and consultant Terri Taylor Straut, examined U.S. Department of Education data on distance education enrollments. The focus was on overall distance education enrollments in 2013; a comparison of 2012 and 2013 enrollments; and data on serving students across state lines, and the implications for state authorizations.

[WCET Leadership Summits](#) offer single-issue focused discussions among higher education administrators who are considering adoption of an emergent technology-related initiative. The summits are designed to provide leaders with a checklist of the challenges, opportunities, and options for advancing such initiatives. The 2015 Leadership Summit, “Adaptive Learning in Higher Ed: Improving Outcomes Dynamically,” explored the many challenging facets of choosing and applying an adaptive learning approach for remedial, undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.

At WCET’s 26th Annual Meeting, held in October 2014 in Portland, OR, five organizations were honored with the [WCET Outstanding Work Award \(WOW\)](#), established to recognize innovative solutions to key problems. Recipients included Capella University for its FlexPath, a competency-based, direct-assessment delivery option for several bachelor’s and master’s degrees and post-baccalaureate certificates; Colorado Technical University for its intellipath™ for MBA preparation, an adaptive learning implementation that is both assessment and facilitator driven, and is aimed at ensuring all MBA students have the base knowledge they need to be successful in the classroom and their careers; Excelsior College for its Online Writing Lab (OWL), which addresses the need for stronger writing support for college students through use of an open-source environment with extensive multimedia elements; Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Extended Learning Institute for its OER-Based Associate Degree Project, a comprehensive

approach to addressing access, affordability, and student success through use of open educational resources; and University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee for its U-Pace, an instructional approach that integrates self-paced, mastery-based learning with instructor-initiated Amplified Assistance in an online environment. In addition, Michael Goldstein, partner at Cooley LLP, received the [Richard Jonsen Award](#), given annually to a WCET member whose career has been committed to improving postsecondary educational programs and services through innovative uses of technology.

The [State Authorization Network \(SAN\)](#), now in its fifth year, is a membership service for individuals seeking to comply with state authorization regulations related to the provision of distance courses and programs. WCET provides training on state regulations, access to experts, and strategies on meeting state requirements, and maintains a community of practitioners to share effective practices and latest developments. Participation in SAN is an additional fee-for-service opportunity for WCET member institutions, systems, and consortia. SAN has worked closely with state regulators, including conducting a joint session and its own meeting in conjunction with the national conference of state regulators.

[WCET Membership Services](#) offer members numerous benefits, including issue briefs in the Talking Points and Q&A series online on emerging technologies, student success, policy and regulations, and managing e-Learning. In addition, through member-only email discussions, WCET’s popular Frontiers blog, and regular Twitter updates, educators from institutions with large as well as small online and distance education programs can readily tap into WCET’s network of e-Learning experts. The number of members on the email discussion list exceeds 2,700 North American subscribers. WCET’s Senior Academic Leaders Forum provides provosts, deans, and senior academic leaders with a peer-to-peer networking opportunity on the engagement of adjunct faculty, data analytics, and other topics.

The [Mobile App Series](#) features Robbie Melton, associate vice chancellor of e-Learning mobilization for the Tennessee Board of Regents, who volunteers as WCET’s “app-ologist” by providing expertise on mobile applications for teaching and learning in postsecondary education. As a cooperative organization, WCET members are encouraged to be engaged and to contribute their expertise.

The [Monthly National Webcast Series](#) brings together experts on e-Learning issues. Webcasts in FY15 included:

“State Authorization for Distance Education: The Future for Regulations”; “State Authorization for Military Students: Navigating the Defense MOU and State Laws”; “Law and Disorder: Revision of Laws Affected by the Internet”; “Lessons Learned with Institutional Data Analytics”; “WCET Google Hangout with Anya Kamenetz, author of *The Test: Why Our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing – But You Don’t Have to Be*”; “Using Technology to Foster Collaboration in Education”; “What’s New at Creative Commons”; “Are Smart Devices and Gadgets Smarter Than Teachers?”; and “WCET Google Hangout: Diversity and the Higher Education Pipeline.” WCET’s webcasts attract a national audience and webcast archives are available on WCET’s YouTube channel.

NEW WCET EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In November 2014, WICHE President David Longanecker announced the appointment of [Mike Abbiatti](#) as the new executive director of WCET. Abbiatti’s career has been a series of successful roles in promoting innovation in teaching and learning and in promoting collaborative solutions. He served as director of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Educational Technology Cooperative and as associate commissioner, Information and Learning Technology for the Louisiana Board of Regents. He led the creation of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative (LONI) and the Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network (ARE-ON).

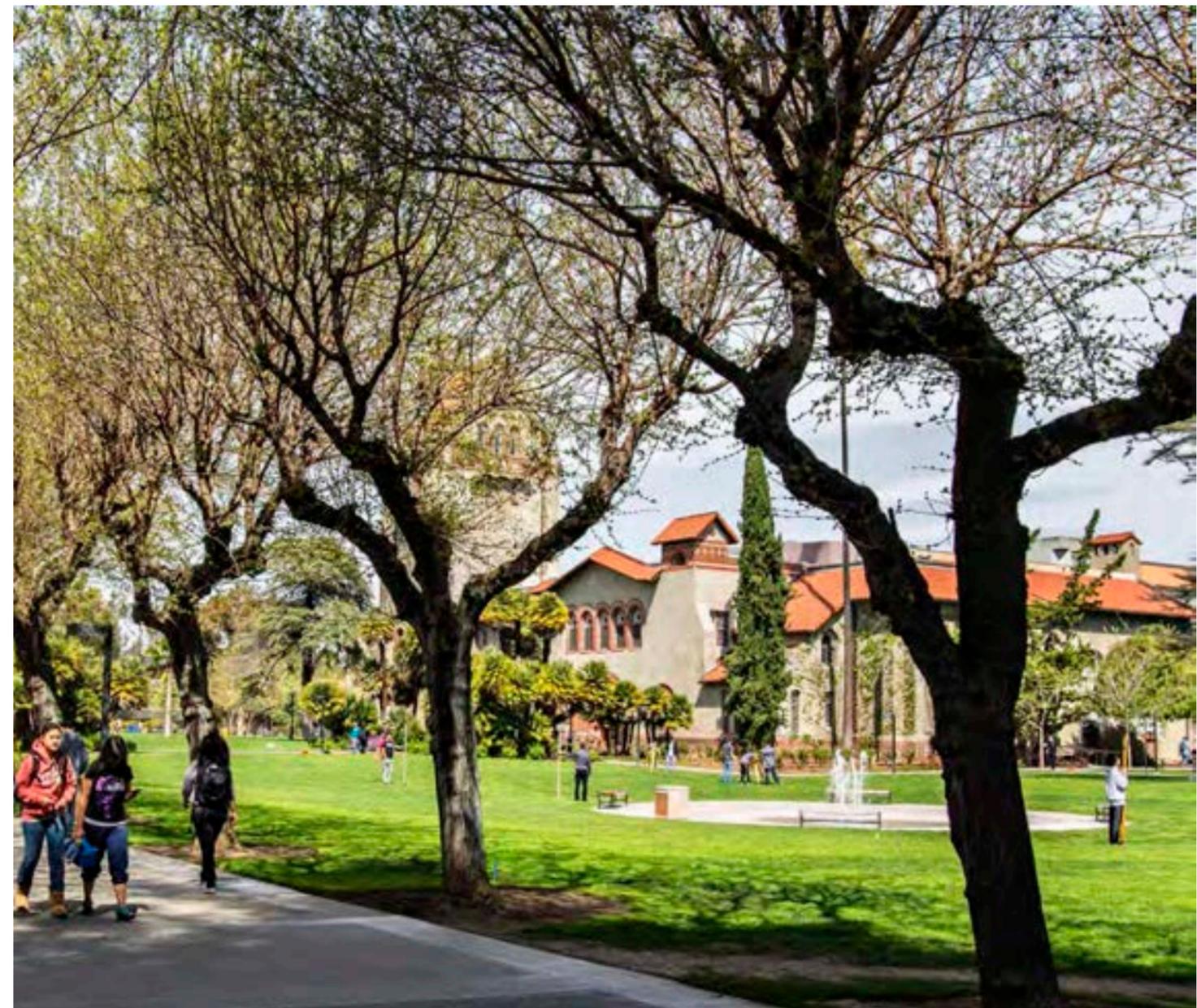


Photo: San Jose University Campus © Robert Jackson



WICHE FUNDERS

The following agencies, foundations, institutions, and organizations supported WICHE during FY 2015 with grants and/or contracts:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Alaska Department of Health and Social Services | Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands | State of Nevada |
| Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority | State of Colorado | State of Oregon |
| Alaska Pacific University | State of Hawai'i | State of South Dakota |
| Alaska Trust | Health Resources Services Administration | United States Department of Veterans Affairs |
| American Psychological Association | Hogg Foundation for Mental Health | United States Department of Health and Human Services – National Institutes of Health |
| Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers | State of Idaho | University of Alaska |
| Arizona Department of Health Services | State of Iowa | University of Texas |
| Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | Lumina Foundation | Washington State Hospital |
| | Mat-Su Health Foundation | State of Wyoming |
| | Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care | |

Sponsors and partners who supported various WICHE meetings and initiatives in FY 2015.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Ace Learning Company | Instructional Technology Council | SALT – American Student Assistance |
| Acrobatiq | Internet2 | Smart Sparrow |
| Blackboard | Jones & Bartlett Learning | Soft Chalk |
| Brainfuse | McGraw-Hill Education | Southern Regional Education Board |
| Brightspace by D2L | Mediasite by Sonic Foundry | StraighterLine |
| Burning Glass | Midwestern Higher Education Compact | Starfist by Hobsons |
| Cengage Learning | M-SARA | TIAA-CREF |
| Career Education Corp. | New England Board of Higher Education | UPCEA |
| CogBooks | Online Learning Consortium | VitalSource |
| College Board | Pearson | zyBooks |
| Elsevier Research Intelligence | RealizeIT | |
| EMSI | | |

WICHE COMMISSIONERS

WICHE is governed by three gubernatorally-appointed Commissioners from each state and territory. The WICHE Commission molds the organization's mission and sets its priorities.

Alaska

Susan Anderson, president/CEO, The CIRI Foundation, Anchorage
Diane M. Barrans, executive director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, Juneau
James Johnsen, president, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Arizona

Chris Bustamante, president, Rio Salado College, Tempe
Eileen Klein, president, Arizona Board of Regents, Phoenix (Appointment pending)

California

Christopher Cabaldon, principal, Capitol Impact, and mayor, West Sacramento City, Sacramento
Dianne Harrison (WICHE chair), president, California State University, Northridge, Northridge (Appointment pending)

Colorado

Joseph Garcia, lieutenant governor, State of Colorado, and executive director, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Denver
Loretta Martinez, general counsel and secretary to the board, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Denver
Dene Kay Thomas, president, Fort Lewis College, Durango

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Sharon Hart, president, Northern Marianas College, Saipan
Jude Hofschneider, senator, Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, Saipan
Joshua Sasamoto, president, Pacific Development LLC, Saipan

Hawai'i

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Carol Mon Lee, attorney and retired associate dean, University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law, Honolulu (Appointment pending)

Idaho

J. Anthony Fernandez, president, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston
Matt Freeman, executive director, Idaho State Board of Education, Boise
Wendy Horman, representative, Idaho House of Representatives, Idaho Falls

Montana

Clayton Christian, commissioner of higher education, Montana University System, Helena
Pat Williams, former U.S. Congressman, Missoula
Franke Wilmer, state representative, Bozeman

Nevada

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North Dakota

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Ray Holmberg, state senator, Grand Forks
Kari Reichert, vice president, National Information Solutions Cooperative, and member, North Dakota State Board of Education, Bismarck

Oregon

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Hilda Rosselli, college and career readiness director, Oregon Education Investment Board, Salem

South Dakota

Robert Burns, dean emeritus, SDSU Honors College, and distinguished professor emeritus, South Dakota State University, Brookings
James O. Hansen, former regent, South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre
Mike Rush, executive director, South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre

Utah

Dave Buhler, commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City
Patricia Jones, member, Utah Board of Regents, and CEO, Women's Leadership Institute, Salt Lake City
Peter C. Knudson, state senator, Brigham City

Washington

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Jeanne Kohl-Welles, state senator, Seattle
Larry Seaquist, former state representative, Gig Harbor

Wyoming

Frank Galey, dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Wyoming, Laramie
Sam Krone, state representative, Cody
Karla Leach, president, Western Wyoming Community College, Rock Springs

WICHE STAFF

The WICHE website, www.wiche.edu, includes a staff directory with phone numbers and e-mail contact information.

President's Office

David Longanecker, president
Erin Barber, executive assistant to the president
and to the commission

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Craig Milburn, chief financial officer
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Allison Murray, accounting specialist

Human Resources

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Derek Englehorn, junior software developer
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Mental Health Program

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National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) & WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)

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and W-SARA
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Cali Morrison, manager, communications
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Peggy Stevens, office support manager, PAR Framework

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