



WICHE NewsCap

WICHE
Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education



A new day dawns over Boulder Valley Dean Fikar/bigstockphoto

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- ▶ WICHE region's Pacific Islands membership now includes Guam.
- ▶ The latest data on college tuition and fees in Western states.
- ▶ 31 new high-quality graduate programs available through WRGP.
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Message from WICHE President David Longanecker

Western Higher Education in the New Millennium

As I close out my career in higher education after 45 years in the field, I can remember no time when so much was changing in the environment in which higher education operates or in our internal operations themselves. This includes changes in why we provide postsecondary education and *how we provide it, whom we educate, the way we assess the quality of the enterprise, and the way we finance what we do.*

One of the most significant changes since the turn of the century is in the public's perception of *why it is that we provide postsecondary education.* Throughout the 20th century, we sent late adolescents to college to become adults – to prepare them for the world of work, for sure, but also and perhaps even more important, to gain adult-level knowledge of culture, personal and collective finance, civic responsibility, and the like.

Today, however, the public agenda for education beyond high school focuses almost exclusively on preparing students for the world of work. Like it or not, those of us working in higher education must understand that for higher education to remain relevant in the current environment, we as an enterprise must not only accept but embrace this change.

America's long-held supremacy in educating its population is clearly being challenged. The U.S. currently ranks 11th in the world in the share of young adults with a

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▶ New WICHE president takes the helm.

Joe Garcia will assume the presidency of WICHE on June 20, succeeding David Longanecker, who is retiring after 17 years as the organization's leader. Garcia, who left his dual role as Colorado's lieutenant governor and executive director of the state's Department of Higher Education this spring, will be the seventh president of WICHE since its founding 62 years ago.



Before his inauguration as lieutenant governor in 2011 and re-election in 2015, Garcia was president of Colorado State University-Pueblo. During his four-year tenure there, he helped the institution overcome financial difficulties and stagnant enrollment, and enhanced its reputation through aggressive marketing and nontraditional solutions. Previously, he was president of Colorado's second-largest community college, Pikes Peak Community College, overseeing three campuses serving more than 16,000 students a year.

Garcia, who earned a business degree from the University of Colorado and a juris

doctorate from Harvard Law School, began his career in 1983 with Holme Roberts & Owen, where he went on to become the first Hispanic partner in the 100-year history of the storied Denver law firm. In 1993, he joined former Gov. Roy Romer's cabinet as executive director of the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies, a position he held until his appointment in 1999 as the U.S. Department of Housing and Development's regional director for the Rocky Mountain states.

Throughout his career, Garcia has been actively involved as a board member for numerous civic, educational, and cultural nonprofit organizations, including the YMCAs of Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Denver; Pikes Peak Legal Aid; economic development agencies in Pueblo and Colorado Springs; the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority; Pikes Peak Child Nursery Centers; and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. He served nine years on the WICHE Commission, and was its chair in 2012.

► **Guam now a member of WICHE.** The WICHE Commission on May 17 approved Guam's request to join the Pacific Islands membership in WICHE. The Pacific Islands membership, open to all of the U.S. territories and freely associated states, was established by the commission in 2012 and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands was the first territory to participate. Other members include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Beginning this summer, residents of Guam will be eligible to participate in WICHE's Student Exchange Program, which allows students from member states and territories to enroll in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other member states and territories and pay reduced tuition. Guam residents are especially excited about gaining access to WICHE's cooperating Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) institutions at the reduced WUE rate of 150 percent of resident tuition. Guam's citizens will also benefit from the full range of other WICHE programs including policy and research projects; institutional collaborative initiatives; workforce development; technical assistance, education, consulting, and training related to behavioral health; and initiatives that advance the role of technology and innovation in higher education.

The opportunity for WICHE membership is also available to American Samoa, the other U.S. territory, along with the freely associated states (Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau) should they opt to join.

► **Arizona's Eileen Klein reappointed as WICHE commissioner.** Eileen Klein, president of the Arizona Board of Regents, has been reappointed to a four-year term on the WICHE Commission by Gov. Doug Ducey.

► **Thirty-one new high-quality graduate programs available to students in the WICHE region.** The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) allows master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral students who are residents of 15 participating WICHE states, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam to enroll in

high-quality programs on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2015, some 1,450 students enrolled through WRGP and saved an estimated \$21.1 million in tuition – an average of \$14,637 per student, annually. Enrollments continue to increase, and a growing number of programs are now offered fully or partially online.

Thirty-one new programs were added to WRGP this spring, bringing the total to 409, offered by 60 participating institutions. WRGP has become a vital resource for graduates in the Western states who are looking for distinctive programs and those in areas of high workforce demand. It's also an opportunity for WICHE states to share these programs (and the faculty who teach them) to build the region's workforce in a variety of disciplines, particularly healthcare.

Currently, some 140 healthcare-related programs are available through WRGP, including those in audiology and speech pathology, public health, graduate nursing, mental health and psychology, biomedical informatics, and a master's in dental hygiene. Some of the new ones include several public health programs offered by the University of Arizona (biostatistics, epidemiology, health behavior health promotion) and by the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (epidemiology and community-based and translational research). Other new healthcare-related offerings include Idaho State University's health informatics master's and Weber State University's executive master's in health administration.

The University of Hawai'i at Manoa's juris doctor (doctor of law) degree was approved as well, largely for the benefit of Alaska, CNMI, and Guam residents, who don't have access to a public law school. Portland State University will offer its master's in financial analysis and its real estate development master's at the reduced WRGP rate. In addition, residents of WICHE's member states will now have access to two critical engineering programs via WRGP: 1) Idaho State University's nuclear science and engineering master's and PhD programs will help bolster the shrinking nuclear workforce (more than half of nuclear professionals are now of retirement age), and 2) Colorado School of Mines is offering its master's and PhD in underground construction and tunneling – the only program of its kind in North America – as demand grows for experts who can design, construct, rehabilitate, and manage underground space.

Participating programs have found WRGP to be an invaluable recruitment tool and an effective resource in diversifying their student pool. Graduate deans and provosts at public institutions in the WICHE region will find application forms on the [WRGP website](#). For additional information, contact Margo Colalancia, Student Exchange Program director, at mcolalancia@wiche.edu.

► **New from WCET: distance education enrollment, open educational resources, academic integrity.** The 2016 [WCET Distance Education Enrollment Report](#) provides a variety of useful information about the nearly 6 million U.S. students now enrolled in at least one online course. The report, based on data accumulated by the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System



(IPEDS) surveys in fall 2014, highlights differences by sector, graduate vs. undergraduate study, student location, and by the number of institutions educating students at a distance. The report offers a one-of-a-kind look at the current state of the industry through graphs, data tables, observations, and commentary.

WCET's website now features an issue page on the leading trend in distance education – [open educational resources](#), freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media that are useful for teaching, learning, assessment, and research. The new issue page offers a variety of information: reports, blogs, links, webcasts, and videos, including a recent in-depth interview with Paul Stacey, associate director of global learning for Creative Commons, by WCET's Megan Raymond.

Also new on the WCET website is a [Q&A on academic dishonesty in the online setting](#), featuring a wealth of peer-reviewed and practical resources.

▶ **Number of states participating in W-SARA grows to 12.**

In May, the WICHE Commission approved Hawai'i's application to become a member of the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA), joining Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. A 13th state, Utah, currently is preparing its application to join W-SARA.



SARA is a nationwide effort of states committed to making distance-education courses more accessible to students across state lines, and easier for states to regulate – and institutions to participate in – interstate distance education. The initiative was funded initially by grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, but now it relies entirely on fee revenue from member institutions. Find out more about [W-SARA](#).

▶ **New WICHE report provides the latest data on the affordability and financing of higher education in the Western states.**

“[Tuition and Fees in the West 2015-16](#)” summarizes the results of WICHE's latest annual survey of published tuition and fees at public institutions in the West, along with new and emerging trends in state higher education policy. Among the key findings are:



- ▶ Average resident undergraduate tuition and fees for the academic year 2015-16 at public two-year institutions in the WICHE region (excluding Alaska and California) increased by 1.8 percent (\$64) from the previous year, while published prices at public four-year institutions grew by 2.7 percent (\$209). By comparison, nationally, the one-year increase was 2.6 percent for two-year institutions and 2.9 percent for four-year institutions.
- ▶ Within the WICHE region, there is substantial variation in tuition at four-year institutions, with statewide average prices ranging from \$4,892 in Wyoming to \$10,639 in Arizona.

- ▶ The gap between high-price states like Arizona, Colorado, and Washington and low-price states like Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming has widened considerably over recent years, with the highest tuition and fees roughly double that of tuition and fees in the lowest-price states.
- ▶ Within the WICHE states, community colleges in California charge the lowest rates for in-district students, at \$1,380, followed by those in New Mexico, at \$1,810. The highest rate was in South Dakota, where the average was \$6,400, almost twice the average for WICHE states.
- ▶ State appropriations for higher education were up 6.5 percent for the WICHE region as a whole this year, higher than the national average. Increases in per-student funding were particularly robust in California (8.7 percent), Colorado (15.7 percent), Hawai'i (8.4 percent), Oregon (12.9 percent), Utah (9.2 percent), and Wyoming (9.4 percent).
- ▶ While state support for higher education across the WICHE region generally continued to recover in FY 2015, it still amounts to 13 percent less per student than in FY 2008.

The eight-page brief also provides a concise look at policy trends in Western states involving the affordability and financing of higher education – including proposals to create some form of tuition-free college and to address various aspects of student loan repayment.

▶ **Teddi Safman, Jose Fierro elected chairs of academic leadership groups.** Phyllis (Teddi) Safman, the Utah System of Higher Education's assistant commissioner for academic affairs, recently became chair of the Western Academic Leadership Forum, succeeding Neil Moisey of the Montana University System. Safman will serve as chair through April 2017. The Forum provides a venue for academic leaders at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral institutions and chief executives and chief academic officers for systems and state governing boards to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. To find out more about the Forum's history, membership, and initiatives, visit www.wiche.edu/forum.

The new chair of the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders is Jose Fierro, president of Cerritos College in Norwalk, Calif. Fierro, who will serve through April 2017, succeeds John Cech, deputy commissioner of academic and student affairs for the Montana University System. The Alliance provides chief academic leaders of two-year institutions and related system and state agencies with opportunities to share resources and work collaboratively on issues of mutual interest. To learn more about the Alliance, visit www.wiche.edu/alliance.

▶ **Registration opens in June for WCET's 28th Annual Meeting.** Jaime Casap, who holds the title of chief education evangelist at Google, will be the keynote speaker for WCET's 28th Annual Meeting, to be held Oct. 12-14 in Minneapolis. The program will feature sessions on topics ranging from new and emerging technologies, accessibility, and organizational success, to student perspectives and the recruitment and training of adjunct teaching faculty. For registration and program information, go to the [WCET website](#).

► **The scope and reach of WICHE's Interstate Passport continue to expand.**



The Interstate Passport – a newly designed framework of learning outcomes and proficiency criteria – represents a significant reform of policies and procedures affecting postsecondary students who transfer from one institution to another across state lines. It is aimed at improving graduation rates, shortening time to degree, and saving students money. In recent months, the initiative has made steady progress on several fronts:

- **Completion of Passport Framework.** [Passport Learning Outcomes and transfer-level proficiency criteria](#) have now been established for all nine knowledge and skill areas. Faculty teams at 17 Passport institutions are currently constructing their Passport Blocks – the list of courses and other learning experiences that impart the Passport Learning Outcomes – and several institutions are expected to begin awarding the full Passport in fall 2016.
- **Recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.** Out of 42 First in the World (FITW) projects awarded funding thus far in two rounds of competition, the U.S. Department of Education staff selected 12 projects – including the Passport initiative – to showcase during a recent FITW project directors meeting in Washington, D.C. WICHE's Patricia Shea gave a presentation on the Passport at the White House to Education Department officials and other guests.
- **Train-the-trainer workshop.** Academic advisors and campus marketing/communications representatives from the Passport states of Hawaii, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming convened in Boulder in May for a two-day workshop providing ideas, materials, and templates to share with multiple audiences back home – faculty, administrators, incoming and outgoing transfer students, and parents.
- **Orientation workshop for faculty leaders.** A recent workshop in Boulder brought together more than 80 faculty members and administrators from two- and four-year institutions in states that have been engaged in Passport work for several years, and states that are more recent participants. Representatives from the six “new” states – Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Virginia – received a crash course in mapping the Passport Learning Outcomes to institution and state learning outcomes and how to construct Passport Blocks. Representatives from the veteran states shared their experiences in implementing the Passport and navigating obstacles.
- **Verification and tracking.** Work is progressing at the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to develop the Passport Verify and Academic Progress Tracking (APT) services for Passport institutions. Through Passport Verify, institutions will be able to query NSC to verify if incoming transfer students have earned a Passport. The second round of data collection for the pilot phase is underway. NSC is also establishing the infrastructure for the APT service, which will collect disaggregated data from Passport institutions at the end of each term and provide reports

annually to the sending institutions on the performance of their students after transfer. This quality-assurance component of the project is focused on keeping the Passport Review Board informed on how Passport student performance compares to non-Passport transfers and to native students.

► **New policy brief shares lessons learned from WICHE's Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange (MLDE).**

A series of 11 papers focused on improving the nation's postsecondary data infrastructure, published recently by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), includes a brief co-authored by Patrick Lane, WICHE's project manager for the MLDE, and Brian Prescott, formerly of WICHE and now with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

“[Fostering State-to-State Data Exchanges](#)” draws on lessons learned from the MLDE to identify how a broader state-to-state exchange could be established to help answer key questions about postsecondary education. Among the key findings summarized in the paper: the very real barriers to establishing such an exchange are surmountable, and these exchanges can produce vital information for students and their parents as well as policymakers.

► **WICHE's work on adult college completion showcased at several recent conferences.**



Over the past two months, WICHE staffers have made a number of presentations on the [Adult College Completion Network \(ACCN\)](#), a Lumina Foundation-supported initiative that unites diverse groups working to increase college completion among adults with some postsecondary credit but no degree.

In May, Demarée Michelau, WICHE's director of policy analysis, spoke about ACCN's work during panel discussions at a statewide convening in Ohio titled Go Higher Ohio: Summit on Postsecondary Education Attainment, where she highlighted the importance of, and successful strategies for, serving adult learners. She also spoke about ACCN at a panel discussion on college completion as part of the University of Denver's Annual Higher Education Leadership Lecture Series.

Michelau and WICHE project coordinator Christina Sedney participated in a two-day convening in May, sponsored by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), that focused on designing a promise-type aid program offering free college tuition and fees for a specific subset of adult students. In June, Sedney made a presentation on ACCN at the University System of Georgia's Adult Learner Symposium, and another presentation, on system-level approaches to prior learning assessment, at the National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning in Philadelphia.

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college education and if current trends continue, the U.S. could conceivably slip to between 15th and 20th. Of particular concern in our region is that the West is solely responsible for America's stagnant position in world rankings. Despite the generally held belief that each generation should become better educated than the previous one, that is not the case in the West. Of the 12 states with a young adult population that is less well-educated than older residents, 10 are Western states, including in order of magnitude: New Mexico, Nevada, Hawai'i, Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, California, Washington, and Oregon. Given the close correlation between education and economic vitality, it is not hard to see why job preparation has become so clearly defined as the primary purpose of postsecondary education.

In great part, this change in purpose is a function of the change in *whom we educate*. Today, postsecondary education, whether it is college or vocational technical education, serves not only traditional-age students, but more and more adults returning for additional education or beginning postsecondary education at a later age. The 20th century focus on civilizing late adolescents, therefore, doesn't fit many, if not most, of today's students.

Furthermore, we are focusing much more on serving populations that traditionally have not been served well in higher education, particularly students of color. While this focus on reducing equity gaps certainly existed prior to the change of the century, with a heavy focus at that time on the social justice imperative, our performance clearly didn't measure up to our rhetoric. Truth be told, that remains true today, particularly in the West. Nationwide, the difference between the share of adults from traditionally underrepresented minority populations (blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans) who have a college education and white adults with a college education is 23 percent, with white adults reaching nearly 50 percent in college attainment. This means that white adults are twice as likely as adults from minority populations to hold a college degree. Nine of the 15 WICHE states have even higher equity gaps than the national average, with Colorado and California leading the nation – hardly a statistic of which we can be proud.

The expansion of whom we serve has, not surprisingly, also increased the demand for higher education. Despite suffering substantial financial constraints resulting from the two recessions, American higher education accommodated an increase of 31 percent in enrollments in the first 15 years of the new century. The West experienced this same 31 percent increase. Both nationwide and in the West, the most precipitous percentage increase occurred within the for-profit sector of higher education, where enrollments rose by 254 percent in the West. Both public and private higher education enrollments also increased rapidly, by 19 percent and 44 percent, respectively.

These changes in public purpose and in whom we educate, along with constraints in funding and a new wave of technological innovation within higher education, have contributed greatly to changes in *the way in which we provide education*. Online education was still pretty much a novelty in 2000, with only 10

percent of students back then taking any online course work and only 2 percent taking their full load online. By 2014, 28 percent of students were taking at least a portion of their education online and 14 percent were taking their entire education online. The way in which education is provided has also been profoundly changed by the use of technology through hybrid learning, adaptive coursework aligned with predictive analytics, technology-mediated support services, and online textbooks and libraries, among other things. And it works. Evidence suggests that these new processes and products are improving both the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of higher education.

At the same time, *the ways in which we assess and are held accountable for the quality of the higher education enterprise* have changed significantly. Both assessment and accountability regimes now focus much more on measuring educational outcomes than on education practice and effort. Within the public policy sphere, this has resulted in shifting the focus from enrollment, which drove public policy in the 20th century, to successful program completion, most often measured by degrees and certificates conferred.

Of course, the increased focus on job preparation has helped fuel greater focus on educational completion, given the exceptionally high correlation between educational attainment and successful employment. Although the overall educational attainment level of America's adult population has remained rather stagnant, there is actually very good news on the college completion front. During the first 14 years of this century, degree completion increased 59 percent nationally and a whopping 74 percent in the West. While the for-profit sector accounted for much of this increase, degree completion at public institutions in the West increased 58 percent. This means that during the most financially challenged period of time in modern history, higher education in the West substantially increased its productivity – obviously, good news. But it comes with one sobering and concerning caveat: the increase in productivity was not equitably shared, and, in fact, equity gaps actually increased during this period of time, a trend that we cannot long endure.

We have also begun to focus more on student learning outcomes – and it's about time. For far too long we have used the accumulation of courses, and passing grades in those courses, as evidence that a student has accumulated the knowledge and skills to be granted a college degree. The changing expectations of the business environment, coupled with evidence from large-scale assessments like the National Adult Literacy Survey, are forcing higher education to focus more on whether students are learning what they need to learn to function in an increasingly competitive world. While much of the demand for this shift is coming from outside the academy – from accreditors, state and federal governments, and prospective employers of graduates – much of the energy for it is coming from faculty members themselves, who in many cases have caught the spirit of assessing student learning.

Finally, there is the issue of *changes in the financing of higher education* – some of which are promising; some, not so much. The most significant shift has been a movement toward outcome-

based funding. Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio provided early leadership in this area, though more recently, a number of Western states – notably Colorado and Oregon – have made significant progress. When designed well, outcome-based funding has great potential for both improving desired performance and more appropriately aligning responsibilities between government, governing boards, and individual institutions.

Despite these new funding approaches, little has been accomplished in terms of bending the cost curve in higher education. From the late 20th century to the present, higher education has been increasing its costs of doing business well above the cost of inflation. The most recent annual SHEF report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) indicates that, today, per-student funding in the U.S., adjusted for inflation, is at the highest level in history.

Now, that's not what we often hear. What we hear is, "Woe is us – states have been reducing their support per student, and dismantling the public in public higher education." While it is true that state support per student, adjusted for inflation, has declined precipitously, it is not because states have reduced their overall support for higher education, but rather because in tough times they couldn't fund enrollment increases. Although many states did, in fact, reduce funding during the Great Recession, most states have increased funding since the recession ended and today the overall funding for higher education, adjusted for inflation, is about the same as it was before the turn of the century. It is substantially lower on a per-student basis, but that is solely because of the increases in enrollment.

In the face of reductions in public per-student funding, however, the near-universal response in higher education has been to shift costs to students and their families through tuition increases. As a result, on average, higher education hasn't really suffered at all.

Predictably, ever-increasing tuition costs have generated concern and anger among those picking up the tab – parents, students, and the politicians for whom they vote. Thus, affordability has become a major public policy issue. To a great extent, increases in federal financial assistance have offset higher costs for the neediest students. But the burden for middle-income families has grown heavier, and although they can still afford to send their children to college, or to attend themselves, it is now coming at much greater personal sacrifice.

Public policy responses to these challenges have included initiatives such as tuition constraints and boosts in financial aid. In the West, for example, Washington State's rollback of tuition made sense given the exceptionally rapid increases that had preceded the rollback. The establishment of need-based financial aid systems in Idaho and Nevada, and the enhancement of Oregon's aid program, helped fill a significant financial access gap in those states.

Some initiatives, however, will likely prove penny wise and pound foolish. Tuition freezes fail to recognize both the importance of tuition as a major revenue source for public institutions and the real increases in costs that inflation imposes on institutions. Tuition-free programs sound great, but fail on just about every measure of good public policy. They target their resources on those students least needing the assistance, they eliminate the marginal revenues that institutions must rely on to cover marginal costs, they eliminate tuition revenue as a legitimate substitute for state resources in difficult times, and they make it easier for students not to take their education seriously (after all, they don't have much invested in it). But such approaches are politically popular. And absent any efforts by higher education to bend the cost curve down and quit relying on tuition revenue to always fill the gap, we can expect additional proposals – both sound and not so sound – to enhance affordability.

So the world of higher education is changing in fundamental ways on a variety of fronts. If you're a professional working in higher education or in the policy arena around higher education and you are uncomfortable with these trends, you may want to consider changing your venue.

This month, I will be doing just that – moving on. Not because I'm uncomfortable with change; in fact, I will miss the excitement of these times. I am appreciative of the wonderful career that higher education has provided me but, quite simply, it is time for me to retire. Enjoy the interesting times ahead.

Dave Longanecker