



# NewsCap

A bimonthly newsletter from the leading regional agency serving higher education throughout and beyond the American West

## He knows the long haul: A Q&A with David Longanecker, interim WICHE president



David A. Longanecker with his big rig

Dr. David Longanecker served as president of WICHE from 1999 through 2016, and this month he returns to WICHE to serve as interim president. He plans to spend several months here leading in service of WICHE’s mission and

commission, and preparing the turf for the next long-term president.

In the gap between his long-term and interim WICHE presidencies, Longanecker went back to school. His half-century career positions him as one of higher education’s principal experts and leaders—yet he says about his recent schooling, “I wasn’t the best student in the class... but I learned a great deal in a very short period of time. I thought I’d be smarter than the other people in the class. And I wasn’t. They were extremely good people, very bright. And they’re probably very good truck drivers.”

The school in question was Aims Community College, where Longanecker recently obtained a commercial driver’s license to initiate a lifelong dream of driving a long-haul big rig. The experience gives him yet another

lens through which to see the diversity of the higher education landscape WICHE serves.

Longanecker recently sat for an interview to chat about what he’s been doing and what he’s learned these past two years. He also talks about the past, present, and future of higher education generally and WICHE in particular. [You can read the full interview at wiche.edu/david-longanecker-qa](http://wiche.edu/david-longanecker-qa)



Kim Hunter Reed discussing attainment gaps

## WICHE Equity Gap Task Force selects states, hosts kickoff

“In a way, it’s like terraforming: trying to produce life on a new planet,” said Gretchen Syverud, Lumina Foundation strategy officer for state policy, about the foundation’s higher education equity and opportunity efforts. “Life will not grow unless the environment is hospitable.”

Extending that analogy to WICHE's new Task Force for Closing Postsecondary Attainment Gaps, which Lumina supports, this environment requires engagement across business, education, philanthropy, and government sectors, Syverud told guests at a May participant kickoff meeting. And it should assume states lack additional funds to put toward these ends, requiring new synergies and relationships to be found.

For this reason Wyoming, one of three states selected for this Task Force, filled two tables with key stakeholders at this kickoff meeting. "Gov. Matt Mead wanted all hands on deck for this initiative," said Mary Kay Hill, policy director for the Wyoming Office of the Governor. "We don't usually see Wyoming with so robust a contingent compared with other states."

Arizona, Utah, and Wyoming learned this spring of their selection (via RFP) for this WICHE-led effort, which aims to increase the proportion of adults with postsecondary credentials from traditionally underserved groups. In the U.S., though 61 percent of Asian adults and 46 percent of White adults have such credentials, just 29 percent of Black adults, 24 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native adults, and 22 percent of Hispanic adults do.

Each state's stakeholders will work with WICHE over two years to undertake a data gap analysis and a policy and practice gap analysis, leading to the development of state-specific action plans and ultimately strategies for closing attainment gaps throughout the West. As outgoing WICHE Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed said at that meeting, "We need a broad tent of people talking about this work."

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## WICHE Spring Meeting draws heavy commission engagement

Nearly 40 commissioners convened May 7-8 in Missoula, Mont. for WICHE's biannual commission meeting. The theme, "How We Innovate: Examples from WICHE's Front Lines," underscored four plenary sessions in which higher education stakeholders from Montana and Hawai'i discussed programs and innovations finding success in their states, and prominent higher education thought-leaders shared national perspectives on budget, policy, access, and equity issues. The commission also heard



Montana Governor  
Steve Bullock

valuable perspectives on higher education from Montana Governor Steve Bullock.

The business portion featured the approval of WICHE's FY19 budget and workplan, as well as PSEP support fees and state dues for 2019-21 (see [agenda materials](#) for detail). The meeting also included a salute to departing WICHE President Joe Garcia, the announcement of [David Longanecker as interim WICHE president](#), and preparations for the pursuit of a new long-term WICHE president. Find meeting presentations and selected photos at [wiche.edu/resources/presentations](http://wiche.edu/resources/presentations)



Alliance leaders with Bernice Joseph Award honorees from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

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## Forum, Alliance honor programs supporting faculty student success

The Western Academic Leadership Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, each convened by WICHE, honored initiatives promoting best-practice-sharing at (respectively) two-year colleges and four-year universities.

The Forum honored a [California State University Long Beach](#) program that supports student success by deploying data in innovative and collaborative ways. The Alliance honored the [Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges](#) for a cross-institution program aimed at retaining and mentoring faculty of color. Both awards were given at spring annual meetings for those groups, and each are detailed in the [Academic Leaders Toolkit](#), a WICHE clearinghouse for academic resource-sharing.

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## WICHE Reading Room

- The latest edition of [WICHE Insights, Tuition and Fees in the West, 2017-18: Trends and Implications](#), discusses WICHE's annual tuition and fees survey of

350-plus Western public colleges and universities, and spotlights trends in state appropriations, financial aid programs, and student fees.

- WICHE's Mental Health Program has had a strong year, with over 30 funded projects in 11 member states and territories. [Their 2018 Annual Report](#) inventories the program's current activities to illustrate our breadth of efforts supporting the behavioral health workforce and sector.



**Interstate Passport staff** at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's June 7 meeting, and at an American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers conference July 8-10 in Minneapolis.

## Save the Date!

- **June 12-13**, [Back to Basics State Authorization Compliance Workshop](#), Boulder
- **July 11-13**, [Western Academic Leadership Academy](#), Boulder
- **Oct. 23-25**, [WCET 30th Annual Meeting](#), Portland, Ore.

## WICHE Welcomes...



*Ben Cannon  
Oregon WICHE  
Commissioner,*

*John Gomez  
director of  
operations*

*Rebecca Helfand  
program director*

- New Commissioner Ben Cannon, executive director of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission since 2013, and a former middle-school humanities teacher, state representative, and governor's education policy advisor
- New Mental Health Program staff **John Gomez**, director of operations, and **Rebecca Helfand**, program director



## Mental Health Program strengthens rural safety nets

Nowhere in America is the mental health safety net thinner than in sparsely populated areas like Beaverhead County in southwestern Montana, where fewer than 10,000 residents are spread across 5,572 square miles. A \$75 million state revenue shortfall has led to budget, spending, and Medicaid reimbursement cuts that greatly reduce Beaverhead County resident access to outpatient therapy and case management. The primary Missoula-based regional provider of such services can no longer staff to deliver them in Beaverhead County.

In plotting a viable way forward, the county's Mental Health Local Advisory Council (MHLAC) sought out Dennis Mohatt, WICHE's vice president of behavioral health and a nationally recognized expert on rural healthcare. With his assistance, MHLAC earlier this year conducted a survey, focus groups, and interviews to assess community needs and priorities. In May, Mohatt traveled to Dillon, the county seat, to help the group sort through their findings and establish a strategic plan.

## On the road: Selected recent or upcoming WICHE-led presentations

**Policy and Research staff** at legislative higher-ed committee meetings in Nevada and North Dakota, and at the New Mexico Department of Higher Education's statewide governance summit in April

**WCET's Tanya Spilovoy and Russ Poulin** at the [2018 Summit for Online Leadership and Administration + Roundtable](#), June 18-20 in Washington D.C.

## WICHE Organizes Workshop On Financing Higher Education

### From the WICHE archives

“Equal educational opportunity for all has long been a basic objective of this nation. During the coming 15 years, there will be a need for further reduction of the economic barriers to worthy and needy would-be students. There should be no indiscriminate resort to higher fees and tuitions as expedients for meeting the short-run financial needs of higher education institutions. Particularly in the case of state institutions, it would be altogether perverse to let year-to-year changes in tuitions and fees become a device by which state governments escaped their responsibility to levy adequate taxes.”

—From “Needs, Resources and Priorities in Higher Education Planning,” in the April 1958 issue of the Higher Education in the West. [The Arizona Memory Project](#) enables you to browse this and nearly 100 WICHE newsletters from 1954 to 1990.

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## Thank you, Joe Garcia!



We salute outgoing president Joe Garcia, who departs WICHE this month for a new role as president of the Colorado Community College System. In two years at the helm of WICHE, he has been a champion for attainment, equity, innovation, actionable research, and varied other goals in support of higher

education. His WICHE efforts have been well informed by his experience leading two colleges, and his service as a WICHE commissioner, as lieutenant governor and as Colorado’s chief higher education official for Colorado. Best of luck Joe, as you continue to raise the sea level for higher education on behalf of students and the institutions that serve them.

WICHE Mental Health Program personnel have played this role in dozens of rural areas over the years and are increasingly invited to provide insights in key forums. Mohatt hosted a National Institutes of Mental Health webinar on rural mental health in late May, and WICHE’s Hannah Koch spoke at a June journalism workshop on behavioral health issues in rural communities. These speaking platforms broadcast urgent health needs, as well as WICHE’s ability to partner with communities that may lack deep behavioral health system know-how.

“Planning, needs assessment, analysis—that’s our bread and butter,” Mohatt says. “We also provide training and support in suicide prevention, veteran behavioral health, mental health first aid, and motivational interviewing. You can find such training elsewhere, but you’re unlikely to find it with our rural knowledge and expertise.”

Mohatt said he was encouraged by the Beaverhead County group’s openness to creating a stronger, more flexible mental health safety net, anchored by a robust primary care system, a Critical Access Hospital, and a Community Health Center.

At its May meeting, the MHLAC decided its top priority would be to reach out to every county resident who had lost case-management services and connect them with an in-county primary care provider. “In my opinion, for a community that size, focusing limited resources on building up the capacity and quality of an integrated primary care/behavioral health system is a good use of resources,” Mohatt says, noting also that it would better position the county to attract federal government and other funding. “[Integrated care] is the wave of the future in healthcare.”

Among other Beaverhead County plan elements Mohatt views as promising: a multi-faceted public awareness and information campaign, and a new peer-run drop-in center in Dillon to replace a discontinued conventional Adult Day Treatment program. “Most people in day treatment/partial hospitalization programs will tell you it’s the peer support they come for. Center it around a healthy lunch, and you’ve made a big dent in the isolation people are feeling,” Mohatt says.

Recapping his Dillon visit, Mohatt praises the “high level of interest, responsiveness, and pragmatism” of Beaverhead County stakeholders, adding “I urge them to build on it.”