



NewsCap

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



WCET's new Z Initiative targets soaring textbook costs

With the national spotlight on college affordability focused on rising tuition costs, another growing financial burden – the price of textbooks – has remained largely in the shadows. The average community college student now spends \$1,328 a year on textbooks, up more than 80 percent over the past decade. Nearly two-thirds of students have forgone purchase of a textbook for at least one class, and nearly half say the cost of materials led them to enroll in fewer classes.

Several U.S. colleges are experimenting not merely with controlling or decreasing textbook costs, but replacing textbooks altogether with openly licensed educational resources (OER). To nurture and expand such efforts, the [WICHE Collaborative for Educational Technology \(WCET\)](#) recently launched the Z Initiative – short for Zero-Textbook-Cost courses and degrees, and led by new WCET Director of Open Policy Tanya Spilovoy. [Learn more about the Z Initiative here.](#)



More than 20,000 Passports awarded in first broad-launch year

After a successful pilot in seven western states, Interstate Passport—a program based at WICHE that eases students' transfer of general education lower-division credits between universities, saving them time and money—launched more broadly during the 2016-17 academic year. The Interstate Passport Network's 24 member institutions in eight states awarded 20,651 Passports this first year to students for lower-division general education attainment. [Read more here about Interstate Passport](#), its learning outcomes, and how your institution can join to facilitate friction-free student transfer.



Digital Inclusion Award honoree brings NASA imprimatur to tribal community college

Small tribally run colleges are rarely where high-tech employers look for the next generation of top talent. But they may be where space and robotics employers increasingly take notice, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Nader Vadiee, professor at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, N.M. Vadiee leads an immersive robotics program that sparks interest in technical fields among Native American and Hispanic students now underrepresented in such high-paying professions.

Vadiee was honored in June by WCET and partner Global MindED with the inaugural [Digital Inclusion Award](#), which recognizes those who spearhead increasing involvement in digital leadership among first-generation student populations.

Vadiee's leadership on SIPI's engineering faculty has included running the NASA-funded Intelligent Cooperative Multi-Agent Robotic System (I-C-MARS) project, which enables students to work with rovers in a simulated Martian environment. SIPI recently emerged victorious at NASA's Swarmathon, a cooperative robotics competition at which SIPI bested 20 other colleges with far greater resources.



100 converge on Salt Lake for WCET Leadership Summit

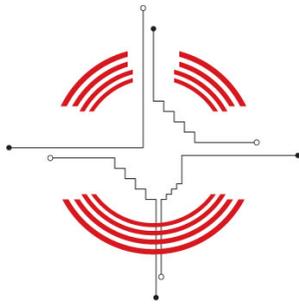
Data security, open educational resources, and student success were hot topics at WCET's annual [Leadership Summit](#) June 14-15 in Salt Lake City. This more-intimate of WCET's two annual gatherings was aimed at senior academic and administrative leaders, many charged with shepherding higher-ed programs toward technological and instructional innovation.

One such innovation is exemplified by John Gillmore (seen here in blackjack-dealer mode), assistant director of instructional technology at the University of Central Oklahoma. Challenged with having high-level instructional-design conversations without getting bogged down in content details, his Institute for Learning Environment Design team created sticky-note pads with five symbols (standing for information, dialogue, feedback, practice, and evidence). Together, these icons are a functional shorthand for discussions on lesson sequencing and structure, with a positive byproduct of easing tensions that may arise between senior faculty and learning designers—who lack subject expertise but have insight into optimizing pedagogy for new platforms.



WICHE welcomes new commissioner Nick Hacker

WICHE welcomes Nick Hacker, former North Dakota state senator, current member of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, and president of North Dakota Guaranty and Title Co.



New Mexico tribal institution first to join national distance-ed initiative

Navajo Technical University (NTU) in Crownpoint, N.M., recently became the first U.S. tribal institution to participate in the [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\)](#), which aims to make distance-education courses more accessible and easier to regulate across state lines. NTU enrolls more than 1,700 students in programs ranging from applied technology to business, engineering, nursing, and language arts.

Since its inception in 2014, all but a handful of states and territories have joined SARA, with 190 institutions in 14 states now participating in [the Western region](#). Launched by grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SARA now relies entirely on fee revenue from member institutions.



Underserved communities gain from WICHE-supported psychology internships

The behavioral health workforce in underserved areas of Alaska, Hawai'i, and Nevada got a boost this summer with the graduation of 23 psychologists from internships supported by WICHE's [Mental Health Program](#).

A shortage of accredited internship slots for doctoral students in psychology is a significant problem nationally, and most acutely in the rural West. WICHE works with state agencies and other partners to develop opportunities for doctoral students to train, work, and ideally make their home in underserved areas. Learn more in this [overview of WICHE-supported internships](#).



Did you know?

The number of financial aid fraud recipients increased 82 percent between 2009 and 2012, leading to \$187 million in stolen federal aid in 2012. This limits access to aid for legitimate students and can affect an institution's default rate. Contact [Megan Raymond](#) for details or view highlights from this June 22 WCET [Combatting Financial Aid Fraud](#) webinar.

WICHE on the road

On July 18, WICHE President **Joe Garcia** gave a keynote on *Knocking at the College Door* at the 2017 ACT Enrollment Planners Conference in Chicago and will be among the featured speakers at the 2017 [Accelerating Latino Student Success \(ALASS\) Institute](#), Oct. 5-6 in Washington, D.C.

Policy staff including **Peace Bransberger** and **Demi Michelau** have presented on the *Knocking at the College Door* report at a New York college admissions fair and at WICHE's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council annual meeting in Oregon.

WICHE reading room

Mental health literacy: The spring 2017 issue of *Military Medicine* (unavailable online) features an article by the [WICHE Mental Health Program](#) reporting on a pilot clinical trial that used a military-specific modification of the Mental Health First Aid program. The study, in which WICHE and its research partners worked with Army National Guard personnel, showed an increase in mental health literacy, a reduction in stigma, and increased willingness to help fellow soldiers in mental health distress.

Growing nonresident student enrollments: Higher education policymakers need a stronger grasp of how public postsecondary institutions increasingly rely on nonresident student enrollment. That's the key conclusion of a [WICHE Policy Brief](#) summarizing attempts to gather data on tuition revenue broken out by students' residency. Though most surveyed states do not collect or analyze such data, WICHE found evidence in those that do that nonresident students are an increasingly vital source of unrestricted revenue for some institutions.

With public institutions under pressure to increase reliance on tuition revenue (amid declining state appropriations), the Brief concludes, "Residency status becomes an important variable for policymakers navigating complex decisions at the intersection of appropriations, tuition price-setting, and financial aid."

Shifting Demographics of High School Graduates: "Fewer students, more diversity" is a key conclusion from the first in a series of supplemental reports that drill down on data highlights from the latest edition of [Knocking at the College Door](#), the quadrennial WICHE publication that reflects the most complete available snapshot of U.S. college-age demographics.

Across the nation, graduating classes are projected to gradually become smaller and more diverse—but this [July 2017 WICHE report](#) shows how trends vary by region. In the South, robust increases are projected for the number of graduates, with Hispanic students accounting for most of that increase. College-age populations in the Midwest and Northeast are expected to flatten, and even shrink. The West should see modest growth in high school graduates through 2024, then a rapid contraction driven by declines in Hispanic graduates.

The next release in this supplement series, with new projections of male and female high school graduates, is slated for September.

Save these dates!

Sept. 19-20 for the annual meeting of WICHE's [Legislative Advisory Committee](#), at the Park City Marriott in Park City, Utah. The theme of this year's meeting is "Demographic Change in the West: Choices, Challenges & Opportunities."

Oct. 25-27 for [WCET's 29th Annual Meeting](#), in Denver at the Westin Downtown. Early-bird deadline: Sept. 22.

Nov. 9-10 for the fall WICHE Commission meeting, at the SpringHill Suites Denver Downtown.

April 18-20, 2018, for the annual meeting of the [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders](#), at the Motif in downtown Seattle.

April 25-27, 2018, for the annual meeting of the [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#), at the Hilton Vancouver, Wash.

May 7-8, 2018, for the spring WICHE Commission meeting, in Bozeman, Mont.

WICHE's leadership

Joseph A. Garcia, president
Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET
John Lopez, special assistant to the president and chief administrative officer, and director, W-SARA

Demarée Michelau, vice president, Policy Analysis and Research
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Dennis Mohatt, vice president, Behavioral Health
Jeremy Simon, director of strategic communications