

WICHE



Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

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Protecting Our Priorities

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A Message from WICHE Chair Tom Buchanan

What does “protecting our priorities” mean in an era when economic realities require that our institutions of higher education trim their budgets while also providing critical education and training to more and more students – those “human resources” whose skills will be the key to any economic turnaround?

This is a question WICHE addresses every day. For over 50 years, WICHE has helped states deal with scarcity: we were founded specifically to assist states that lacked important resources – specifically, medical, dental and vet schools – to find a way to train the physicians, dentists and veterinarians they needed. Since those early days, WICHE has worked to provide states and institutions with the programs, tools, and research to improve access to higher education – including hundreds of professional, graduate, and undergraduate programs – and to ensure that students succeed.

At the core of all our efforts are three elements: efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation. Our research into financial aid looks at ways to coordinate and maximize state, federal,

and institutional funding, while our project on transfer and articulation pinpoints promising practices that could help states cut time to degree and lower the cost of college for students. The expansion of the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is helping students tap educational resources outside their state’s borders at reduced tuition rates – and saving their state money; while the Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE) is assisting colleges and universities in sharing resources to better meet their students’ needs. The Master Property Program is helping institutions enhance the protection their assets and reduce the cost of property insurance. Our study of mental health first aid is examining how to help college students in need of mental health services. And our efforts with distance education are showing that innovative new modes of delivery can be just as effective – and more economical – than traditional classroom-based learning.

These are just a few of the ways that WICHE worked to protect our higher education priorities in the last fiscal year. The 2010 annual report details these, and many more.



A Message from WICHE President David A. Longanecker

The last year has been a tough one for higher education. With few exceptions state governments have been dealing with major budgetary shortfalls, thanks to the “Great Recession,” which may be over or may be gearing up for a second round. Anticipation of billions in economic stimulus aid to education has softened the blow, but those dollars have provided only a temporary fix – one that likely won’t cover the gap between now and the flush days of economic recovery. For many states – the *Chronicle of Higher Education* says over half – that recovery isn’t going to happen any time soon – not till 2013 or later.

The smartest states and institutions are facing this reality squarely, figuring out their priorities and working hard to protect them. But protecting our priorities isn’t the same as preserving the status quo. It’s not realistic to expect that things will return to normal in a year or so – that institutions will go back to business as usual. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that we will (or should) ever return to the “go go” times at the end of the 20th century, because frankly we as a nation were living beyond our means: that life may have been good, but it was unsustainable. Instead of waging a futile struggle to return to “the way we were,” we need to figure out how to make our systems of higher education thrive despite the very real constraints we face today – constraints that aren’t going away.

Our first priority should be promoting broad access to higher education. Some argue that this can’t be done unless and until revenues increase. Our institutions are weathering staff layoffs, faculty furloughs and course reductions. Many – including some community colleges – see slashing or capping enrollments as the only solution. But there’s another way. Institutions can change the way they do business, instituting measures to increase productivity – and a number are doing just that. Arizona State University, for example is realigning the teaching/research mix, placing new emphasis on the “scholarship of teaching” with the goal of improving student learning, progress, and graduation rates. Others, like Metropolitan State College in Denver, are tapping technology, creating hybrid courses that link face-to-face and online learning or course-sharing at a distance with other institutions. Still others, like the University of Wyoming and the University of Maryland, are rethinking their business plan from top to bottom to discover new and more effective ways to produce well-educated graduates at a lower cost. Recent work by Arthur Hauptman, done for the World Bank, demonstrates the potential of effectively using the marginal dollars from recession-enhanced enrollments to fund the enterprise in the absence of new state and federal support.



The advent of federal stimulus dollars has been a definite blessing, protecting our students and institutions from the terrible upheavals that would otherwise result – and our economy from the downshifting that couldn't help but occur if we failed to educate sufficient numbers of young people to participate in a fiercely competitive global economy. But stimulus funds have been a temporary blessing. Let's use them well: not to "get back to normal" or return to the status quo but to adapt to the way things are now, to create a new way of doing business – one that's more efficient and more effective. We can do it – and understanding that stimulus funds won't be with us always, we must.

Programs and Services

The Programs and Services unit oversees WICHE's Student Exchange Program and other initiatives that help institutions and students save money and make good use of available resources, as well as programs that bring together the West's higher education leaders.

The **Student Exchange Program** allows students to attend out-of-state institutions in the region at reduced costs and helps the West's higher education institutions to fill enrollment gaps, avoid unnecessary duplication of programs in the region, and better manage limited resources. It includes the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Western Regional Graduate Program, and the Professional Student Exchange Program.

The **Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)**, founded in 1987, is the largest program of its kind in the nation. Students from all 15 WICHE states are eligible to participate, paying 150 percent of resident tuition at out-of-state schools. WUE enrolled 24,670 students in some 145 public two- and four-year institutions in the West during the 2009-10 academic year, saving students and their families \$173.4 million. Colleges and universities can tailor their participation (including admission requirements and available programs of study) to their individual campus needs. Working with Western regional

associations of high school counselors, WICHE is encouraging more institutions to join WUE: last year it welcomed Arizona State University's Downtown campus and Eastern New Mexico University's Portales campus.

The **Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)** helps students enrolling in some 220 distinctive master's, professional science master's, Ph.D., and graduate certificate programs, where they pay resident tuition. In academic year 2009-10, some 500 graduate students saved an estimated \$5 million by enrolling through WRGP. Some 45 institutions in 15 WICHE states participate. California State University, East Bay, has broken new ground for the state by making two programs available via the WRGP network, thereby making California residents eligible to enroll through WRGP in the 2010-11 academic year – a move that will likely increase WRGP enrollments overall.

WRGP offers over 50 programs for future health professionals, including some 30 specialized graduate degrees in nursing; degrees in public health, audiology, speech pathology, mental health counseling, and social work; a master's of science in dental hygiene to train future faculty; and other healthcare-related programs. Participating programs have found WRGP to be an invaluable recruitment tool and an effective resource in diversifying their student pool. The Colorado School of Public Health – operated jointly by the University of Colorado Denver,

Colorado State University, and the University of Northern Colorado – received applications from 60 WRGP-eligible students for the 2010-11 academic year. Programs can choose to limit the number of WRGP tuition awards each academic year to ensure that their participation is feasible over the long term.

The next call for nominations for WRGP programs was announced in September 2010. Graduate deans and provosts at all public institutions in the WICHE region were notified. To be eligible for the WRGP network, programs not related to health must be "distinctive," meaning they must be offered at no more than four institutions in the WICHE region (exclusive of California). Given the tremendous needs in the healthcare workforce, healthcare-related programs are not subject to the same distinctiveness criteria but must be of high quality.

The **Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)** broadens access in 10 professional healthcare fields to students in 12 WICHE states. In 2009-10 some 730 students were enrolled in programs in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic medicine, physician assistant, and pharmacy at more than 50 public and private institutions. This represented an investment of \$14.5 million across the WICHE region. Participating states determine the fields and the numbers of students they will support.

The West's rural areas have been hardest hit by persistent and growing labor shortages in the healthcare professions. WICHE has been exploring opportunities to strengthen the healthcare workforce in rural areas. This includes the development of its PSEP Plus initiative, which would enroll medical students through PSEP in the U.C. Denver School of Medicine's rural track program. Denver's program was cited as a model in the promotion of the Rural Physician Pipeline Act of 2009 (S.1628), an amendment to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was signed into law in March. The bill – cosponsored by 10 senators, including three from WICHE states (Alaska's Mark Begich, New Mexico's Tom Udall, and South Dakota's Tim Johnson) – is designed to give medical schools resources to recruit students from rural communities, who will return there to practice. It also provides schools with resources to establish or expand rural track training programs that give future rural doctors the additional coursework and training they will need to practice in remote areas.

The **WICHE Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE)** is a robust administrative tool designed to support collaboration among institutions offering online courses. Through ICE the participating institutions expand their students' access to high-quality online courses and programs taught by other member institutions. Seamlessly, students enroll, obtain advising, and use financial aid from their home campus, which transcripts

the course. During this fiscal year, there were 10 institutional members and four consortia members for an overall impact on more than 30 institutions. Both two-year and four-year institutions may participate as enrolling institutions (EI), teaching institutions (TI), or both. A primary focus this year was the expansion of the exchange into a three-tier model, in which seats, courses, or programs are exchanged. Members may engage in one or all three of the exchanges. In the seat exchange, members with excess capacity in online courses offer seats in them to other members at an agreed-upon common wholesale price. With the course exchange, members contract with other members to create and supply a new online course or an entire section of an existing online course. And in the program exchange, members may contract with others to jointly develop and deliver a full program.

Faculty members at ICE institutions also worked together to expand the online offerings in their disciplines through a set of ICE collaborative initiatives. The math and science initiative, for instance, has submitted a proposal to the National Science Foundation for a grant to focus on the cross-campus development of, and enrollment-sharing in, online lab courses in biology and physics, in order to open pathways into STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs for more students. A consortium of engineering schools has been seeking funding to share enrollments in programs in sustainable

energy, while a consortium of community colleges has been working on ways to use ICE to support the exchange of seats in health information technology. Other areas of collaborative interest explored in the past year include general education bottleneck courses, as well as courses in public health, business, Native American studies, and foreign languages. The Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus) has been using ICE to make more online courses responding to workforce needs available to students at their home institutions, as has a Colorado Department of Labor/ U.S. Department of Labor demo project. WICHE ICE implemented a listserv in March to support communication among its members.

The **Western Academic Leadership Forum** addresses regional higher education issues and engages in resource sharing. Its members are public and private doctoral and master's-level institutions and university system offices and state governing boards in the WICHE states. The theme of its 2010 annual meeting – cohosted by the South Dakota Board of Regents and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City – was “Academic Leadership: Charting the Future in a Sea of National and International Initiatives.” Speakers from the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and Lumina Foundation for Education provided introductions to discussions of K-12 initiatives on common core standards, postsecondary readiness, the Bologna Process, and the changing role of

regional accrediting agencies in the U.S. In addition, WALF members reviewed the prototype for the new WALF Toolkit, a Web-based repository of decision-making tools for academic leaders.

The new **Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (WACCAL)** was launched earlier this year with \$10,000 in seed money from WALF. In April WICHE hosted the inaugural meeting of the executive committee – consisting of one representative from each WICHE state – in Seattle. Modeled after WALF, WACCAL provides academic leaders of community colleges and technical schools and academic officers of two-year systems and state agencies with a way to share resources and expertise across the region.

WICHE is a partner in **GOALS (Gaining Online Accessible Learning through Self-Study)**, a project centering on the development, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and processes related to Web accessibility for use by institutions and accrediting bodies. Supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, GOALS is in the final year of its three-year grant. Accomplishments included the development and testing of a Web-based tool allowing institutions to benchmark themselves as they create an accessible Web presence and to chart their progress from year to year. In addition, GOALS published a call-to-action paper, as well as

another piece titled “Recommended Practices for Institution-wide Web Accessibility.”

To help institutions conserve precious fiscal resources, WICHE offers participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s **Master Property Program (MPP)** to colleges and universities in the West. Members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to higher education needs while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. Members also have the opportunity to earn annual dividends, based on the consortium’s comprehensive loss ratios. MPP institutions number over 100 and have total insured values of \$66 billion. WICHE and Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) members together have achieved savings of over \$56.5 million in premiums and dividends. The program is underwritten by Lexington AIG and is jointly administered by Marsh, Inc., and Captive Resources, Inc., under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the insured institutions. Seven institutions and two systems in the WICHE region are members of the Master Property Program: Colorado College, our newest member; Lewis and Clark College (OR); Nevada System of Higher Education (including the Community College of Southern Nevada, Desert Research Institute, Great Basin College, Nevada State College at Henderson, Truckee Meadows Community College, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University of Nevada, Reno, and Western Nevada Community College), Pima County Community College system (AZ, with

six campuses and four learning and education centers), Reed College (OR), Seattle Pacific University (WA), Westminster College (UT), and Willamette University (OR).

In addition, WICHE participates in other **cost-saving initiatives** with MHEC, including a three-year contract with Xerox Corp. for printing equipment and document management services, with four possible one-year renewals. Under the contract all government agencies and institutions or systems of higher education in the MHEC and WICHE regions can use Xerox for their office printing needs at a discount. The contract also includes production-level printing services. In addition to hardware – including multifunction devices, laser printers, copiers, and fax machines – the contract covers Xerox services, such as productivity assessments and document advisories to help manage and streamline records and administrative documents. The full range of Xerox Global Services’ offerings is available, including Xerox Office Productivity Assessments that will examine copy, print and fax volumes across an entire organization and identify opportunities to save money by consolidating equipment. Members can also utilize Xerox’s Document Advisor Services to help manage the information overload of student records and administrative documents that schools continually face. An administrative fee is assessed on all purchases resulting from the MHEC/WICHE contracts: 2 percent on gross sales on equipment purchases under the small printer contract and 1 percent of gross sales on equipment purchases

under the large printer contract. Revenues from the fees are split evenly between MHEC and WICHE.

Policy Analysis and Research

The Policy Analysis and Research unit investigates a variety of higher education issues. In FY 2010 Policy staff made several presentations to communities of scholars on the findings of the unit's earlier evaluation of the **Colorado College Opportunity Fund**, the first and (to date) only attempt by a state to fund higher education through a voucher-based system. The evaluation, which focused on the original intent of the policy, its impact on access, and its implementation and supply-side effects, was completed under contract with the Colorado Department of Higher Education. Policy staffers also prepared an article for a lay audience, which was published by *Change* magazine.

Policy also consulted with several states, including Alaska, Colorado and Kentucky, on potential state financial aid programs or policies. In addition, it tracked trends in pricing at all public institutions in the region: its ***Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West*** report is updated annually and released every fall.

In light of the dismal fiscal environment battering state economies, opening up state budget gaps, and leaving higher

education vulnerable to vast cuts in state support, the Policy unit devoted considerable effort in FY2010 to keeping track of state budget conditions and state responses in support of public higher education. The unit's staff made presentations at both commission meetings this year on these topics.

The Policy unit manages several projects related to access and success. One of the most exciting initiatives is **Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners**, a comprehensive effort to stimulate and guide policy and practice changes to create a more navigable path to degree attainment for "ready adults" – those who are just shy of having enough credits to obtain a degree but have not yet returned to college. Funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, Non-traditional No More focuses on removing barriers related to data, academic affairs, financial aid and financing, student support services, and communications. Staff worked closely with four project states: Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, and South Dakota. In addition, it expanded the project to include North Dakota.

The Policy unit also works with the **Pathways to College Network**, an alliance of private and corporate foundations, nonprofits, educational institutions, and the U.S. Department of Education. The alliance, which includes researchers, policy analysts, educators, K-12 administrators, and representatives from government, business, foundations, and community organizations, uses research-based knowledge to improve

postsecondary education access and success for the nation's underserved students. These include underrepresented minorities, low-income students, those who are the first in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities. WICHE staff helps determine Pathways' overall focus and has continued its long-standing partnership with the initiative.

In an effort to assist the Western states with program implementation and administration, the Policy unit manages the **College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Consortium and Network**. In 2008 the federal government launched a program designed to foster partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and philanthropic organizations through matching grants aimed at increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. In 2010 CACG was extended, and as a result states will receive additional money to implement their programs. Through the CACG Consortium, WICHE worked closely with state leaders in Alaska and Nevada to successfully implement their CACG programs. Simultaneously, the CACG Network, composed of the two consortium states plus North Dakota and Washington, provides a forum in which staff involved in developing, implementing, and maintaining state CACG efforts can share and discuss issues related to the administration of their programs. Through this network state leaders and policymakers share promising practices, lessons learned, common challenges, and the latest research. WICHE

held two successful meetings of the CACG Network and served as a useful resource for state administrators.

Building on the Changing Direction project, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, the Policy unit partnered with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to promote informed decision making and the alignment of higher education appropriations, tuition, and financial aid by educating state legislators, news media (especially state house and higher education reporters), and others about these issues in an effort to increase student access and success. The first phase of this project, called **Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid**, ended shortly after the close of the 2010 fiscal year, and WICHE followed up with targeted technical assistance in California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. In the previous fiscal year, WICHE and NCSL collaborated with the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media to produce eight policy briefs about important issues related to policy integration, targeting them to state legislators. These briefs were disseminated to every state legislator in the country, and over the past year, WICHE staff presented the material at a variety of meetings and policy forums.

Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems, a joint project of WICHE and Hezel Associates, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, seeks to

develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their articulation and transfer programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions. In partnership with Hezel Associates, a consulting firm based in Syracuse, NY, WICHE published *Promising Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems*, which features recommendations for policymakers and state leaders. In addition, WICHE's Policy unit and WCET examined how states and higher education systems are using Websites, Web portals, and other Web-based tools to help students navigate the transfer process. The project's findings are intended to be a valuable resource to SHEEOs and other policymakers as they confront issues related to postsecondary transfer and access.

Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity (7th edition), released nationally in 2008, is widely used by politicians and policymakers; librarians; researchers; the media; businesses; state agencies (including SHEEO offices and education departments); postsecondary institutions; school districts, and individual public and private schools. Policy has obtained funding to examine the methodology behind the projections, which has changed little since WICHE published the first edition of *Knocking* in 1979. The project will also investigate ways to incorporate additional analyses sought by our constituents, such as income-based projections (the 6th edition of the publication did include a first attempt to project graduates by income, an

analysis that could not be updated for the 7th edition due to a lack of new data). Finally, it will modernize the content and delivery of the data to allow users to develop meaningful, real-time reports for their specific needs. With funding in place, this work will get underway this year.

In 2010 WICHE continued to work closely with its **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**, a group of state legislators from the West who inform the WICHE Executive Committee and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education; provide input on WICHE initiatives; and advise on program and participant considerations related to WICHE's policy forums. Staff serves the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West. This year, the annual meeting was held in September at the WICHE offices. The meeting, titled "A Crisis is a Terrible Thing to Waste: How to Increase Your Return on Investment," focused on how to better align higher education appropriations, financial aid, and tuition policies to increase student success.

In FY2009, WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit hosted a meeting of data stewards in 14 member states to help them stitch together their K-12, postsecondary, and workforce data systems. That meeting was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through a project called **Fostering Collaborative State-Level Education and Workforce Database Development**. In FY2010 the unit completed work on that

project, which ultimately included a conversation among four states about how to construct a multistate data exchange and culminated in the publication of a report titled *A Framework for a Multi-State Human Capital Development Data System*. Building off its success with that project, the unit has been awarded a three-year, \$1.5 million grant from the Gates Foundation to make that multistate vision a reality. The project, called **Facilitating Development of a Multi-State Longitudinal Data Exchange**, gets underway as the new fiscal year begins.

The Policy unit also partnered with the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California in an effort to help policymakers and higher education leaders keep equity at the forefront in their decision making, particularly given current budget challenges. As part of this project, WICHE is analyzing data from Nevada to disaggregate student progress through postsecondary education by race/ethnicity and working with the state's stakeholders to interpret the findings and understand what might be done to preserve access and improve success for underrepresented student populations. WICHE is working with a small group of early career policy analysts and faculty members to more intentionally incorporate equity-mindedness into their work or to make their work more relevant for policymakers.

Policy continued to update **SPIDO (State Policy Inventory Database Online)**, the nation's only online searchable database of higher education policies. WICHE staff conducted

presentations about SPIDO at national meetings to highlight how the database can be used to support accountability and other higher education efforts in the states. Policy will continue to market the site as a resource to policymakers, education leaders, researchers, practitioners, and others nationwide.

Mental Health Program

The past year was a busy one for the Mental Health Program (MHP), with projects across the WICHE West and beyond. Mental Health's mission is to ensure that a high-quality mental health workforce is available to support good care to citizens of the West. The program is recognized as a leader in rural mental health policy and research. Program staff conducts research, provides technical assistance, and supports effective public planning. Key program staffers are often invited to participate in federal and state planning and advising activities and routinely serve as speakers at conferences across the nation. The MHP has successfully completed the first year of a project funded by the National Institute of Mental Health to test the impact of a mental health literacy program with college students. The MHP has recruited 32 campuses for the second year of this groundbreaking study.

The MHP has also partnered with the Citizen Soldier Support Program, a Congressional demonstration project designed to expand training for health and behavioral health providers to better meet needs of returning service members.

In addition, MHP staff completed the development of a Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Rural Primary Care Providers and is disseminating it throughout the nation through a partnership with the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. MHP staff members are now examining how states have utilized this toolkit and are planning to conduct training on toolkit implementation in primary care settings.

MHP continued to support a range of workforce development activities this year. During fiscal 2010 these activities have included evaluation, technical assistance, and consulting services. MHP, in collaboration with the Annapolis Coalition for the Behavioral Health Workforce, provided leadership in an effort to establish a set of core competencies and assessment tools for direct care providers in Alaska. Additionally, staff has led an effort to develop an Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium, to ensure applied training opportunities exist in Alaska for graduates of their doctoral program in clinical-community psychology. Finally, MHP partnered with several organizations, including the Norton Sound Health Corporation, in supporting the Alaska Jobs to Careers Project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The project works to embed an applied, credit-earning curriculum in entry-level health jobs.

MHP staff also assisted in planning and system improvement projects. Alaska contracted with MHP to provide program model recommendations for improvement around services

for persons with complex behavioral management issues, who are currently at risk for out-of-state residential treatment placement. MHP continues to support South Dakota in its efforts to develop improved services to children and families. Additionally, Colorado utilized MHP to complete an evaluation of populations in need of public mental health services to better understand gaps in service utilization. MHP continues to provide program evaluation consultation to federally funded efforts in South Dakota. This evaluation support has centered on suicide prevention initiatives and the implementation of treatment for persons with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

To support MHP's focus on rural mental health, the program assisted with the hosting of the National Association for Rural Mental Health conference in Denver in June. Rural mental health researchers, providers, policymakers, consumers, and funding agencies joined together to share information on innovative programs and research for rural and frontier communities. In addition, in collaboration with the Health Resources and Services Administration's Office of Rural Health Policy, MHP is working to identify promising practices, best practices, models that work, and evidence-based practices in rural behavioral health.

Another MHP focus is mental health first aid (MHFA), a 12-hour training course designed to give members of the public

important skills to help those who show signs of developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The Mental Health Program has five certified MHFA instructors who are available to provide training in interested communities. MHP has been working in collaboration with several partners in Colorado to develop a plan to roll out MHFA throughout the state.

WCET

In November WICHE announced the appointment of Ellen Wagner, an internationally renowned expert in learning technologies, as the new executive director of **WCET**, the newly renamed WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies. WICHE and WCET chose Wagner based on the breadth of her knowledge of educational technologies, her experience with technology companies and commercial partners, and her understanding of state and federal policy as it relates to learning and technology. She has been involved in WCET in various roles since its earliest days, including receiving the 2008 Richard Jonsen Award, the organization's highest honor. WICHE established a one-year agreement with Sage Road Solutions, where Wagner will continue as the principal analyst. The terms of the contract also enable WCET access to the business development expertise of Beth Davis, managing director of Sage Road Solutions.

Under the new executive leadership, WCET completed a competitive analysis of its membership composition and trends; a needs assessment of WCET members; and a scan of other e-learning organizations. In February the results of this analysis were presented to WCET's Executive Council. The findings include the following.

- ◆ Growth in new membership has been coming from outside the Western region and from the non-public higher education sector.
- ◆ WCET's programmatic agenda excels in these areas: tracking learning technology trends; policy research and advocacy (federal, state); technology implementation and integration; faculty development; research and good practices; and networking among peers.
- ◆ WCET members often represent key decision makers in their institution/organization.
- ◆ WCET's bond to WICHE places it in a strong position, distinguishing it from other e-learning organizations.

During first quarter 2010, WCET was engaged in realigning its services and programs, business plan, and messaging/leadership campaign plan. Several elements of these plans required the implementation of new communications tools, such as a WCET blog and redesigned Website. In fiscal 2010 WCET also focused on developing a drive to strengthen the membership base.

WCET is coordinating the **Transparency by Design** project, which helps prospective adult learners become better consumers of higher education offered at a distance, providing comparisons among participating institutions and context about the differences in the institutions, as well as guidance for students. The project is funded by Lumina Foundation for Education and member institutions. WCET has created the **College Choices for Adults** site to display data that help adults select institutions and programs that best meet their needs. WCET is assisting in the development of the data and will serve as a neutral reviewer of data submitted before it is posted on the site.

WCET's annual conference is one of the premier national e-learning events, bringing together many of the top technology innovators from colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and companies around the country. The November 2009 annual conference registered 355 participants, down from the previous year's record high but strong in spite of the travel restrictions felt by many in the public sector. The program offered attendees resources and good practices related to quality assurance of online learning, serving nontraditional students, strategies to improve student engagement, recruitment and retention of online faculty, and more. In conjunction with the annual conference, program officers from Lumina Foundation for Education and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation convened an invitational discussion among WCET members to solicit their

ideas concerning the ability of large-scale online networks to serve low-income youth and adults.

The 2009 conference also launched WCET's newest professional development offering, **CatalystCAMP**, created in collaboration with the Southern Regional Education Board and national leaders in online education. Directors of online and distance education asked WCET to provide more professional development programs to help them retain and advance their staff to higher managerial and leadership positions. CatalystCAMP was designed to develop the leadership capabilities of education professionals with one to five years of experience in e-learning.

WCET continued its Webcast series as yet another means of providing professional development. The fall 2009 series addressed both practical and future-oriented topics, including: Carnegie Mellon University's Community College Open Learning Initiative; cutting textbook costs; student-centric marketing; the findings from the inaugural Managing Online Programs survey (see below); and designing online programs to serve military students.

WCET's member institutions often seek solutions and guidance on "rubber hits the road" issues. WCET draws upon the multiple perspectives, pragmatism, and real-life experiences of its members to identify good practices. WCET's member-

led common interest groups are currently addressing a variety of topics, including: e-learning consortia; evaluation and ownership of learning management systems; faculty policies and practices in online programs; and student retention in online courses and programs

Together with Kansas State University's Institute for Academic Alliances, WCET is producing a public wiki listing multi-institution consortia throughout the U.S. and Canada. Each consortia can upload information about their funding, strategic planning, accountability reporting, and public relations. More than 40 consortia are featured on the site.

EduTools, the highly successful model for providing comparative reviews of various e-learning products, is being redesigned to take advantage of Web 2.0 models and practices. The development of the EduTools 2.0 prototype was delayed this year due to staffing changes, but two surveys were disseminated to companies that have products in two categories: course/learning management systems from commercial providers and open source options; and student authentication systems.

In fiscal 2010 WCET staffers provided consulting services to organizations such as NEXus and worked on a number of publications. WCET partnered with the **Campus Computing Project** on the first **Managing Online Education** survey and

report, investigating the management of online programs and including results on tuition, fees, faculty support, ADA accessibility support, and many other issues facing online programs. In addition WCET's Russ Poulin and the Policy unit's Demaree Michelau cowrote "**The Funding of Virtual Universities**", published in *New Directions for Higher Education: Lessons Learned from Virtual Universities*.

Technology & Innovation

Another tech-related program is the WICHE Technology and Innovation initiative. Access to broadband networks has been identified as a national priority and has received a significant investment of federal stimulus funds: the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes \$7.2 billion to extend broadband network connectivity to unserved and underserved communities. Ubiquitous access to broadband will stimulate job creation, knowledge creation, and better educational, health, and mental health services to citizens.

Louis Fox, who leads the Technology and Innovation initiative, continued to serve as an advocate with state and national government entities and a facilitator among the leading advanced research and education networking entities during fiscal 2010. The Technology and Innovation initiative took an active part in the national discussion about higher education and the country's broadband future. Fox is strategizing with

regional higher education networks and national educational coalitions about pilot projects to compete for federal stimulus funds under grant programs by the Commerce and Agriculture departments.

Through its involvement in national, regional, and state-level networking initiatives, WICHE's Technology and Innovation unit is well-positioned as a broker and facilitator as states, institutions, and communities consider how to get engaged in these new broadband efforts. WICHE conversations with the Western Governors Association and many national higher education and research organizations (such as Internet2, National LambdaRail, the Community Computing Research Association, EDUCAUSE, The Quilt, StateNets, National Science Foundation, EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation, and the Southeastern Universities Research Association) have elevated WICHE to a leadership role in helping the higher education community shape its national broadband agenda.

WICHE Commissioners

Alaska

Susan Anderson, president/CEO, The CIRI Foundation, Anchorage

Diane M. Barrans, executive director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, Juneau

James Johnsen, senior vice president of administration, Doyon, Limited, Fairbanks

Arizona

Thomas Anderes, president, Arizona Board of Regents, Phoenix

Leah Bornstein, president, Coconino Community College, Flagstaff

David Lorenz, retired vice president of administration and finance, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff

California

Roy Ashburn, state senator, Bakersfield
Two appointments pending

Colorado

Joseph Garcia (WICHE vice chair), president, Colorado State University – Pueblo

Kaye Howe, executive director, National Science Digital Library, Boulder

D. Rico Munn, executive director, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Denver

Hawaii

Roy Ogawa, attorney at law, Ogawa, Lau, Nakamura & Jew, Honolulu

Roberta Richards, principal, Pauoa Elementary School, Honolulu

Steven Wheelwright, president, Brigham Young University Hawaii, Laie

Idaho

Robert W. Kustra, president, Boise State University, Boise

M. Duane Nellis, president, University of Idaho, Moscow

Michael Rush, executive director, Idaho State Board of Education, Boise

Montana

Clayton Christian, chair, Montana Board of Regents, and chief executive officer, Stewart Title of Missoula County, Missoula

Kim Gillan, state senator, Billings

Sheila Stearns, commissioner of higher education, Montana University System, Helena

Nevada

Warren Hardy, president, Associated Builders and Contractors, Las Vegas

Jane A. Nichols (immediate past WICHE chair), vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education, Reno

Carl Shaff, educational consultant, Reno

New Mexico

Viola Florez, cabinet secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department, Santa Fe

Susanna Murphy, secretary of education, New Mexico Public Education Department, Santa Fe

Patricia Anaya Sullivan, assistant dean, College of Engineering, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces

North Dakota

Duaine Espeguard, member, State Board of Higher Education, Grand Forks

William Goetz, chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck

David E. Nething, state senator, Jamestown

Oregon

Ryan Deckert, president, Oregon Business Association, Tigard

Tim Nesbitt, deputy chief of staff, State of Oregon Governor's Office, Salem

Camille Preus, commissioner, Oregon Dept. of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, Salem

South Dakota

Robert Burns, dean emeritus, SDSU Honors College, and distinguished professor emeritus, Political Science Department, South Dakota State University, Brookings

James O. Hansen, regent, South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre

Jack Warner, executive director, South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre

Utah

Bonnie J. Beesley, vice chair, Utah Board of Regents, Salt Lake City

Peter C. Knudson, state senator, Brigham City

William Sederburg, commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City

Washington

Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney, state representative, Olympia

Jeanne Kohl-Welles, state senator, Olympia

Wyoming

Thomas Buchanan (WICHE chair), president, University of Wyoming, Laramie

Deborah Hammons, state representative, Worland

Klaus Hanson, emeritus professor of German, University of Wyoming, and vice mayor, City of Laramie

WICHE Staff

David Longanecker, president

Louis Fox, senior associate, WICHE Technology and Innovation

Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis

Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services

Dennis Mohatt, director, WICHE Mental Health Program, and vice president, Behavioral Health

Brian Prescott, director of policy research

Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE and Western Academic Leadership Forum

Margo Schultz, director, Student Exchange Programs

Ellen Wagner, executive director, WCET

James Werle, director, Internet2, K20 Initiative, WICHE Technology and Innovation

