

Alaska | Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

A trusted partner in regional collaboration, resource-sharing, sound public policy, and innovation since 1955

Commissioners



Susan Anderson
WICHE Vice Chair,
President/CEO,
The CIRI Foundation



James Johnsen
Lecturer, School
of Management,
University of
Alaska, Fairbanks



Donn Liston
Commissioner,
Alaska Commission
on Postsecondary
Education

Legislative Advisory Committee



Gary Stevens
Senator,
Alaska State
Legislature



Andi Story
Representative,
Alaska State
Legislature

WICHE...

Provides strong return on investment

- 1,355 Alaskan residents saved \$13.6 million in 2019-20 through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). These WICHE programs provide significant student savings on nonresident tuition at 170+ Western US public colleges and universities and select private health care programs.
- WICHE's Student Access Programs collectively provide Alaska:



- Alaska students and their families have saved nearly \$246 million since the state began participating in WUE.

Helps Alaska attract students from other states

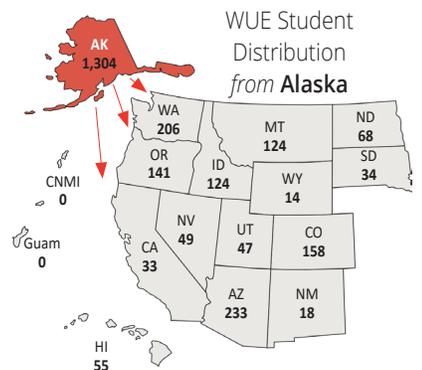
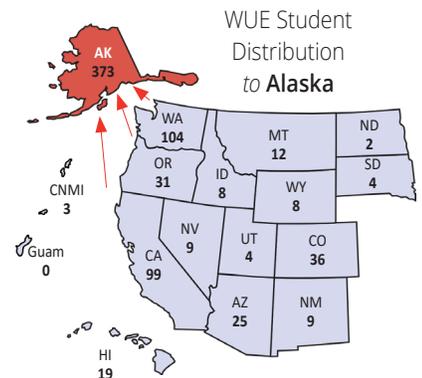
- WUE and WRGP incentivized 430 students in 2019-20 to invest their tuition dollars in Alaska, students who might not otherwise pursue an Alaska program.

Bolsters Alaska's health workforce

- Through PSEP, Alaska students earn health degrees more affordably in fields such as dentistry, pharmacy, optometry, and several other health fields, and **70 percent of them return to Alaska to practice** in communities that need these health specialists, all at no cost to the state.
- Alaska's behavioral health workforce benefits from a **Psychology Internship Consortium** that WICHE initiated and supports with Alaska partners. The WICHE Behavioral Health Program prepares psychologists to pursue careers in rural and underserved Alaska communities.
- WICHE also provides contracted technical assistance and consultation on varied **Alaska Division of Behavioral Health projects**, including health-record programming and system enhancements, and on a recent publication that guides skill development for Alaska health and human services direct-care workers.

Increases Alaskans' higher education access and affordability

- The **University of Alaska Anchorage**, **University of Alaska Southeast**, and **University of Alaska Fairbanks** are three of more than 30 college and university members of WICHE's **Interstate Passport® Network**, which—by enabling block transfer of lower-division general education—reduces barriers to transfer of credits that students may encounter.
- The **University of Alaska Fairbanks** and **Kodiak College** are among 20+ US colleges and universities that WICHE is working with to build an **alliance of institutions with high proportions of American Indian and Alaska Native students**, to support their college/career success.



About WICHE

Since 1953, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of our society's most pressing needs. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping states get the most from their technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy.

- The *Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)* enlisted WICHE to help manage a federal College Access Challenge Grant designed to increase college matriculation and success among low-income Alaskans. Through this work, WICHE helped create a peer advising program that became the **Alaska College and Career Advising Corps (ACAC)**, a successful initiative that provides 1) coordination of statewide college and career access initiatives to assist in developing a postsecondary education culture; 2) facilitation and support of partnerships to encourage site-hired ACAC mentors and services throughout Alaska; and 3) comprehensive college and career advising training opportunities.

Helps Alaska allocate resources efficiently

- WICHE offers various data and policy resources to support better-informed decision-making. WICHE's research projects and collaborations cover postsecondary completion, closing attainment gaps, adult learners, and multistate data-sharing to support educational planning and workforce development. WICHE staff serve as expert resources and provide technical assistance on finance, financial aid, articulation and transfer, strategic planning, student demographics, and more. Our website features **Benchmarks**, an interactive dashboard featuring the most recent data available on the West's progress in improving access to, success in, and the financing of higher education, as well as other useful resources.

Fosters idea sharing

- WICHE's **Legislative Advisory Committee** provides valuable insights on trends and promising practices to Alaska's legislative leaders as they build partnerships with leaders in other Western states.
- *Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Southeast, and University of Alaska System* are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum (the Forum)**, a consortium of academic officers at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral institutions and chief executives and chief academic officers for systems and state governing boards. Karen Carey, provost and dean of graduate studies, University of Alaska Southeast, is chair of the Forum executive committee.
- Seven campuses of the *University of Alaska* are members of the **Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance)**, the sister consortium for academic leaders at two-year institutions and related state governing and coordinating boards. Evon Peter, vice chancellor for rural, community, and native education, University of Alaska Fairbanks, is a member of the Alliance executive committee. Both the Forum and the Alliance are hubs for the exchange of ideas and information, sharing resources and expertise, and collaboration on regional initiatives.
- **WCET, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies**, is the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. Its growing membership includes institutions, higher education agencies and systems, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in all U.S. states and several Canadian provinces. WCET is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations focused on the role of technology and innovation in higher education.
- The **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)** is a voluntary, state-led initiative designed to establish comparable standards for US states and territories regulating postsecondary distance education. SARA expands access to postsecondary educational opportunities, while ensuring meaningful consumer protections for students and reducing regulatory red-tape for institutions. The *University of Alaska Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast* as well as *Alaska Pacific University* each participate in SARA in order to offer distance education across state lines, while students in Alaska gain access to a wealth of online education offerings from more than 2,000 qualifying institutions across 50 US states and territories. In addition, a staff appointee from the *Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education* works closely with colleagues from SARA member states across the West to ensure the integrity of the agreement through the **WICHE-SARA Regional Steering Committee (W-SARA RSC)**. The W-SARA RSC works to share promising practices in state authorization, foster collaboration across state lines, and strengthen SARA policy and implementation in the West.
- The **State Authorization Network (SAN)** provides institutional support in managing state regulations related to online courses and programs. *University of Alaska Anchorage* is a member.

Responds to urgent priorities

- WICHE is partnering with our states, institutions, and partners to respond and be proactive during the COVID-19 pandemic. WICHE is facilitating peer-to-peer videoconferences for higher education leaders to connect and identify solutions to common challenges; following legislation passed in response to the crisis; and identifying how emergency funding for students and higher education institutions, as well as block grants to states, can be best used to support education in the West. The Behavioral Health Program is hosting webinars that offer guidance to support the mental wellbeing of their students, and WCET is providing updates and resources to help institutions address issues that arise due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

About the WICHE Commission

The WICHE Commission oversees the development of WICHE programs and assures that the Western Regional Compact is carried out for the benefit of the citizens of the West. WICHE's 48 commissioners, who are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States, are leaders in higher education; they include state higher education executive officers, college and university presidents, legislators, business and community leaders, and other key partners. Camille Preus from Oregon is the 2020 chair of the Commission.

Alaska Projected High School Graduates, 2013-14 to 2031-32, Public by Race/Ethnicity, and Private

