

Western Alliance  
of Community  
College  
Academic Leaders



How Will Higher Education and the  
Purpose of Community Colleges  
Change in the Next Decade?

**Western Alliance of  
Community College Academic Leaders**

Annual Meeting: Preliminary Program

October 26-28, 2022 Broomfield, Colorado

# How Will Higher Education and the Purpose of Community Colleges Change in the Next Decade?

## Message from the Chair



WELCOME TO COLORFUL COLORADO! On behalf of your executive committee and the good folks of the vital WICHE staff, we look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting October 26-28, 2022 in Broomfield, CO. We have developed a program that we know will be engaging and energizing, while providing you the time to network with like-minded colleagues from community colleges across the western United States. The theme, *How Will Higher Education and the Purpose of Community Colleges Change in the Next Decade?*, this year is particularly relevant to the challenges on our campuses. The pandemic has forced us all to examine our practices, programs, support services, policies, and structures with an eye to the future. We all need to rethink who we serve, how we serve them, and the vital role we play in supporting our respective communities. The focus of this year's conference, developed with input from the membership, is to do just that. Redefining and refining our role must be a collaborative effort with our key constituents - students, community partners, workforce partners, and college employees. We are truly excited not only for the compelling conference sessions, but also to engage with you all in person.

I look forward to joining with you here in Colorado in October!



Landon Pirius, Alliance Chair

Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Colorado Community College System

## Who should attend

In attendance you will find colleagues from the WICHE region eager to share the lessons they've learned from tackling a host of institutional and academic challenges, including some of the ones you may currently be facing.

- Provosts, vice presidents, and directors of academic affairs at community colleges and technical schools
- Chief executive officers and chief academic officers of related systems and statewide agencies
- Institutional staff with expertise in the program topic areas, accompanying those above at their invitation

## About the Alliance

The members of the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) are the chief academic officers of community colleges and technical schools along with their associated system and state agencies in the 15 Western states and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States which make up the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) region. Through the Alliance, these top academic leaders share perspectives on current issues, work together on regional projects that are beyond the scope of a single institution or state, and contribute resources and expertise to build a stronger future for higher education in the West. The Alliance was founded in 2010 with support from the Western Academic Leadership Forum which is also based at WICHE.

Cover image credits: Center: Travelview; Top: Yacobchuk; Left: Xavier Arnau; Right: Michael Wels. All images from istock.com.

# Bernice Joseph Leadership Award

## *Call for Submissions*

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, faculty, staff, and institutions are continuing to adapt and pivot by being more creative and resourceful than ever. The Alliance Forum Executive Committee welcomes nominations for the 2022 Bernice Joseph Innovation Award.

The purpose of the Bernice Joseph Leadership Award is to publicly recognize and elevate the innovative achievements among Forum members that advance equity for student success.

Share your innovativations with colleagues!

*Download the submission at*

<https://www.wiche.edu/collaboration-leadership/western-alliance-of-community-college-academic-leaders/2022-alliance-annual-meeting/bernice-joseph-award/>

**Deadline: September 9, 2022!**

The namesake for the **Bernice Joseph Innovation Award** was vice chancellor of rural, Community, and Native Education for the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2010 when she became a founding member of the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders. Joseph (1964-2014) was a visionary leader with an infectious energy for making high quality education accessible to all. Her collaborative spirit and love for innovation were driving forces in the creation of the Alliance.



Bernice Joseph (1964-2014)

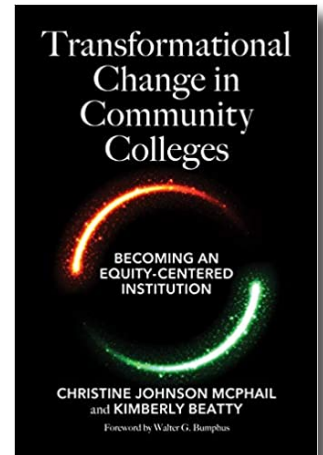
# Advance Reading

Descriptions for the following books were retrieved from Amazon.com on October 4, 2021.

## ***Transformational Change in Community Colleges: Becoming an Equity-Centered Institution***

by Christine Johnson McPhail and Kimberly Beatty

Transformational Change in Community Colleges is a significant contribution to the ongoing struggle to find practical approaches to implementing an equity agenda in higher education. While many of the books on equity are informative about the topic, they are not very helpful when it comes to leading and implementing equity as a change process. Becoming an equity-centered institution requires leaders to redesign, reinvent, and reset their approaches to implementing the equity agenda. This book is a way to jumpstart these strategies.



## ***Pursuing Quality, Access, and Affordability: A Field Guide to Improving Higher Education***

by Stephen C. Ehrmann

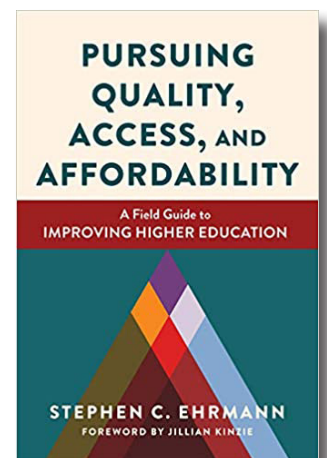
Whether they recognize it or not, virtually all colleges and universities face three Grand Challenges:

***Improve the learning outcomes of a higher education:*** A large majority of college graduates are weak in capabilities that faculty and employers both see as crucial.

***Extend more equitable access to degrees:*** Too often, students from underserved groups and poor households either don't enter college or else drop out without a degree. The latter group may be worse off economically than if they'd never attempted college.

***Make academic programs more affordable (in money and time) for students and other important stakeholder groups:*** Many potential students believe they lack the money or time needed for academic success. Many faculty believe they don't have time to make their courses and degree programs more effective. Many institutions believe they can't afford to improve outcomes.

These challenges are global. But, in a higher education system such as that in the United States, the primary response must be institutional. This book analyzes how, over the years, six pioneering colleges and universities have begun to make visible, cumulative progress on all three fronts.



# Schedule at a Glance

Please note that this is a preliminary program and subject to change. See the complete program and watch for updates at [wiche.edu/alliance](http://wiche.edu/alliance)

## Wednesday, October 26

Noon - 5:30 p.m.	Registration Open
1:00 - 4:30 p.m.	Executive Committee Meeting (executive committee members only)
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Welcome Reception
6:30 p.m.	Networking Dinners at Local Restaurants

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Innovation Circles
	- Strengthening Rural Community Colleges
	- Dismantling the Testing Industrial Complex: Stories from the West
	- Building a Sturdier Bridge: Leading Students to College Success
3:30 - 3:45 p.m.	Break
3:45 - 5:15 p.m.	Finding, Attracting, and Keeping the Best Faculty

## Thursday, October 27

7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Registration Open
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 - 8:45 a.m.	Welcome and Meeting Overview
8:45 - 9:45 a.m.	Changing Nature of Higher Education in the Next 10 Years
9:45 - 10:00 a.m.	Break
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Changing Demographics in Higher Education: Insights and Implications
11:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Break
11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m.	Awards Luncheon and Student Panel: Why Community College Was a Good Choice
1:55 - 2:00 p.m.	Break

*Dinner on your own*

## Friday, October 28

7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Membership Breakfast Meeting
8:30 - 8:45 a.m.	Break
8:45 - 10:15 a.m.	How Successful Colleges Retain Students
10:15 - 10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30 - Noon	The Case for College in a COVID-Adjacent World: State and Student Perspectives
Noon - 12:15 p.m.	Wrap Up/Adjournment

## Hosts and Sponsors

Special appreciation goes to our host.



And to our generous sponsors who make this meeting possible!



# Program Sessions and Speakers

## Wednesday, October 26

---

*Renaissance Boulder Flatiron Hotel*

- Noon - 5:30 p.m.      **Registration**
- 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.      **Executive Committee Meeting** (*executive committee members only*)
- 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.      **Welcome Reception**  
Join us for a lovely evening reception where you can meet up with old friends and make new ones!
- 6:30 p.m.              **Networking Dinners**  
Join your colleagues for some lively conversation about a topic that concerns you. We will reserve tables for dinner at several nearby restaurants to be hosted by members of the Alliance. You can sign up for your preference when you register.  
*Attendees are responsible for the cost of their dinner.*  
Hosts:
- Kaylyn Bondy, Bismarck State College
  - Mike Cartney, Lake Area Technical College
  - Eric Leshinskie, Maricopa Community Colleges
  - Landon Pirius, Colorado Community College System
  - Carli Schiffner, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

## Thursday, October 27

---

- 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.      **Registration**
- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.        **Breakfast**
- 8:30 - 8:45 a.m.        **Welcome and Meeting Overview**  
Landon Pirius, Colorado Community College System and Alliance Chair
- 8:45 - 9:45 a.m.        **Changing Nature of Higher Education in the Next 10 Years**  
How new strategies and models have the potential to address the crises of college completion, affordability, and employability, and close America's skills gap.
- Introducer:*  
Eric Leshinskie, Maricopa Community Colleges
- Speaker:*  
Belinda Miles, Westchester Community College
- 9:45 - 10:00 a.m.      **Break**
- 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.      **Changing Demographics in Higher Education: Insights and Implications**  
This session will explore the challenges and opportunities regarding the changing demographics in higher education. The insights and implications regarding topics such as declining high school graduation, increased diversity, and returning adult learners will be discussed to leave sessions participants with practical approaches to consider.



*Introducer:*  
**Kaylyn Bondy**, Bismarck State College (ND)



*Speaker:*  
**Peace Bransberger**, WICHE

11:30 - 11:45 a.m. **Break**

11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. **Awards Luncheon**

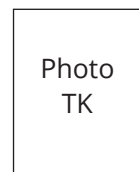
Join us for some stimulating conversation and to congratulate this year's winner of the Bernice Joseph Academic Leaders Award for 2022.

*Host:*  
**Carli Schiffner**, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

**Student Panel: Why Community College Was a Good Choice**

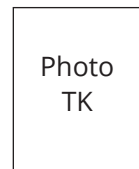
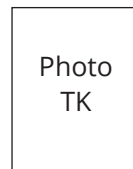
Students from the Colorado Community College System will share their reasons for attending community colleges, how community college has helped them and their communities, and why community colleges are important to the future of higher education.

*Introducer:* Landon Pirius, Colorado Community College System



*Panelists:*

- Student #1
- Student #2
- Student #3
- Student #4



1:45 - 2:00 p.m. **Break**

2:00 - 3:30 p.m. **Innovation Circles**

**Strengthening Rural Community Colleges**

Participants in this breakout group will discuss strategies for strengthening rural community colleges and ensuring their long-term viability. Topics will include program development, workforce and community partnerships, student support services, and collaboration across community colleges.

*Moderators:*  
**Kari Brown-Herbst**, Laramie County Community College  
**Landon Pirius**, Colorado Community College System



*Panelists:*

**Lynette Bates**, Trinidad Community College  
**Keith Peterson**, Colorado Northwestern Community College  
**Kathy Wells**, Central Wyoming College



**Dismantling the Testing Industrial Complex: Stories from the West**

Prior to the onset of COVID, many institutions of higher education were in the process of rethinking their placement testing processes and procedures. Many questioning the validity of such measures. Work with different movements like Guided Pathways, Achieving the Dream, etc., helped initiate this work, but the impact of COVID and the lack of physically being on campus accelerated the eradication of most placement test practices. This session will highlight three western colleges and the work their colleges have done to move past this practice.

*Panelists:*  
**Jeffrey Alexander**, Truckee Meadows Community College  
**Carli Schiffner**, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges  
**Laura Schueller** (*invited*), Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges



**Building a Sturdier Bridge: Leading Students to College Success**

How do we ensure students not just enrolling in college, but thriving? Participants in this discussion will discuss the impact of college-bridge programs meant to provide support to students to ensure they are prepared for success in higher education, particularly in the age of COVID-19.

*Panelists:*  
**Richard Diaz**, Salt Lake Community College  
**Penina Fitiao**, Salt Lake Community College  
**Kino Hurtado**, Salt Lake Community College  
**Clifton Sanders**, Salt Lake Community College  
**Augustin Bautista Silva**, Salt Lake Community College



3:30 - 3:45 p.m.

**Break**

3:45 - 5:15 p.m.

**Finding, Attracting, and Keeping the Best Faculty**

In a time of great challenges for higher education, the recruitment and retention of quality faculty has become one of the top concerns for administrators. Skyrocketing housing costs, pandemic and politically driven migration, particular challenges for urban and rural colleges alike have all contributed to a sometimes-dismal outlook and shallow candidate pools. But there are solutions, and this group of speakers will provide helpful guidance to assist in faculty recruiting, onboarding, and retention.

*Moderator:*  
**Eric Leshinskie**, Maricopa Community Colleges



*Panelists:*  
**Stephanie Fujii**, Arapahoe Community College  
**Tammy Robinson**, Cañada College



Dinner on your own



## Friday, October 28

---

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast and Membership Meeting

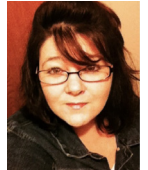
8:30 - 8:45 a.m. Break

8:45 - 10:15 a.m. How Successful Colleges Retain Students

The Director of Aspen Prize Community College Excellence Prize, an Aspen Prize Winner (LATC), and the largest Community College in Oregon (PCC) discuss their insights on how colleges can retain students at rates several times higher than the national average.

*Moderator:*

**Donna Lewelling**, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission



*Panelists:*

**Mike Cartney**, Lake Area Technical College

**Laura Ramirez**, Pasadena City College

**Josh Wyner** (*invited*), Aspen Institute



10:15 - 10:30 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. - Noon The Case for College in a COVID-Adjacent World: State and Student Perspectives

Overnight in March 2020, higher education found itself going through one of the most radical shifts in its history. Traditional approaches to teaching, learning, and student success were all significantly disrupted with the onset of pandemic. Many questioned the purpose of higher education, the way content was delivered, and the relevance of postsecondary credentials for employment and career advancement. While we are still learning what the pandemic means for the future of higher education, there is no doubt that our institutions must lean more earnestly than ever on the perspectives of our students and our statewide partners in order to successfully navigate this challenging new era. Following the leadership remarks, a student panel will be convened to hear directly from students their advice and perspectives.

*Moderator:*

**Brock Tessman**, Montana University System

*Panelists:*

**Marty Alvarado**, California Community Colleges

**Scott Eychner**, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

**Michelle Johnson**, Pierce College



Noon - 12:15 p.m. Wrap Up/Adjournment

## Registration Information

All attendees must register in advance for the Alliance 2022 Annual Meeting. The official program's registration fee is waived for nonmember speakers and for each Alliance member's official representative. All others must pay the appropriate fees listed below.

The registration deadline for all attendees is October 12, 2022. Register at <https://cvent.me/M7g8NQ>.

### Registration Schedule

Annual Meeting	Early-Bird Registration Up to September 14, 2022	Regular Registration September 15-October 12, 2022
<b>Alliance Member Attendees</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Official Representative &amp; Speakers</li></ul>	Fee waived	Fee waived
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Staff accompanying official representative</li></ul>	\$595 per person	\$650 per person
<b>Non-Member Attendees</b> <i>Join today and have your official representative's registration fee waived!</i>	\$695 per person	\$750 per person

### Refund/Cancellation Policy

A cancellation request must be received in writing prior to September 15, 2022, to receive a refund, less a \$100 processing fee. No refunds will be made for cancellations after the September 15 deadline. WICHE/the Alliance is not responsible for canceling hotel reservations.

Send cancellation requests to:

WICHE  
Attn: Jenn Raby  
3035 Center Green Drive  
Boulder, CO 80301  
[jraby@wiche.edu](mailto:jraby@wiche.edu)

### Accommodations

Please make your room reservations by clicking [here](#) to receive the discounted rate of \$139.00 or call 1-888-236-2427 and ask for the Alliance discounted rate. The cut-off date for the discounted rate is **October 3, 2022**, unless the block fills earlier. Room costs are the responsibility of the meeting attendees.

Renaissance Boulder Flatiron Hotel  
500 Flatiron Boulevard  
Broomfield, CO 80021  
Phone: 303-464-8400

### Airport Information

The Denver International Airport (DIA) is served by most major airlines. It is approximately 36 miles from the Renaissance Boulder Flatiron Hotel.

### Transportation

**Taxi:**

Fare is approximately \$68.00 USD from DIA to the hotel.

**EightBlack Shuttle:**

Fare is approximately \$55.00 USD from DIA to the hotel. Make a [reservation](#).

### Dress

Dress for the meeting is business casual. The average temperature in the Denver area in October is 67 degrees.

## Local Attractions

Denverites are much more laid-back than residents of other major American cities, promoting an active, outdoorsy culture that thrives on good food and craft beer. Take a cue from the city's residents and spend your days in the Mile High City getting to know its hiking paths, shopping streets and brewery trails. In addition to loving nature, Denver's population also exhibits a passion for art, culture and cuisine. Below are a few possibilities if you arrive before the meeting begins or stay afterwards.



**Hike in Rocky Mountain National Park** – [Rocky Mountain National Park](#) draws millions of people every year who come to explore its varied trails and stunning views. The park features dramatic peaks, as well as 147 pristine lakes and plenty of wildlife. Its 355 miles of trails appeal to hikers of all experience levels.

**Garden of the Gods** – It's easy to see how this [natural landmark](#) earned such an ethereal title: These magnificent red rock formations look as though deities could've carved them. However, the sandstone pillars are, in fact, the work of geological activity along a natural fault line, as well as rainfall over millennia. You can learn about the garden's formations at the visitor and nature center, which houses numerous informative displays and hosts daily nature presentations.



**Mesa Verde National Park** – It's not too often that scenic hiking areas are also steeped in history, but [Mesa Verde](#) certainly has both. This national park consists of an array of preserved cliff dwellings originally built by the people of Pueblo centuries ago. The Ancestral Puebloans lived and worked in these cliffside quarters for years until finally abandoning them in 1300. Now, the remnants of this ancient civilization draw thousands of visitors to the southwest corner of Colorado each year.

**Denver Museum of Nature & Science** – With exhibits featuring everything from dinosaur bones to Egyptian mummies, the [Denver Museum of Nature & Science](#) inspires learning in the young and young at heart. This impressive facility houses artifacts pertaining to a variety of scientific areas, including anthropology, zoology, geology, health sciences, paleontology and space science. Some of the more popular displays include the wildlife exhibit, which includes more than 90 habitat scenes containing information on animals from around the world, from Alaska to Australia. Meanwhile, the hands-on Space Odyssey area introduces travelers to the outer reaches of the galaxy and beyond..



**United States Mint** – Even if you hate the sound of excess change rattling around your pockets, you'll find a tour of the Denver branch of the [United States Mint](#) to be an interesting way to spend an hour or so. Having opened in 1863, its purpose was to transform the Gold Rush's findings into coinage. Today, the U.S. Mint in Denver can produce up to 50 million coins a day.

## Speaker Biographies

---

**Marty J. Alvarado** serves as executive vice chancellor of educational services with the California Community Colleges. She provides leadership and support for the Academic Affairs and Student Services Programs. In this role Alvarado is responsible for agency-wide policies and programs related to student support, instructional delivery, and curriculum with the aim of increasing student success rates and closing achievement gaps. Prior to joining the chancellor's office team in 2019, Alvarado provided support for scaling up regional cross-sector partnerships and state systems engaged in large scale transformation. She received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Whittier College in Whittier, CA, and a master of arts in philosophy and cultural analysis from the Universiteit van Amsterdam located in the Netherlands.

**Jeffrey Alexander** has served as vice president of academic affairs at Truckee Meadows Community College since 2021, and he collaborates with public institutions of higher education across Nevada. Previously, he served for six years as dean of arts and sciences at Pueblo Community College, prior to which he taught history at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. Alexander is an historian of modern Japan and has published three books on Japanese consumer product manufacturing, sales, and consumption. He holds a B.A. in history from Brock University, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in history from The University of British Columbia.

**Lynette Bates** serves as the vice president of academic affairs at Trinidad State College. Previously, she served as the dean of career and technical education. Her passion concentrates on first generation, Pell Eligible and students of color, their identity and social capital and to provide resources and opportunities for her students. Bates earned her B.S. and M.S. from Colorado State University. She is currently earning her doctorate at University of Colorado Boulder.

**Agustin Bautista Silva** is currently serving as an orientation and student success coordinator for the Bridge Program at Salt Lake Community College. He is responsible for providing academic support to underrepresented first generation students. He is currently co-leading the development of a STEM-focused Summer Bridge where students will have the opportunity to implement engineering concepts through a capstone project completed at the end of the 8-week program. Bautista Silva has a background working with TRIO STEM and teaching AC/DC circuits. He earned his B.S in electronics engineering from Weber State University in 2021.

**Peace Bransberger** has been a researcher with WICHE for 10 years. She leads the production and analysis of WICHE's projections of high school graduates and other research focused on equitable college access, success and financing. Previously, Peace was a consultant and evaluation researcher with the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities and Workforce Strategies Initiatives and Westat's education and mental health evaluations, in Washington, DC, as well as a licensed adult educator. Peace is a former foster youth and first-generation college graduate with an M.A. from American University, Washington, DC and B.A. from St. Cloud State University, Minnesota.

**Richard A. Diaz** has served as the director of the Orientation and Student Success Department at Salt Lake Community College since 2013. He leads an energetic team responsible for leading new student orientations and subsequent programs aimed at supporting students to complete their academic goals. Diaz brings previous experiences as an ethnic studies and education faculty, and as a seasoned student affairs practitioner with roles in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, Admissions, and TRIO. Diaz received his academic training at the University of Utah where he earned a B.U.S in social justice education, and an M.Ed. in educational leadership and policy with an emphasis in student affairs.

**Mike Cartney** is president of Lake Area Technical College, Watertown SD, recipient of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, and commonly ranked as the top community college in the nation. He was also recently re-appointed as a commissioner for the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, serves on the Air University Board of Visitors, and also serves on the executive committee for the Alliance. Cartney testified to the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, on education's role in addressing the skilled workforce gap and making the country more competitive. He holds a B.S. in computer science from the U.S. Air Force Academy, a M.Sc. in numerical analysis for Automated Data Processing (ADP) from Purdue University, attended numerous national and international military schools, and was a National Fellow to Harvard University's Program on Information Resources Policy.

**Penina Fitiao** is serving as a success advocate coordinator for the Bridge Program at Salt Lake Community College. The Bridge Program provides guidance to first-generation, minoritized, LGBTQIA+ students who are transitioning from high school to college. Fitiao is passionate about guiding students through the labyrinth of higher education and empowering marginalized voices. She has acquired numerous talents from varying industries including International Rescue Committee, Fabian VanCott, Pharmacotherapy Outcome Research Center and Surgical Pathology at ARUP Laboratories. Fitiao received her B.A. in international studies, emphasis in Latin American studies from the University of Utah in 2016.

**Scott Eychner** was born in San Antonio, Texas to a career Air Force officer which allowed him the opportunity to live in locations and experience cultures all over the world. Growing up in this type of ever-changing environment instilled in him an appreciate and even desire for change. Eychner has spent 25 years in the workforce development world and serves as administrator of workforce services at the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. His passion for workforce development built itself over time through various positions and fantastic opportunities to be a part of helping others. Today he continues to work to understand Montana's unique and dynamic workforce challenges and focus on making sure the public workforce system is a relevant and active partner in helping businesses and individuals address those challenges.

**Stephanie J. Fujii**, Ph.D. serves as the president of Arapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colorado. She is a passionate, outcomes-oriented, community college leader with over 30 years higher education experience in student services, instruction, and workforce/career and technical education. Prior to moving to administration, she was tenured faculty, division chair, and faculty senate president. Past administrative experience include service as a system/district level director leading and facilitating instructional support services and programs between ten colleges, a college instructional workforce dean, and a vice president of academic affairs. Fujii received B.A. in communication and M.A. in counseling and educational psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno and Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy studies from Arizona State University.

**Tranquilino "Kino" Hurtado** is a second year Ph.D. student at the University of Utah. He earned a B.A. in economics from the University of New Mexico and a M.A. in counseling from New Mexico Highlands University. His research interests are centered on closing the racial transfer gap that exists between Latina/o/x students and White students from a community college to a public 4-year institution. He currently serves as the assistant director of the Orientation and Student Success Office at Salt Lake Community College. In this role, he is responsible for designing and implementing a summer bridge program. The summer bridge is designed to help incoming freshman from historically underserved backgrounds succeed in the transition from high school to college.

**Michele L. Johnson**, Ph.D., has served as chancellor/CEO of Pierce College since 2005. She leads a mission-driven, data-informed, equity-minded community college district committed to supporting student success and building an anti-racist institution. She collaborates with institutions of higher education, K-12 districts, and community and business/industry partners, to improve access to and quality of education. Previously, she served as president of Pierce College Fort Steilacoom and was a professor in criminal justice/sociology for 15 years. Johnson received her B.S. and M.A. in police science and administration from Washington State University and Ph.D. in educational policy and management from University of Oregon.

**Belinda S. Miles**, Ed.D., has served as president of Westchester Community College since 2015. Her leadership contributed to the college's selection to the Achieving the Dream network; the founding a full Honors College; and procurement of a major gift to establish the Center of Excellence in Cybersecurity. Previously, she served as provost and executive vice president at Cuyahoga Community College. Miles received her B.A. in political science from York College (CUNY), and an M.A. in educational psychology and an Ed.D. in higher education organization and leadership development from Columbia University Teachers College.

**Keith Peterson** has served as the vice president and chief academic officer of Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC) since 2018. He is the former chair and current member of the Colorado Community College System Rural College Consortium, a group dedicated to the advancement of and equitable distribution of resources for community colleges in the state of Colorado. Prior to his time at CNCC, Peterson spent five years as the dean of workforce education and economic development at Northwest Arkansas Community College. Peterson received his B.S. in communication from the University of Texas-Tyler and an M.A. in communication from Arkansas State University.

**Laura M Ramirez**, Ed.D., has served as assistant superintendent vice president of instruction at Pasadena City College since 2021. Previously, she served at East Los Angeles College for 20 years as a tenured faculty, dean and vice president of instruction and three years at Rio Hondo Community College as vice president of instruction. Ramirez received her B.S. in chemistry from the University of California, Los Angeles. She received her M.S. in chemistry and Ed.D. in educational leadership from California State University, Fullerton.

**Tammy Robinson** serves as the vice president of instruction at Cañada College in Redwood City, California. Prior to this position, she served as the dean of global learning programs and services and dean for social science and creative arts at Skyline College in San Bruno, California. Robinson has over twenty years of experience as a community college administrator and faculty member. Robinson holds a doctorate in education with an emphasis in community college administration from the University of Southern California, a M.A. degree in English with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition from California State University, Dominguez Hills, a B.A. degree in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles and an A.A. degree in social science from Cerritos College.

**Clifton Sanders** has served Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) as provost for academic affairs since 2015. He is chief academic officer at SLCC, overseeing instruction and training for more than 61,000 students annually. Previously, he served in

several roles at SLCC, including assistant professor of chemistry, division chair for natural sciences and communication, and dean of science, mathematics and engineering. Prior to his tenure at SLCC Sanders was a senior research scientist and co-inventor on six patents in biomaterials technology. He received his B.A. in chemistry from Hamline University and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Utah.

**Carli Schiffner** serves as the deputy executive director of education at the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. She is a dedicated leader in higher education, with over fifteen years of progressive senior leadership experience in positions including interim university president, university provost, vice president for instruction, and dean of arts and sciences. Schiffner values servant leadership, collaboration, quality improvement, focusing on the whole student, an entrepreneurial spirit, equity, hard work, and a sense of humor. She has a B.A. in history and political science from Gonzaga University; a M.A. in cultural and intellectual history from Drew University; and a Ph.D. in American women's history from Washington State University.

**Laura Schueller** began serving as a policy associate in the Student Success Center at the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges in the fall of 2019. Her current work is focused on placement reform, mathematics corequisites, and supporting colleges across Washington in their Guided Pathways work. She has more than 30 years of classroom experience and has worked on projects on equitable placement practices, pre-college math reform, and curriculum alignment. She received her B.S. in mathematics from Penn State University and Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Kentucky.

**Kathy Wells**, DNP, RN, CNE, has served as the vice president for academic affairs at Central Wyoming College (CWC) since 2015. As the institution's chief academic officer, she works with faculty and academic support staff to ensure relevant, experiential student learning. She collaborates with academic leaders across the state to advance initiatives to meet the needs of communities, employers, and other educational partners. She is a professor of nursing education, and currently serves on the local hospital board and on various advisory boards related to higher education and healthcare. Wells received her A.A.S. in nursing from CWC, her B.S. in nursing from Weber State University, her M.S. in nursing from the University of Wyoming, and her D.N.P. in educational leadership from American Sentinel University.

# Membership in the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

*Join your colleagues now and take advantage  
of this special meeting offer!*

For institutions joining for the first time, take 50% off the annual dues and the registration fee for your official representative to attend the annual meeting will be waived too!

Apply at [wiche.edu/alliance/membership](http://wiche.edu/alliance/membership)

## Member Benefits

- An active listserv for instant access to advice from your colleagues across the region
- Opportunity to participate in regional initiatives addressing common areas of interest
- Complimentary registration for your institution's or organization's official representative at the Alliance annual meeting
- Discounted registration fees for members of your staff with expertise in the topics covered at the meeting
- Opportunity to serve on the Alliance Executive Committee if selected as the state representative

## Dues Schedule

The membership year runs from July 1-June 30. The dues schedule is set by the Executive Committee

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| • Community colleges and technical schools with enrollment under 2,000:   | \$575   |
| • Community colleges and technical schools with enrollment of 2,001-4,000:  | \$865   |
| • Community colleges and technical schools with enrollment of 4,001-10,000:   | \$1,150 |
| • Community colleges and technical schools with enrollment of 10,001+ and district and system offices and statewide governing and coordinating board offices: | \$1,380 |

**Volume Discount:** The Alliance offers a 20% volume discount when a system or state agency joins with all eligible public institutions in the system or state and pays via one invoice.

**Apply today at [wiche.edu/alliance/membership](http://wiche.edu/alliance/membership)**

Interstate Passport® is a national program that enables seamless block transfer of lower-division general education attainment based on an agreed upon set of learning outcomes rather than on specific courses and credits.

Members of the Interstate Passport Network are institutionally accredited, nonprofit, public and private two- and four-year institutions. Students who earn a Passport and transfer to another Network member institution will have met all or nearly all of the receiving institution's lower-division general education requirements. To join the Interstate Passport Network, an institution or system should declare its intent to become a member and define and submit a Passport Block.

Interstate Passport is based on four guiding principles: student focused; faculty driven, institutional autonomy; and quality assurance.



Please visit our website to find more information for:

[Prospective Members](#)

[Members](#)

[Students](#)

[interstatepassport.wiche.edu](http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu)

## — What People Say —

"The process of developing the learning outcomes in each knowledge and skill area – something that was done by faculty from institutions in multiple Western states – is truly an integral part of the Interstate Passport itself."

*L. Lynn Vidler, Professor and Dean,  
College of Letters, Arts & Sciences,  
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*

"The Interstate Passport program's streamlined transfer process will allow our students to complete their education faster with less debt, and lower foregone earnings from unduplicated learning."

*Jose Fierro, President/Superintendent,  
Cerritos College, California*

"Interstate Passport serves students. It is that simple. The common sense Interstate Passport is long overdue and its implementation will be one of the most impactful reforms higher education has seen in decades."

*Ann Clemmer, Senior Associate Director,  
Academic Affairs, Arkansas Department  
of Higher Education*



## Alliance Executive Committee

---

### ARIZONA

Eric Leshinskie  
Maricopa Community Colleges

### CALIFORNIA

Marty Alvarado  
California Community Colleges

### COLORADO

Landon Pirius  
Colorado Community College System

### HAWAII

Erika Lacro  
University of Hawai'i System

### IDAHO

Todd Schwarz  
College of Southern Idaho

### MONTANA

Brock Tessman  
Montana University System

### NEVADA

Jeffrey Alexander  
Truckee Meadows Community College

### NEW MEXICO

Douglas Murray  
New Mexico Military Institute

### NORTH DAKOTA

Kaylyn Bondy  
Bismarck State College

### OREGON

Donna Lewelling  
Oregon Higher Education Coordinating  
Commission

### SOUTH DAKOTA

Michael Cartney  
Lake Area Technical Institute

### UTAH

Clifton Sanders  
Salt Lake Community College

### WASHINGTON

Carli Schiffner  
Washington State Board for Community  
and Technical Colleges

### WYOMING

Kari Brown-Herbst  
Laramie County Community College

For further information, please contact:

Sarah Leibrandt  
Director, Academic Leadership Initiatives  
[sleibrandt@wiche.edu](mailto:sleibrandt@wiche.edu)

or

Kay Hulstrom  
Associate Director of Operations and  
Leadership Initiatives  
[khulstrom@wiche.edu](mailto:khulstrom@wiche.edu)



Western Interstate Commission  
for Higher Education

3035 Center Green Drive, Suite 200  
Boulder, CO 80301  
[wiche.edu/alliance](http://wiche.edu/alliance)