



FY 2024
WORKPLAN

FY 2024 WORKPLAN

Vision

WICHE will strive to provide access to postsecondary education opportunities that are both valuable and equitable for residents of the West, so that all may realize their potential as individuals and contribute to the region's economic, social, and cultural vitality.

WICHE's Value Proposition

By embracing the region's rich and distinct features, WICHE drives innovation and collaboration as a trusted and forward-thinking partner with our states and Pacific Island members.

Introduction

Each May, WICHE's 48-member Commission develops and approves the organization's annual Workplan. The Workplan outlines the diverse set of activities, projects, and initiatives that the Commission has prioritized for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, all of which are intended to advance WICHE's mission.

The Commission has identified five strategic priorities to guide the work of the organization:

- ▶ **AFFORDABILITY & FINANCE (A/F):** supporting the alignment of appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policy and practice at the institutional, state, and federal levels to make postsecondary education more accessible for those who seek it.
- ▶ **ACCESS & SUCCESS (A/S):** improving access to and success in postsecondary education for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved, by developing and sharing evidence-based strategies to increase student outreach and engagement.
- ▶ **WORKFORCE & SOCIETY (W/S):** collaborating across all sectors, including but not limited to behavioral health, business, and industry, to meet the region's workforce needs so that our communities can thrive.
- ▶ **INNOVATION (I):** developing and supporting advancements in teaching and learning, student services, and technology to help students access and succeed in postsecondary education and increase the value of their investment after completion.
- ▶ **VALUE & ACCOUNTABILITY (V/A):** collecting and measuring sound data about postgraduate outcomes to determine the true value of WICHE's partnerships for students and society at large so that we can continually improve how students, institutions, and WICHE members spend their time, effort, and money on postsecondary education and workforce training.

WICHE implements the Workplan by conceptualizing and managing a vast array of programs, projects, and initiatives, and by developing valuable resources that address the needs of members through four operational units:

- ▶ **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:** The Programs and Services unit is where students thrive and institutional leaders collaborate. The unit's primary goals are to broaden student access and success and to foster higher education collaborations that address institutional strategic goals. The Programs and Services unit manages WICHE's three Student Access Programs and other initiatives that help institutions and students—undergraduate, graduate, and health professional—save money and efficiently use available resources. The unit also oversees initiatives that bring together the West's higher education leaders to address common goals and concerns and develop a new cadre of academic administrative leaders. In addition, it helps institutions achieve cost savings through three programs in collaboration with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), which created and administers the programs.
- ▶ **POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH:** The Policy Analysis and Research unit supports better-informed decision-making by providing a variety of policy analysis and data resources and leveraging its convening power to foster regional collaboration. The unit leads research projects and collaborative initiatives that focus on open educational resources, the West's workforce

challenges, and supporting postsecondary education and completion. WICHE staff provides expertise on higher education issues including demographic change, governance, equitable opportunity in higher education, adult learners, state and federal financial aid, finance, articulation and transfer, federal policy, and college completion initiatives. WICHE is responsible for implementing the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) for the western region. The unit's publication series WICHE Insights explores a wide range of significant policy issues. The unit also undertakes major long-term grant-funded projects, collaborates with other regional and national organizations, and provides short-term technical assistance to members.

- ▶ **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:** The WICHE Behavioral Health Program, established in 1955, seeks to support the public systems of care and the workforce that serve people with behavioral health issues and their families. The program supports this mission through partnerships with state behavioral health agencies, federal agencies, advocacy and consumer groups, and higher education institutions. WICHE Behavioral Health activities focus on direct technical assistance to state and local agencies, policy analysis and research, support of state behavioral health agency data analysis, and higher education liaison activities to enhance workforce development and campus behavioral health.
- ▶ **WCET – WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES:** WCET was established in 1989 to promote collaboration and information-sharing related to educational technologies in higher education. WCET's mission is to be the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of digital learning in higher education. Today, WCET supports more than 400 member colleges, universities, state higher education agencies, and nonprofits and for-profit companies across the U.S. and Canada, with more than 5,000 active users of WCET resources. Dues paid by WCET and State Authorization Network members, event income, sponsorships, and grants (such as Every Learner Everywhere) help enable WCET to be a self-supporting unit. WCET's strategic plan focuses on practice, policy, equity, and community in fulfilling its vision of advancing learner access and success through postsecondary digital learning for a more equitable world.

Importantly, WICHE, an organization founded on the idea of collaboration, prides itself on working in partnership across units to better serve the region. The final section of this Workplan highlights collaborations across WICHE units. When appropriate, some initiatives also extend beyond the WICHE region.

Each of the following sections is organized according to these categories:

- ▶ **CURRENT ACTIVITIES:** WICHE's current work, segmented into Ongoing Services and Resources (continuing work supported by the general fund or fees) and Projects and Initiatives (continuing or new work supported by grants, contracts, or fees)
- ▶ **NEW DIRECTIONS:** Commission-approved projects for which staff is seeking funding
- ▶ **POTENTIAL FUTURE PROJECTS:** work that staff is considering pursuing (and bringing to the Commission for approval); also listed are projects that staff previously considered pursuing but now proposes to remove from the Workplan
- ▶ **COMPLETED PROJECTS:** work that staff finished in FY 2023.

To guide Commission consideration, projects in the New Directions category are prioritized by relevance to WICHE's mission, opportunity, and staff competence. Current Activities are not given prioritization rankings, since they are initiatives WICHE staff already has committed to undertaking. Potential Future Projects also are not given prioritization rankings, because they are not approved and remain under consideration by the Commission.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

Continuing work supported by the general fund or by fees. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: A/F Affordability and Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Academic Leaders Toolkit	A/S	Western	(included in Forum and Alliance)	Forum and Alliance members
MHEC Cyber Insurance	A/F	WICHE/MHEC/ NEBHE/SREB	.10	All WICHE members are eligible
MHECare	A/F; A/S	WICHE/MHEC/ NEBHE/SREB	.10	MHEC/United HealthCare Student Resources, META Teletherapy, and TAO Connect
MHECtech	A/F	WICHE/MHEC/ NEBHE/SREB	.30	All WICHE members
Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)	A/F; A/S; W/S	Western	1.20	All WICHE members send and/or receive students except Guam, FSM, RMI and Palau; 130+ programs at 60+ participating institutions
PSEP Field Assessment and Review	A/F; A/S; W/S	Western	.05 FTE complete program review by end of FY 23; NCHEMS hired to complete the assessment and review	Western postsecondary institutions, workforce development agencies, certifying officers, other stakeholders
Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)	W/S; V/A	Western	.15 and consultants	Forum and Alliance members
Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) • Professional Development: 2024 Annual Meeting • Collaborative projects	A/S; W/S	Western	.70	All WICHE members; 52 institutions, 9 systems
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) • Professional Development: 2023 Annual Meeting • Collaborative projects	A/S; W/S	Western	.70	All WICHE members; 68 institutions, 8 systems
Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	A/F; W/S	Western	.90	All WICHE members; 66 participating institutions
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	A/F; W/S	Western	.90	All WICHE members; 163 participating institutions

The **ACADEMIC LEADERS TOOLKIT**, jointly funded by the Alliance and Forum, is a peer-reviewed, searchable online repository of decision-making tools contributed by college and university, and system-level academic leaders. Tools in a range of categories—such as program evaluation, creation, and elimination; faculty recruitment and retention; and learning-outcomes assessment—help academic leaders address a variety of challenges.

The **MHEC CYBER INSURANCE PROGRAM**, in conjunction with Marsh USA Inc., offers institutions access to services including analysis of the cyber threat environment, the significance of vulnerabilities in security controls, and potential financial exposure should breaches occur. It can also help institutions benchmark how much cyber coverage similar institutions and systems are buying.

MHECARE, another MHEC partnership available in WICHE member states, offers institutions and systems a student health insurance plan underwritten by UnitedHealthcare Student Resources (UHCSR). UHCSR was selected through a competitive bid process, enabling member institutions to avoid a time- and resource-consuming request-for-proposal process. MHECare now includes META Teletherapy, which offers teletherapy services for students seeking counseling services.

MHECTECH, a third partnership, enables institutions to purchase off competitively bid master purchasing agreements for an array of hardware, software, and technology services. Several of the agreements are also available to K-12 districts; state, county, and local governments; and education-related nonprofits. More than 1,600 institutions and other entities in the WICHE region benefit from aggregated volume purchases that lower product costs and save institutions money and time.

The **PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)** provides affordable access for students to 130+ healthcare professional programs at more than 60 institutions and in 10 healthcare fields. In 2022-23, 559 students from 10 WICHE states and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands received \$14.2 million (reflecting investment by their home-state legislatures) in tuition benefits through PSEP. Since its 1953 inception, PSEP has helped some 15,800 students, many of whom return to their home states to fill key healthcare positions.

The **PSEP FIELD ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW** is investigating the current health professions (dentistry, allopathic medicine, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, and veterinary medicine) served by the PSEP program. The inquiry will report on how well the current fields meet regional workforce needs. It will also recommend other professional areas that may help meet the region's current or future workforce needs. The field assessment and review will be presented to the Commission after completion.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY** is a year-long professional development program aimed at expanding the pipeline of qualified chief academic leaders for two- and four-year institutions in the West. Academy activities focus on understanding the context of academic leadership, setting academic goals and priorities, and developing specific skill sets required of chief academic officers. Its sixth cohort, nominated by members of the Forum and the Alliance, commenced in July 2022. The Academy is funded by registration fees and Forum and Alliance support. Two-year institutions were added for the summer 2022 cohort only.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM** (Forum) brings together WICHE-region chief academic leaders from four-year institutions and associated systems and state coordinating and governing boards to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. The Forum is funded primarily by membership dues, with additional funding provided by annual meeting sponsors.

The **WESTERN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC LEADERS** (Alliance) brings together academic leaders at community colleges and technical schools and related systems and state agencies to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives supporting the two-year higher education sector. Like the Forum, the Alliance is funded by membership dues and annual meeting sponsors.

The **WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)** allows WICHE-region residents to cross state lines yet pay reduced tuition rates for approximately 1,850 master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral programs at 66 participating public universities. In 2022-23, 3,269 students saved an estimated \$48.1 million in tuition through WRGP. The WRGP program-distinctiveness requirement was lifted several years ago, and Western public universities may make any graduate program eligible at the WRGP tuition rate at their discretion, which has significantly increased the number of students who can benefit. Participating institutions

also now have the option to charge WRGP students up to 150% of resident tuition, but the vast majority continue to charge students resident tuition.

The **WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)** is WICHE’s signature undergraduate tuition savings program and the nation’s largest of its kind, saving 46,110 students an estimated \$520.9 million in tuition in 2022-23. Currently, 163 public two- and four-year WICHE-region institutions allow WUE students to pay no more than 150% of resident tuition, instead of full nonresident tuition. The Programs and Services unit will continue to expand the marketing of WUE and WRGP to benefit more students and institutions through targeted, state-specific publicity and activities as well as increased outreach to high school counselors and admissions advisers.

Current Activities – Projects & Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants, contracts, or fees. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Interstate Passport®	A/S; I	National	ECMC Foundation \$500,000 grant; General Fund support (approved at Nov. 2020 Commission Meeting from Programs and Services reserves) National Science Foundation \$300,000 grant	3.25 and consultants (11/20-10/22; received a no-cost extension through April 2023) 1.25 and consultants (3/21-2/23)	72 institutions in 21 states across the country are members; Institutions in these and several other states are in the exploratory stage New Mexico State University and its four community colleges
No Holding Back: Using Data to Review and Revise Administrative Hold Policies among Public Postsecondary Institutions in the Western Region	A/S; A/F	Western	Ascendium Education Foundation and Lumina Foundation grants totaling \$452,500	.75 FTE; grant ends in October 2023	American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and members of the Alliance and Forum, Policy Analysis and Research, MHEC, NEBHE
WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities	A/S; W/S	Western	Andrew W. Mellon Foundation \$1.5 million grant	1.15 FTE	Western postsecondary institutions

INTERSTATE PASSPORT® is a national initiative that facilitates the block transfer of lower-division general education based on multistate, faculty-developed learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It is the only nationwide network of institutionally accredited, nonprofit, public and private two- and four-year institutions dedicated to the block transfer of general education attainment. It also provides institutions in the network with an academic progress tracking system for Passport transfer students, designed by registrars and institutional researchers in conjunction with the National Student Clearinghouse. The goal of Interstate Passport is to eliminate transfer students’ unnecessary repetition of learning previously achieved. WICHE staff provides overall direction and support for this innovative program. A two-year grant from ECMC Foundation is enabling WICHE to further expand the Passport Network by providing 20 institutions (10 of which are minority-serving institutions) a two-year membership fee waiver and personalized onboarding support.

The award from NSF is supporting a collaboration with New Mexico State University (NMSU) and its four community colleges to address issues related to engineering degree attainment by testing the feasibility of using sets of lower-division student learning outcomes (SLOs) as the basis of block transfer into engineering programs. WICHE is conducting a literature review to further identify factors that inhibit transfers within engineering disciplines, articulate a theory of change, and recruit leaders of national organizations and two- and four-year institutions representing at least four states to analyze and refine NMSU's proof of concept and assess the feasibility of scaling NMSU's work to additional institutions.

NO HOLDING BACK: Staff members are collaborating with the American Association of College Registrars to assess the use of administrative holds at colleges and universities in the West. WICHE and AACRAO propose a collaboration to develop tools and guidelines that institutions and others can use to monitor administrative holds, which are ubiquitous at U.S institutions. Recent research found that 99% of institutions use registration holds, and 95% use transcript holds. However, most institutions do not regularly review or seek alternatives to administrative holds. Moreover, less than half are confident in analyzing the hold data for potential equity issues. There is a range of data limitations institutions face: access to the data, what information matters most, and examining the data. This lack of understanding is presumed to be particularly problematic for institutions serving a high percentage of first-generation students.

The **WICHE ACADEMY FOR LEADERS IN THE HUMANITIES** would offer leadership development to tenured humanities faculty members. WICHE is collaborating with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and other key stakeholders to develop a two-year, campus-based immersive experience for faculty leaders. These leaders will also attend a three-day WICHE Institute for Leaders (WIL) in the Humanities in Boulder, Colo., focused on three key competencies: career planning and development, project management, and organizational design and agility. They also will join upper-level academic administration to learn more about day-to-day operations, craft a campus project, receive internal and external mentoring, and develop a new network with the fellows appointed at other institutions.

New Directions

WICHE Commission-approved projects for which staff is actively seeking funding, prioritized as follows.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/TIMELINE	PARTNERS
Interstate Passport®	A/S; I		National	Seeking grant funding from other foundations and self-sustaining model	TBD	Interstate Passport Network members and potential members
Compact for Faculty Diversity	A/S; W/S		National	TBD	TBD	MHEC, NEBHE, SREB
Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice	A/S		National	Seeking additional external funding to further assist NASNTIs and sustain an institutional network	TBD	Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, higher education organizations

INTERSTATE PASSPORT® is a national initiative that facilitates the block transfer of lower-division general education based on multistate, faculty-developed learning outcomes and proficiency criteria.

The **COMPACT FOR FACULTY DIVERSITY:** Staff members are collaborating with the other three higher education regional compacts to seek funding to reinvigorate the Compact for Faculty Diversity and its associated Doctoral Scholars Program. The programs would address the significant imbalance that continues nationwide in terms of the racial and ethnic composition of faculties. The goals of the initiative are to increase faculty diversity in all ranks and across all institution types to equal or exceed the diversity of the nation by engaging postsecondary systems, institutions, and leaders in concrete commitments to increase the hiring of faculty of color, supported by specific action plans.

REDUCING THE POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT GAP FOR AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES: Linking Policy and Practice, an initiative begun in late 2017 with funding from Lumina Foundation, continues to have strong relevance in light of the persistent postsecondary attainment gap of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) compared to other student populations. Staff will seek funding to continue efforts to reduce or eliminate these gaps at Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs) by supporting the use of culturally relevant high-impact practices and fostering institutional and tribal collaborations to share and expand sustainable student support systems on campuses. Another major objective going forward is to continue to strengthen the NASNTI presence and impact in state and federal higher education policy arenas and to create a collaborative network of institutions serving large numbers of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Projects to be Removed from Workplan

Work that staff previously considered pursuing but now proposes to remove from the Workplan.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/TIMELINE	PARTNERS
Online Course Exchange – FlexPATH Alliance	A/S; I	■ ■ ■ ■	National	Grant request pending: \$1,416,883 National Science Foundation subaward (5 years) The FlexPATH grant was not funded.	1.9	University of Nevada, Reno; New Mexico State University; University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign; and their respective community colleges
Online Course Exchange	A/S; I		National		0	1 consortium serving 16 institutions

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff is considering pursuing and bringing to the WICHE Commission for approval, along with ideas generated by a survey of commissioners:

The **ALLIANCE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY** would identify, develop, and prepare aspiring academic leaders for career advancement and success in progressively more complex administrative roles at community, junior, and technical colleges across the West.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2023:

REDUCING THE POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT GAP FOR AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES, Linking Policy and Practice, funded by a grant from Lumina Foundation and launched in December 2017, was a collaboration of two- and four-year institutions designated as Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs) by the U.S. Department of Education. The initiative addressed the higher education attainment gap of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) compared to other student populations at these institutions and identified strategies to reduce the gaps. During the initiative, NASNTI administrators and faculty were convened at two national summits and in virtual settings through a webinar series. At the outset, WICHE awarded small grants to 11 of the institutions to support planning for achieving quantifiable goals to narrow attainment gaps, implement high-impact practices and other efforts leading to students' academic success, and to foster sustainability in their programs. Additional Lumina funding was provided to assist the grantee campuses in meeting AI/AN students' access to online courses and providing virtual student support services during the pandemic. Several reports and case studies were produced that focused on effective practices to enhance the educational attainment of American Indian and Alaska Native students and provide a platform.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

Continuing work supported by the general fund or by fees. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: A/F Affordability and Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Benchmarks: WICHE Region	A/F; A/S; W/S; V/A	Western	.025	N/A
Legislative Advisory Committee	A/F; A/S; W/S; I; V/A	Western	.25	All WICHE members
Peer-to-Peer Virtual Convenings	A/F; A/S; W/S; I; V/A	Western	.15	All WICHE members
Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West	A/F; A/S; W/S; V/A	Western	.025	N/A
State Policy and Data Profiles	A/F; A/S; W/S; I; V/A	National	.20	N/A
Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West	A/F	Western	.025	All WICHE members
WICHE Insights	A/F; A/S; W/S; I; V/A	Western	.10	N/A
WICHE Policy Webinar Series	A/F; A/S; W/S; I; V/A	Western	.10	Variable
WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	A/S; I; V/A	Western	2.25	NC-SARA; Western SARA signatories; MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB

The annual **BENCHMARKS: WICHE REGION** report analyzes key higher education metrics and information about the West’s progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education. This resource helps stakeholders monitor regional changes over time and informs discussion in policy and education communities. Utilizing WICHE’s Policy Analysis Research Database (PARDB), the Benchmarks data dashboard now includes state information as well as regional metrics.

The **LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)** informs the WICHE Commission and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education, and WICHE staff serves the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West and relevant policy research. LAC members are appointed by the Commission and meet annually.

As the pandemic appears to be winding down and reaching a new endemic phase, Policy Analysis and Research unit staff will continue to provide support to the region through regularly scheduled **PEER-TO-PEER VIRTUAL CONVENINGS** on federal funding issues, campus responses, and policy approaches to address the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and other relevant policy issues.

WICHE’s **REGIONAL FACT BOOK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WEST** presents regional and state-by-state data and analysis on policy indicators across a range of topics. These fiscal, demographic, economic, and social indicators provide up-to-date information for policymakers, educators, and researchers in the West. The Fact Book’s downloadable data tables are updated periodically throughout the year. WICHE released several enhanced tables in FY 2022, providing increased detail and interactivity, and adding new analysis. WICHE will supplement the core data sources, as possible, to keep this resource contemporary and is examining the overall utility of the full suite of data resources.

WICHE will continue building out **STATE POLICY AND DATA PROFILES** that capture state and territory postsecondary contexts. The development of the Policy Analysis and Research Database (PARDB) will enable the Policy unit to provide more detailed and relevant information specific to each WICHE member. WICHE has been consulting with key stakeholders in the West about how our data resources can be most useful and expects to begin rolling out these new profiles in FY 2023.

TUITION AND FEES IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WEST annually provides comprehensive data about the tuition and fee rates published by public higher education institutions in the WICHE region, including changes in tuition and fee rates over the past one-, five- and 10-year periods. In addition to total tuition and fees, the report displays the average mandatory fees for each institution, state, territory, and the region over the past one, five, and 10 years, as well as what proportion of total tuition and fees they represent.

The **WICHE INSIGHTS** publication series consists of periodic briefs (usually published several times a year) that illuminate a higher education policy or research topic, or that supplement a regular WICHE activity or release (such as our annual Tuition and Fees or our quadrennial Knocking at the College Door report).

The **WICHE POLICY WEBINAR SERIES** features WICHE staff, partners, and/or higher education stakeholders periodically hosting digital forums for registrants on selected higher education topics of interest. Anticipated topics for FY 2023 will likely continue to focus on COVID-19 recovery with particular attention to enrollment declines and potentially worsening equity gaps due to changes in college-going behavior.

The **STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (SARA)** is a voluntary initiative designed to establish comparable standards for U.S. 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. WICHE coordinates the membership of SARA states in the West through the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA). WICHE collaborates with the other regional compacts and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) to provide national coverage and ensure consistency in the implementation of the agreement.

Current Activities – Projects & Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants, contracts, or fees. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Increasing Access, Affordability, and Equity Using OER: A National Consortium	A/F; A/S	Western/ National	\$450,000	2.25 2023-24	Hewlett Foundation, WCET, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB
Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership	A/S; W/S; I	Western	\$264,000	1.05 FY 2022-24	Wyoming Community College Commission
Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates	A/S; W/S	National	\$50,000	.25 in FY 2024	TBD
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S; W/S	Western/ National	\$100,000 +	.5 FTE in FY 2024	Lumina Foundation, Behavioral Health Program, Programs and Services, Federal Agencies

INCREASING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND EQUITY USING OER: A NATIONAL CONSORTIUM: The policy unit and WCET received funding to create a national consortium with the three other regional higher education compacts—the Midwest Higher Education Compact, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the New England Board of Higher Education—focused on scaling the successful adoption of high-quality open educational resources to improve student outcomes, increase equity, and improve affordability. This effort started in FY 2021 and WICHE expects additional funding to continue this work into FY 2024. There is significant collaboration and coordination across regions, with WCET serving as the “backbone” of the effort.

SUPPORT FOR THE WYOMING INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP: WICHE has been contracted by the Wyoming Community College Commission to provide project management for a broad initiative that will seek to modernize and focus Wyoming’s efforts to develop a resilient workforce and economy. The effort aims to better align Wyoming’s economic development agenda by increasing collaborations among state entities and ultimately local partners.

KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR: The Policy Analysis and Research unit released the 10th edition of state-by-state forecasts of high school graduates in December 2020. During FY 2024, staff will continue dissemination activities and produce tools that can help users understand the potential implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, and develop analysis related to socioeconomic status.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS: WICHE has secured a funding commitment from Lumina Foundation to support an initial convening of exemplar states/systems focused on improving behavioral health and wellness in postsecondary education. Additionally, conversations continue with other partners about large-scale efforts to scale healthy practices through policy.

New Directions

WICHE Commission-approved projects for which staff is actively seeking funding, prioritized as follows.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/ TIMELINE	PARTNERS
COVID-19 Reengagement Network	A/F; A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$1.2 million	3.0 3 years	TBD
Building Evidence for Scale: Policy and Practice Solutions for Adult Learners	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	National	\$1.5 - 2million	1.75 4 years	TBD
Evaluation and Research Partnerships	A/S; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Western	Dependent upon size and scale of effort	.05 Ongoing	Western states
Exploratory Research into Programs Designed to Increase Postsecondary Attainment in Idaho	A/S; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$385,313	.0825 2 years	Idaho State Board of Education
Policy Paper Series on Affordability	A/F; A/S	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$500,000	1.50 2 years	TBD

New Directions *(continued)*

WICHE Commission-approved projects for which staff is actively seeking funding, prioritized as follows.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/ TIMELINE	PARTNERS
Scaling Technology- Assisted Skill-Building in Rural Areas	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$1 million	1.5 3 years	WCET
Western Postsecondary Data Users Network	A/S; W/S; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$50,000	.50 6 months	Western states
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$100,000	.25 Single convening	Behavioral Health Program
Dual Credit Research and Implementation Network	A/F; A/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$400,000	2.0 2 years	TBD
Data with a Purpose	W/S; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	National	\$497,475	.05 2 years	Strada Education Network
A Hole in State Policy: Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/S; W/S; I; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$975,000	2.5 3 years	WCET, TBD
Articulating the Value of Postsecondary Education in the West	W/S; A/S; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$600,000	1.5 FTE 3 Years	TBD
Recognizing Learning: Raising Awareness for Scale	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western/ National	\$200,000	1.5 2 years	CAEL
A Second Chance at Success: Reducing the Fiscal and Social Impact of Recidivism Through Inmate Education and Re-entry Programs	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$2.5 million	2.0 3 years	TBD
Improving Credential Information in the West	A/S; W/S; I; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$50,000	0.1 2 years	MHEC, National Science Foundation, Credential Engine
Serving Student Soldiers of the West	A/S; W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$1 million	1.35 3 years	Behavioral Health Program
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$100,000	2 years	WCET, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency
Policy and Practice Solutions for Workforce Shortages	A/S; W/S; I	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	\$400,000	2 years	TBD
Intermediaries for Scale Partnerships	A/F; A/S; I	■ ■ ■ ■	Western/ National	TBD	TBD	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

COVID-19 REENGAGEMENT NETWORK: WICHE will partner with states and postsecondary institutions to develop and implement targeted plans to reengage students who have stopped out (or are considering doing so) because of COVID-19 and its related impacts on school, the economy, and students' lives. The project will identify high-impact supports for returning students that correlate with increased credential completion; develop effective and aligned policy and practice for reaching and reengaging these students in concert with WICHE members, postsecondary systems and institutions, employers, and local leaders; and measure the impact of these efforts.

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR SCALE – POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR ADULT LEARNERS: Building on WICHE's Adult College Completion Network (which concluded in 2016) and other work related to adult learners, WICHE proposes to leverage its existing membership and activities to pursue new approaches to achieve four objectives: 1) build the evidence base for effectively serving adult learners, 2) facilitate collaboration among network members, 3) share scalable solutions across the field, and 4) link adult college completion work with the broader equity agenda. The project will also seek to partner with WICHE members and other key stakeholders to increase the number of adults with a postsecondary credential of value. To accomplish that goal, the project will identify high-impact supports for adult learners that correlate with increased credential completion; develop effective and aligned policy and practice for serving adult learners in concert with WICHE members, postsecondary systems and institutions, employers, and local leaders; and measure the impact of initiatives aimed at increasing adult postsecondary credential completion to drive continuous improvement.

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS: WICHE members are implementing many new innovative policies and programs aimed at improving student outcomes. Examples include developmental courses, summer bridge programs, dual and concurrent enrollment, and efforts to decrease "summer melt." The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) and other funders offer grants to support partnerships between education agencies and research entities that produce usable information for WICHE members and help advance overall knowledge in the field.

WICHE is interested in bolstering efforts to improve access and success by engaging in partnerships wherever it is useful and where it fits within WICHE's mission. One immediate opportunity is an IES grant program that supports low-cost, short-duration evaluations of education interventions. Partnering with WICHE members to carry out such an evaluation would help address capacity issues, provide actionable information to the participants, provide evidence for other states to consider in designing education interventions, and potentially provide opportunities to secure additional funding. WICHE will solicit partner agencies to jointly submit proposals to IES and identify other research and evaluation needs for which WICHE can be of assistance.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH INTO PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO INCREASE POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT IN IDAHO: Flowing from the previous item on Evaluation and Research Partnerships, WICHE has recently completed an evaluation of Idaho's dual-credit funding model. This work identified numerous potential avenues for further research that meets Idaho's needs and can inform all WICHE members about effective policies. Information about the efficacy of innovative programs is valuable not only to the WICHE member or institution that enacts the policy or program but to others in the West (and across the country) that are looking to improve student outcomes. WICHE will carry out additional research where opportunities and funding are available, and the research meets Idaho's needs.

POLICY PAPER SERIES ON AFFORDABILITY: The Policy Analysis and Research unit will commission a series of papers focused on policy and practice actions to improve postsecondary affordability. The papers (which will include WICHE as a key author) will aim to provide rigorous, actionable research that is accessible to policymakers.

SCALING TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED SKILL-BUILDING IN RURAL AREAS AND OTHER COMMUNITIES OF NEED: This project, which would be a joint effort of the Policy Analysis and Research unit and WCET, would leverage technology to scale work-based learning to rural and other communities of need by providing underserved students with the training they need to succeed in their local economy's high-demand fields, and the ability to adapt should demand for certain careers change. Specifically, after conducting a landscape analysis of innovative program models of technology-assisted work-based learning opportunities, WICHE would deploy its robust network across the region to identify pilot sites for project implementation that involves expanding such models. Rural, low-income areas with identified high-demand industry sectors would be priorities for pilot site selection. The project would convene pilot and mentor sites to share lessons learned and craft implementation plans for the pilot sites. The project would incorporate seed funding for small-scale testing of technology-assisted training opportunities with potential for scale, and would rigorously evaluate the process using longitudinal data to inform larger-scale state policy decisions over time.

WESTERN POSTSECONDARY DATA USERS NETWORK: Education and workforce development agencies continue to improve data systems that have the potential to provide critical information to students and their families, policymakers, and institutional leaders. To take full advantage of these systems, states, territories, and freely associated states must have highly competent staff that can analyze the available data and convert it to usable information for improving programs and policies. Additionally, researchers must have opportunities to explore new areas of research that can drive policy conversations. Barriers to taking advantage of these data systems include limited opportunities for state postsecondary researchers to engage in professional development; heavy workloads managing existing reporting duties, leaving little time for exploratory analyses; and few chances to network with colleagues to address common problems. WICHE hopes to address these issues by exploring the need for and, if appropriate, establishing a Western Postsecondary Data Users Network, which would convene key system and institutional education and workforce researchers, as well as key staff from WICHE members, to address common questions, provide technical assistance, and assist in professional development. This network would aim to ensure that Western policymakers have access to high-quality evidence to develop, assess, and improve education and training policies and programs.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS: Behavioral health issues have a significant impact on the health and well-being of many traditional-age students. Additionally, they can be a major barrier to postsecondary success. There are not currently well-accepted policies and practices for providing support systems on campuses. WICHE is well-positioned to begin addressing the issue through its policy and behavioral health units. The initial project will be to host a convening of policymakers and institutional leaders and practitioners to identify policy and practice gaps, as well as potential solutions.

DUAL CREDIT RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION NETWORK: WICHE will work with partners to develop common metrics with which to evaluate dual credit programs that include analyses of cost to students and their families, states, school districts, and institutions of higher education. Further, WICHE and its network partners will carry out rigorous quantitative and qualitative research to better understand how these programs operate, where they are successful, and develop actionable recommendations to improve student outcomes.

DATA WITH A PURPOSE – BUILDING ON WICHE’S MULTISTATE LONGITUDINAL DATA EXCHANGE (MLDE): Data with a Purpose would seek to build a bridge between decision makers and data available through the MLDE to ensure that the data are effectively used to guide policy and improve practice. Specifically, Data with a Purpose would seek to accomplish two tasks: 1) facilitate state research using multistate data to analyze crucial issues related to postsecondary education and employment and 2) translate this research and analysis into actionable information that can be used to improve policy and practice.

A HOLE IN STATE POLICY – ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: In this project, the Policy Analysis and Research unit will work with WCET and key partners to develop appropriate frameworks to address the rise of alternative providers of postsecondary education. This work will help ensure WICHE members can take advantage of legitimately innovative and disruptive ideas while also protecting students from predatory practices of substandard providers. WICHE will also develop and execute a major education campaign to share findings and lessons from project participants with policymakers across the country.

ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE WEST: WICHE’s Policy Analysis and Research Unit will work on multiple approaches to understand and articulate the value of postsecondary education for diverse stakeholders, including a focus on where that value is not meeting broader expectations. This effort will begin with a general articulation of the broad dimensions of value, including the economic return to individuals and communities, civic and cultural value, and other social dimensions of value that are not easily captured in earnings data. This work will have an explicit focus on how value is articulated in diverse Western contexts.

RECOGNIZING LEARNING – RAISING AWARENESS FOR SCALE: Through this work, WICHE will leverage and disseminate research related to competency-based education (CBE) and prior learning assessment (PLA) so that policymakers can make evidence-based decisions. Additionally, staff would develop targeted information campaigns to build understanding of and support for CBE and PLA based on new and extant research. WICHE has substantial expertise in prior learning assessment research and policy through its work on previous Lumina Foundation-funded efforts.

A SECOND CHANCE AT SUCCESS – REDUCING THE FISCAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF RECIDIVISM THROUGH INMATE EDUCATION AND RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS:

The goal of this project is to reduce the fiscal and social impact of recidivism by helping former inmates, upon release from the correctional system, to be successful individually and to be productive members of society through effective, comprehensive prison education and re-entry programs.

IMPROVING CREDENTIAL INFORMATION IN THE WEST: WICHE will partner with MHEC and Credential Engine to share findings with WICHE members and territories about efforts to improve information about the different types of credentials offered. The overall aim would be to work with WICHE members – where there is demonstrated need and interest – to evaluate the utility of existing credential information platforms and, if appropriate, identify cost and resource savings through collaboration.

SERVING STUDENT SOLDIERS OF THE WEST: POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS is a project whose goal is to increase access to and success in higher education for members of the military and their families in the Western region.

CYBERSECURITY TRAINING FOR SENIOR NONTECHNICAL LEADERS: As an additional component of the cybersecurity initiative, WICHE is continuing to develop partnerships with cyber experts and conducting outreach to WICHE members to provide training for institutional non-technical leaders for cyber protection. This initiative was previously approved by the Commission but paused during the height of the pandemic due to the inability to convene in person. Staff will look to relaunch this effort in FY 2024.

POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR WORKFORCE SHORTAGES: As part of its general efforts to support COVID-19 recovery (discussed above), the Policy unit began convening key staff from WICHE members to focus on ways to address short- and long-term workforce shortages in health fields using general fund dollars. Staff has developed a broader proposal to carry out a project that would implement solutions being developed while focusing on building a strong research base into effective and sustainable long-term policy and practice.

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE PARTNERSHIP: Although not selected to be one of the Intermediaries for Scale grantees of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, WICHE has completed multiple partnerships with those organizations that were selected. WICHE was previously brought in by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium to facilitate its efforts to develop an effective data infrastructure and staff capacity. WICHE staff will continue to review other opportunities to partner with Intermediaries for Scale where the work fits with WICHE's mission and staff expertise.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff is considering pursuing:

EXPLORING STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF REMEDIAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES:

A project that would build on emerging practices in the field to help WICHE members more effectively and efficiently target remedial education to students, particularly adult learners.

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING – LEVERAGING WORK-BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND MEET WORKFORCE DEMANDS:

The goal of this work would be to help facilitate the development of partnerships among institutions and businesses to ensure effective linkages between the workplace and the classroom through co-op/internship programs.

IMPACT OF FEDERAL POLICY ON STATE BUDGETS AND POLICY: Several pieces of recent or proposed federal legislation, ranging from tax reform to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, are likely to have an impact on state and territorial budgets and higher education policy. WICHE proposes to engage in work that will keep constituents informed and help policymakers align their policy and practice to better serve students in the West.

SAFER SPACES – ALIGNING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO REDUCE SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES IN THE WEST:

WICHE hopes to conduct research examining how contemporary policy approaches to sexual-violence prevention at postsecondary institutions are being executed, with the goal of identifying those that research suggests can best reduce the prevalence of sexual violence.

STATE POLICIES TO SUPPORT HOUSING AND FOOD SECURITY ON CAMPUS: Housing and food security are crucial issues for students across the West (and the United States as a whole). While campus-level supports such as food banks and emergency grants and loans can help, this effort would examine state- and territory-level policies that can improve outcomes for students, including better alignment of social services and education programs, improved access to benefit programs, and other approaches.

WESTERN POLICY FORUM: An annual convening designed to advance WICHE's mission by bringing together key postsecondary leaders in the Western region to learn about successful strategies around access and success, accountability, finance, workforce, and innovation.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2023:

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM: WICHE completed its initial work to support AIHEC's knowledge-management efforts as funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Based on that initial work, AIHEC selected WICHE (working with NCHEMS) to carry out further work in support of its knowledge-management infrastructure.

OREGON COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS AND OREGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION LANDSCAPE STUDY: WICHE was contracted by NCHEMS to participate in an environmental scan of postsecondary education in the state and to assess the ways in which policy and practice can be improved to serve the needs of the state and its residents more effectively. WICHE provided data analysis and participated in stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

AdvanceCTE POLICY ROUNDTABLES: WICHE received a small subgrant from AdvanceCTE to help convene policy roundtables focused on enhancing Career and Technical Education (CTE) in the West and across the nation. WICHE assisted by convening virtual roundtables that focused on key policy and practice issues and participated as a thought partner in AdvanceCTE's efforts to develop a broad set of recommendations for states and others.

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM: WICHE completed additional work to support AIHEC's knowledge-management efforts as funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR IDAHO'S ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE GROWTH INITIATIVE: WICHE completed this work for Idaho, with a focus on high-level recommendations to spur growth in the production of necessary degrees to support the state's economy.

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

Continuing work supported by WCET dues, event fees, grants, and contracts. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
WCET Member Service and Support	A/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	412 member institutions, agencies, organizations
Digital Learning Practice	A/F; A/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	WCET members, Every Learner Everywhere, other organizations
Digital Learning Policy	A/S; I; V/A	U.S.	WCET staff	WCET members, SAN, NASASPS, NC-SARA, other organizations
WCET Annual Meeting	A/S; W/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Leadership Summit	A/S; W/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Webcast Series	A/S; W/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	Various, depending on the topic
wcetMIX (Member Information Exchange) and Member- only Resources	A/S; W/S; I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	WCET, SAN, and member leadership
System and Consortia Digital Learning Leaders	A/F; A/S; I	U.S.	WCET staff	Higher education systems and multi-institution consortia
WCET Steering Committee Annual Priorities	A/F; A/S; I; V/A	U.S.	WCET staff	WCET elected Steering Committee and other members
State Authorization Network (SAN)	A/S; I; V/A	U.S.	WCET staff	131 members representing ~ 888 institutions. Partners: Regional compacts, NASASPS, NC-SARA

WCET MEMBERSHIP SERVICE AND SUPPORT helps colleges, universities, higher education organizations, state agencies, and companies understand both the practice and policy of digital learning by providing them with timely information and a collaborative community. The popular WCET Frontiers blog features promising practices, innovations, emerging policies, compliance advice, and member features. The WCET Frontiers podcast series was introduced to provide engaging interviews about solutions and innovations in the practice and policy of digital learning in higher education.

WCET and the State Authorization Network (SAN) continue to collaborate to provide in-depth analysis of **DIGITAL LEARNING POLICIES** (federal, state, accreditation, and regulatory) that have an impact on faculty and students. WCET and SAN are noted for their expertise on policy issues including consumer protections for digital learning students, “regular and substantive interaction” for distance education, state authorization of out-of-state activities, out-of-state professional licensure regulatory requirements, and digital learning definitions.

WCET events include the **ANNUAL MEETING, MEMBER-ONLY VIRTUAL SUMMIT**, and **MONTHLY WEBCAST SERIES**. WCET’s annual meetings are in-person events held at locations across the United States and bring together up to 400 leaders and practitioners interested in good practices in digital learning in postsecondary education. Members and non-members attend. The Member-Only Virtual Summit takes place in the spring and is a half-day, topic-focused event. The 2022 Summit had over 450 attendees and the 2023 Summit focused on emerging business models. The webcast series showcases innovative practices and effective policies in digital learning. Webcasts take place monthly, with an average of 150 members and non-members attending.

WCETMIX is a digital platform to support communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing among WCET members. Members are invited to opt in to communicate through WCET’s popular wcetNEWS and wcetDISCUSS digital forums. SAN also uses wcetMIX to support communication and sharing among its members.

The **STATE SYSTEM OR MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL CONSORTIA DIGITAL LEARNING LEADERS** meet monthly to share their unique challenges and solutions in using cooperation and shared services to better meet the needs of students, faculty, and administrators at their member institutions.

The **STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN)** is a membership organization, created in 2011 as a division of WCET, that empowers its members to successfully resolve state and federal regulatory challenges to improve student consumer protections in digital and experiential learning across state lines. SAN serves postsecondary institutional staff who must translate and implement educational technology regulations as well as the agencies that support that work. Related issues include state institutional approvals, reciprocity, professional licensure, employment law issues, international compliance, and military-related considerations. SAN does this through providing members with a library of resources and tools on the SAN website, policy analysis, and virtual and in-person training, as well as facilitating communication so that members can cooperate to identify common needs, track emerging policies and regulations, evaluate their efficacy, and share lessons learned.

Each year, the **WCET STEERING COMMITTEE** selects **ANNUAL PRIORITIES** for providing insights and resources to assist members. Working groups are formed to advise and assist in developing webinars, conference sessions, blog posts, reports, and other resources to inform the membership. For the 2023 calendar year, the selected topics are:

- ▶ Digital Learning Definitions – As modalities change, definitions and communications have been difficult for faculty, administrators, policymakers, and, most importantly, students.
- ▶ Microcredentials – The growth in microcredentials and alternative credentials is both a threat and an opportunity for traditional accredited higher education.
- ▶ Artificial Intelligence – As these tools become ubiquitous, how do we tackle the instructional, academic integrity, and equity issues related to generative artificial intelligence?
- ▶ Higher Education Enrollments – As higher education faces enrollment challenges, what are the ways in which digital learning can help?

Current Activities – Projects & Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants and contracts. All work in this category is considered high priority.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Every Learner Everywhere	A/F; A/S; I	U.S.	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation \$6,688,840 (Oct 2022 – Dec 2024)	6.4-7.8 / 2017-25	11 partner organizations as identified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (more to be added)
Every Learner Everywhere Equity Advisory Board	A/S; I	U.S.	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	ELE Staff + 6 Board members 2022-23	Five higher education professionals advising on equity activities

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE is a network of 11 partner organizations working collaboratively to help institutions use new technology to innovate in teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes for Black, Latino/a, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. WCET is an intermediary for the network, which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is also one of the partners participating in it. During FY 2022, Every Learner offered a number of ecosystem and field-facing services including two webinar series for the general field. The most involved partner organizations included Achieving the Dream, American Public and Land-Grant Universities, and Digital Promise. Service topics included information on adaptive learning, equitable pedagogical practices in digital learning, evidence-based teaching practices for digital learning, and information on the development of faculty communities of practice.

Every Learner Everywhere’s **EQUITY ADVISORY BOARD** consists of six higher education professionals chosen by the Every Learner Everywhere staff and Steering Committee to assist Every Learner in better centering equity considerations in its work.

New Directions

Projects that might need WICHE President approval for which staff is actively seeking funding, prioritized as follows.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/ TIMELINE	PARTNERS
Emerging Federal Policies	A/F; I; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	National	Internal	2.0 1 year	WCET, SAN, WICHE Policy Unit
Artificial Intelligence: Policy & Practice in Higher Education	A/S; W/S; I; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	National	Internal	.5+ 1 year	WCET, external consultants
Price and Cost of Distance Education	A/S; W/S; I; V/A	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	National	Internal	.5+ 1 year	WICHE Policy Unit

The years 2023 and 2024 will be unusually full of **EMERGING FEDERAL POLICY** discussions regarding digital learning in higher education. Both the Department of Education and the Veterans Administration have rules regarding professional licensure programs. The Department of Education announced likely rulemaking on accreditation, distance education definition, state authorization, and third-party services. The Department also released updated guidance on third-party services. NC-SARA is facilitating a new SARA Policy Modification Process intended to be more inclusive and transparent. Legislation is likely in Congress on short-term Pell and on housing allowance for veterans studying at a distance. WCET and SAN staff will continue to follow these policy proposals and inform members.

The impact of **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE** has had a long ramp-up, but it is suddenly upon us. In November, OpenAI released ChatGPT, a chat interface for its GPT 3.5 large language model AI. Using the chat interface, users can make a seemingly endless array of queries of GPT 3.5 that result in often stunning responses. The relative ease in getting the program to create everything from poems to short answers to complete essays has led many faculty and administrators to worry about the academic integrity of coursework. Others are urging faculty to rethink assessment practices and find ways to integrate generative artificial intelligence, especially ChatGPT, into coursework. Artificial Intelligence will be one of WCET’s four focus areas in 2023 and will include the production of several blogs, webinars, and both public-facing and member-only reports including Artificial Intelligence: Policy and Practice in Higher Education and Supporting Learning through Artificial Intelligence: A Survey of Institutional Policies and Practices. This work is being funded through internal investment but may lead to additional funding opportunities.

In 2017, WCET conducted national research on the **PRICE AND COST OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**. A survey of institutions sought to collect information on the “price” that institutions charge students for a distance education course and the “cost” to create that course. The work led to the realization that the views of practitioners and policymakers are completely at odds. An update of this analysis is needed for the post-COVID higher education world.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2023:

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT FOR WCET AND SAN: WCET and SAN used the services of WebAIM, part of the Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice, at Utah State University to improve website accessibility. WCET has long been a leader in the advocacy of accessible digital learning content and wanted to ensure that its websites are highly accessible. The State Authorization Network has begun a similar extensive review with the help of WebAIM and hopes to have the work completed early in the next fiscal year.

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE has successfully closed out six grants and three contracts during this time period and has primarily transitioned to using a new three-year network investment grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The focus of this year has been on the major reinvestment grant, and with it the new deliverables focused on a new governance system, new Technical Assistance Providers, selecting and onboarding a new Equity-First Organization, and creating a menu of services, an Institutional Digital Learning Assessment Tool, and Quality Service Standards. The network continued to be a recognized leader in equity in digital learning through multiple conference presentations, resources, and blog posts. The Every Learner director resigned in February 2023, and the network searched for a new director in the spring.

The **WCET ANNUAL MEETING** was the first in-person event since 2019 and took place in Denver, with a mix of 350 member and non-member attendees. Sessions covered an array of digital learning and higher education topics including potential changes in the Online Program Management (OPM) marketplace, the array of digital learning definitions and need for clarity, microcredential strategies, accreditation challenges and changes, and quality in digital learning.

The **MEMBER-ONLY VIRTUAL SUMMIT** topic for 2022—high-quality digital learning—resonated well with the members as many institutions were emerging from the pandemic and seeking strategies for improving digital learning. Over 450 people participated in the one-day virtual event. The March 2023 event focused on emerging business models in higher education.

The **WCET WEBCAST SERIES** is popular with the WCET community because the webcasts are free and open to all and feature experts and practitioners sharing pragmatic advice and lessons learned on a variety of digital learning topics. Topics for 2022 included guidance for navigating the confusing array of digital learning definitions, strategically evaluating edtech tools, microcredentials, and the higher education policy landscape.

The **STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN)** created, in early FY 2023, the Getting Started with Compliance Management Gateway. Found on the SAN website, the Gateway provides quick access to SAN-developed tools and resources to understand and implement an institutional compliance plan. These tools and resources include a series of issue-based one- and two-page abstracts for basic compliance and beyond-basics issues. Additionally, tables and charts are provided with contact information for multi-state, multi-country, and professional licensing agencies to facilitate research. SAN papers and handbooks are also accessible from the Getting Started with Compliance Management Gateway.

In addition to twice monthly member-only meetings addressing timely topics, SAN held training workshops. A virtual three-day Basics of State Authorization Workshop was led by subject-matter experts and included mentors to assist attendees to understand and develop compliance strategies. A virtual three-day Advanced Topics Workshop was provided for more experienced compliance staff members, addressing Succession Planning for Compliance Continuity. In September 2022, SAN unveiled a new logo that reflects the collaboration of SAN with its members, regulators, and other entities within the institution compliance community.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff is considering pursuing.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/TIMELINE	PARTNERS
A Hole in State Policy: Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/S; W/S; I; V/A		Western	\$1.2M	2.5 3 years	WICHE Policy Unit

A HOLE IN STATE POLICY – ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: In this project, the Policy Analysis and Research unit (assisted by WCET) will work with key state partners to develop appropriate frameworks to address the rise of alternative providers of postsecondary education. This work will help ensure that states can leverage the advantages of legitimately innovative and disruptive ideas while also protecting students from predatory practices of substandard providers.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants and contracts. All work in this category is considered high-priority.

Focus: A/F Affordability and Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium: Interns*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$100,000	7/23-6/24	State of Alaska
Alaska Internship Consortium: Technical Assistance*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$20,000	.05 7/23-6/24	Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Arizona: Evidence- Based Practices Fidelity Monitoring*	W/S; V/A	Western	\$409,250	2.75 7/22-6/23	State of Arizona
Guam Psychology Internship Consortium	A/S; W/S	Western & Pacific Territories	\$250,000	.50 2.5 years	The U.S. Territory of Guam
Hawai'i Early Intervention Services - Rates Study	W/S	Western	\$55,800	1/23-6/23	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$1,850,733	.50 7/22-6/23	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Recruitment of School- Based Clinical Psychologists*	W/S	Western	\$100,000	Ongoing	State of Hawai'i
Idaho Psychology Internship Consortium*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$20,657	7/22-6/23	State of Idaho
Montana Fidelity Reviews*	W/S; V/A	Western	\$90,900	.50 7/22-9/23	State of Montana
Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MP- MHTTC)	A/S; W/S	Western	\$445,559	1.5 5 years	University of North Dakota
Mountain Plains Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center	W/S	Western	\$541,258	2.65 2 Years	US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
NASMHPD Technical Assistance	W/S	National	\$250,000	.75 1/23–8/23	National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Institutes of Health – Behavioral Health Aide Assessment	W/S	Western	\$153,088	.75 4 years	AK Native Tribal Health Consortium' Northwest Indian College; University of AK – Anchorage
National Institutes of Health - Online Publication Update	W/S	National	\$15,977	.15 9/20-9/22	National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health
Nevada Psychology Internship Consortium	A/S; W/S	Western	\$162,401	.25 8/22-8/23	State of Nevada
New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortium	A/S; W/S	Western	\$110,070	.25 2.5 Years	State of New Mexico; Indian Health Service
North Dakota Behavioral Health Workforce Study	W/S	Western	\$60,300	5/22-1/23	University of North Dakota
Oregon Psychology Internship Program*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$3,000	7/22-6/23	State of Oregon

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives *(continued)*

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants and contracts. All work in this category is considered high-priority.

Focus: A/F Affordability and Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	GEO SCOPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE	PARTNERS
Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)	W/S	Western	\$843,219	3.0 9/22-9/23	JBS International
Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention	W/S	National	\$2,892,797	4.5 4/22-3/23	US Veterans Administration Office of Rural Health & Office of Suicide Prevention
Sanford Health Psychology Internship Consortium	A/S; W/S	Western	\$200,000	.50 3 Years	Sanford Health
South Dakota IMP(ACT) Fidelity Reviews*	W/S; V/A	Western	\$49,750	.25 6/22-5/23	State of South Dakota
South Dakota Optimal Capacity T/A – Phase III	W/S	Western	\$50,000	.25 1/23-5/23	State of South Dakota
South Dakota Psychology Internship Consortium	A/S; W/S	Western	\$175,000	.25 8/22-8/23	State of South Dakota
University of Wisconsin Technical Assistance	A/S; W/S	National	\$52,659	.40 4 years	University of Wisconsin
Utah Psychology Internship Consortium*	A/S; W/S	Western	\$6,720	7/22-6/23	State of Utah
Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG): Annual Membership Program	W/S	Western	Varies annually	.10 Ongoing	WICHE Member States and Territories

* WICHE expects these projects will be renewed, or they have already been renewed, for FY 2024.

ALASKA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (AK-PIC) INTERNS: The WICHE BHP supports the ongoing operations of the AK-PIC for interns and faculty, including its engagement in the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and achievement/maintenance of American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation.

ALASKA INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (AK-PIC) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority contracts with WICHE to provide technical assistance to the AK-PIC and prepare it to successfully become re-accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). The AK-PIC consists of a multi-site consortium of Alaska agencies that maintain at least one supervising psychologist on-site to provide supervision and didactic training to interns.

ARIZONA EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (EBPS) FIDELITY MONITORING: WICHE partners with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System to support the implementation and fidelity reviews of four EBPs in the Maricopa County public behavioral health system. WICHE supports a team of fidelity reviewers who review approximately 20 different providers in Maricopa County each year. The project was expanded in FY 2019 to include fidelity reviews of two EBPs in Northern and Southern Arizona.

GUAM PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM: The WICHE BHP has partnered with the U.S. Territory of Guam to develop an accreditable psychology internship consortium to serve Guam and CNMI and build the behavioral health workforces there. As has been accomplished in Alaska, Hawai'i, Nevada, and Colorado, WICHE is guiding all phases of the development of a psychology internship consortium to attract and retain qualified and highly trained behavioral health professionals in the territories. Guam-PIC is participating in the 2022 APPIC National Intern Match, and the first cohort of two interns began their internship in September 2022.

HAWAII EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES – RATES STUDY: The Early Intervention Services Section (EIS) of the Hawai'i Department of Health has contracted with the WICHE BHP to complete another comparative review of early childhood services compensation methodology and pricing structures for both contracted services and related professional salaries such as General Educator, Occupational and Physical Therapies, and Speech Language Pathologist. The EIS seeks to compare Hawai'i rates to those in other, analogous states to ensure competitive pay to help maintain a sufficient workforce.

HAWAII PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (HI-PIC): WICHE supports the state of Hawai'i in the development and operation of an accredited psychology internship consortium. A primary goal of the internship program is the establishment of a pipeline to build Hawai'i's behavioral health workforce. Three Hawai'i state agencies – the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Department of Public Safety – provide funding to support HI-PIC. In the current year, there are 10 interns participating in HI-PIC.

HAWAII RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOL-BASED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS: The Hawai'i Department of Education contracts with the WICHE BHP to recruit and contract with clinical psychologists to fill public school vacancies across the Hawaiian Islands.

IDAHO PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (ID-PIC): WICHE is assisting the state of Idaho in the development and operation of an accredited psychology internship consortium. A primary goal of the internship program is to establish a pipeline to build Idaho's behavioral health workforce, especially in rural and underserved areas. The Idaho State Board of Education received funding from the Idaho Legislature to support WICHE's assistance in restructuring and expanding an existing unaccredited internship program and pursuing American Psychological Association accreditation.

MONTANA FIDELITY REVIEWS: The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services' Behavioral Health and Disabilities Division has contracted with the WICHE BHP to provide consultation and technical assistance to the division on the implementation of its Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT). This project includes conducting fidelity reviews for 13 PACT programs operating across the state, developing plans and focused training to promote the improvement of services, and consultation on outcomes and dashboard development.

MOUNTAIN PLAINS MENTAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTER (MP-MHTTC): The MP-MHTTC is a five-year partnership between WICHE and the University of North Dakota to provide comprehensive training, resources, and technical assistance to mental health providers and other practitioners across a six-state area. Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the center specializes in rural and frontier mental health in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

MOUNTAIN PLAINS RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER: In October of 2022, WICHE was awarded a two-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to establish the Mountain Plains Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center (MP-ROTAC), which is dedicated to supporting opioid and stimulant prevention, treatment, and recovery in HHS Region 8, comprising Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. MP-ROTAC develops and disseminates resources, training, and technical assistance to rural communities across the continuum of care.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM DIRECTORS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The WICHE BHP will be a subcontractor to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) on its Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Technical Assistance Coalition and Transformation Transfer Initiative. The BHP will focus on implementing and expanding 988 crisis services in rural and frontier regions by providing a series of training and technical assistance sessions to providers across the country.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH) BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE ASSESSMENT: The WICHE Behavioral Health Program, in collaboration with the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), was awarded a National Institutes of Health (NIH) research grant. This project will evaluate the behavioral health aide program focusing on efficacy, implementation, and best practices. As behavioral health workforce issues continue to grow in tribal areas, this research has the potential to significantly influence the development of new programs across the West.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH) ONLINE PUBLICATION UPDATE: The NIH has contracted with the WICHE BHP to provide an update to its publication *Mental Health and Rural America: An Overview and Annotated Bibliography*. The revision will expand the publication's focus to include substance use and addiction, with special emphasis on opioid addiction in rural and frontier areas of the U.S.

NEVADA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (NV-PIC): The WICHE BHP assists the state of Nevada in the development and operation of an accredited psychology internship consortium. A primary goal of the internship program is to establish a pipeline to build Nevada's behavioral health workforce. The Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health and Nevada-WICHE provides support and funding for the BHP's ongoing development and operation of the Nevada Psychology Internship Consortium.

NEW MEXICO PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (NM-PIC): WICHE is working with partner agencies to develop a doctoral psychology internship consortium for the state of New Mexico. A primary goal of the internship program is to help develop New Mexico's behavioral health workforce in rural and underserved areas. Through funding from the New Mexico Behavioral Health Services Division, the New Mexico Department of Health, and the federal Indian Health Services, the WICHE BHP will facilitate program development, and help ensure the program meets American Psychological Association accreditation standards. NM-PIC accepted its first cohort of interns in 2021-22, and its accreditation self-study was submitted in March 2022.

NORTH DAKOTA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDY: The University of North Dakota (UND) contracted with the WICHE BHP to provide consultation and technical assistance to UND as part of the North Dakota Behavioral Health Plan Aim 7: Behavioral Health Workforce. WICHE convened and facilitated a Behavioral Health Workforce Summit with key stakeholders and facilitated the development of a Behavioral Health Workforce Strategic Plan.

OREGON STATE HOSPITAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: WICHE continues to assist the Oregon State Hospital Psychology Internship Training Program by providing support for the internship website and technical assistance to help the program comply with accreditation standards.

RURAL COMMUNITIES OPIOID RESPONSE PROGRAM (RCORP): WICHE has partnered with JBS International to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses and psychostimulant misuse in high-risk communities by strengthening the organizational and infrastructural capacity of multi-sector consortia. As a partner in this project, WICHE provides technical assistance to designated grantee sites.

RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION – TOGETHER WITH VETERANS: WICHE is collaborating with the Denver-based federal Veterans Administration, Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) to develop and implement Together With Veterans, a veteran suicide-prevention program for rural communities. The program became operational in FY 2019, with four initial sites: two in Colorado, one in Montana, and one in North Carolina. Since then, the program has grown to 34 sites that are fully operational in FY 2023. The TWV Program sites are located in rural communities throughout the country, stretching from as far east as New Hampshire and as far west as the Territory of Guam.

SANFORD HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM: The WICHE BHP worked with the leadership of Sanford Health to begin planning and preparation for a psychology internship designed to provide a broad and culturally relevant training program to support the preparation and retention of doctoral level psychologists in North Dakota and Minnesota. Sanford Health has a large national footprint, and they are a leading agency in the advancement of integrated health services (physical and behavioral). The internship development began primarily with Sanford's integrated health sites in North Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA IMP(ACT) FIDELITY REVIEWS: WICHE is continuing to assist the South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health to evaluate the fidelity of the evidence-based practice Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) at community behavioral health clinics in three locations in South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM: The University of South Dakota recently contracted with the WICHE Behavioral Health Program for the development of a psychology internship consortium. The BHP is working with the state to identify core partners for the internship, including the South Dakota Human Services Center in Yankton and other community-based partners. WICHE's work will extend from planning and development to supporting achieving accreditation of the internship program.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: WICHE is working in partnership with the University of Wisconsin through a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant to provide education and training to graduate students, practitioners, educators, and trainers. These learning collaboratives will focus on the integration of substance use disorder and mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery in rural communities. WICHE will provide expert trainers for a series of

six trainings over the course of 12 weeks, twice a year for the next four years. Many of the expert trainers will be provided in conjunction with the ongoing work of WICHE’s Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP).

UTAH PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM: WICHE is working with partner agencies to develop a doctoral psychology internship consortium. WICHE will facilitate program development, help ensure the program meets American Psychological Association accreditation standards, and assist with the accreditation process.

WESTERN STATES DECISION SUPPORT GROUP (WSDSG) ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM: Since 1985, WICHE has been managing the WSDSG, an information-sharing membership-based network for behavioral health data and evaluation staff and managers from WICHE states and territories. WICHE manages quarterly conference calls to discuss emerging issues in behavioral health data and system evaluation and provides ongoing support to WSDSG members. WICHE also organizes an annual meeting with training and presentations for WSDSG members to stay apprised of developments and best practices in the field of behavioral health data and evaluation. Funding is based on an annual membership fee of \$6,000.

New Directions

Projects that might need WICHE President approval for which staff is actively seeking funding, prioritized as follows.

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project prioritization: ■ Relevance (mission critical) ■ Opportunity (funding) ■ Competence (staff/consultants)

PROJECT	FOCUS	PRIORITY	GEO COPE	FUNDING	STAFF FTE/ TIMELINE	PARTNERS									
Alaska Psychiatric Institute Regulatory Compliance - Technical Assistance	W/S; V/A	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #003366;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #003366;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #0070C0;"></td> <td style="background-color: #003366;"></td> </tr> </table>										Western	\$197,100	5 years	State of Alaska

ALASKA PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: Through a competitive bid process, the WICHE BHP was awarded a contract by the state of Alaska to provide technical assistance to the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) to help maintain compliance with regulating agencies by performing reviews and providing guidance on how to address shortcomings in policies and execution. The project is scheduled to begin July 1, 2023, and the contract can be renewed for up to four additional years.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff is considering pursuing:

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY – TECHNOLOGY MEDIATED SUPERVISION OF POST-GRADUATE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has asked WICHE for a proposal to complete an analysis of state policies related to use of telehealth technology to supervise new professionals seeking hours of supervised practice for licensure. WICHE BHP would prepare a literature review, and review requirements in other rural states. Currently, Alaska licensure requires all such postgraduate supervised practice to be delivered in-person and face-to-face. This creates a burden for many remote locations in the state. WICHE BHP would author a policy analysis paper, and present findings to the licensure boards in Alaska.

COLORADO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The state of Colorado’s Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has approached WICHE regarding an opportunity for the BHP to provide technical assistance on the establishment of a Behavioral Health Aide Program in Colorado. The WICHE BHP has unique expertise in the development and operation of the Alaska Behavioral Health Aide Program, and multiple states are considering replicating this program to address workforce shortages. WICHE would provide technical assistance to the Colorado BHA in its efforts to establish a similar program.

HAWAI'I DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT, AND FACILITATION FOR SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:

For several years, WICHE's BHP assisted the Hawai'i Department of Education with marketing, recruitment, screening, and referral services for behavioral health professionals to fill public school vacancies across the Hawaiian Islands. As part of its pandemic-related budget strategy, the state of Hawaii eliminated funding for this contract. However, the workforce need is still critical, and the state has indicated its interest in re-establishing this successful recruitment effort.

HAWAI'I PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM – EXPANSION: The state of Hawai'i is considering an expansion of the Hawai'i Psychology Internship program by placing additional interns at several new sites, including the Hawai'i State Hospital.

MERCY CARE ARIZONA EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (EBPS): WICHE is planning to provide training, education, and guidance concerning adult EBPs and fidelity tools to ensure Mercy Care AZ provider staff offers high-quality EBPs and to ensure fidelity to identified EBPs protocols. Additionally, WICHE will provide Evidence Based Practices Training for providers, paraprofessionals, and family members serving infant, child, adolescent, and transitional-age youth populations with developmental delays/disabilities, social/emotional disorders, and/or who are engaged in the foster care system.

STUDENT WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH: WICHE continues to seek opportunities and funding to partner with the WICHE Policy unit and the Lumina Foundation to support and improve college student wellness and mental health, with the goal of improving college completion and degree attainment for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or mental health status.

Previously considered projects that we propose to remove from the Workplan: **None at this time.**

Completed Projects

Work that staff completed in FY 2023:

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE ASSESSMENT: The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), in conjunction with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, contracted with the WICHE BHP to assess ANTHC's Behavioral Health Aide (BHA) Program. The BHP assessed the efficacy of the BHA training program in the provision of training and technical assistance to Alaska Tribal Health Organizations. The BHP produced a written report emphasizing the strengths of the BHA Program, areas for improvement, and recommended changes.

ARIZONA MERCY MARICOPA TRAINING: WICHE collaborated with Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care (MMIC) to develop a training academy to increase workforce expertise by implementing training strategies for three evidence-based practices: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Transition to Independence (TIP) Model, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Abuse (CBT-SA).

AVONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-ACCREDITATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The WICHE BHP supported the Avondale Elementary School District's re-accreditation of its Doctoral School Psychology Internship Program by providing technical assistance in its submission of re-accreditation to the American Psychological Association.

MONTANA CRISIS SYSTEM: The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services contracted with the WICHE BHP to assess and make recommendations regarding Montana's implementation of its Mobile Crisis System, including an assessment of individual crisis-stabilization facilities, existing mobile crisis response teams, and its crisis-system data reporting and technology solutions. In addition to a high-level statewide assessment, the BHP also assessed seven county-based crisis services.

SOUTH DAKOTA HUMAN SERVICES CENTER OPTIMAL CAPACITY REVIEW – PHASE I: The South Dakota Department of Social Services contracted with the WICHE BHP to assist the state in establishing the optimal capacity and patient programming at the South Dakota Human Services Center.

SOUTH DAKOTA HSC OPTIMAL CAPACITY REVIEW – PHASE II: Provided policy guidance, technical assistance, and support for the implementation of focused programming and staffing models.

COLLABORATIONS ACROSS WICHE UNITS

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

Focus: **A/F** Affordability and Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

PROJECT	FOCUS	UNITS*	ACTIVITY CATEGORY	DETAILS OF COLLABORATION
A Hole in State Policy: Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/S; W/S; I; V/A	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	New Directions (seeking funding)	In this project, the Policy Analysis and Research Unit will work with WCET and key state partners to develop appropriate frameworks to address the rise of alternative providers of postsecondary education. This work will help ensure states and territories take advantage of legitimately innovative and disruptive ideas while also protecting students from predatory practices of substandard providers. WICHE will also develop and execute a major education campaign to share findings and lessons from these states and territories with policymakers across the country.
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders*	I	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	Projects and Initiatives (DHS-funded)	The work entails interplay between WICHE's cyber fellow (under WCET auspices) and Policy Analysis and Research staff.
Evolving Higher Education Policy Issues*	A/S; I	WCET, Policy Analysis and Research	Projects and Initiatives (variously funded)	Through WCET's Frontiers blog and other avenues, these units contribute to the field by engaging on emerging issues on which WICHE has policy and research insights and context. This often leads to collaboration or co-publication in areas that recently have ranged from state authorization of distance learning, to changes in IPEDS outcome measures data with implications for attainment metrics.
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus*	A/S; W/S	Policy Analysis and Research, Behavioral Health Program	Projects and Initiatives (variously funded)	This prospective convening of state policymakers, institutions, and other stakeholders would take advantage of WICHE Policy Unit and Behavioral Health Program expertise alike to identify policy and practice gaps related to campus behavioral health services and systems.
Intermediaries for Scale Partnership	A/F; A/S; I	Policy Analysis and Research, Programs & Services	Current Activities	Although not selected to be one of the Intermediaries for Scale grantees of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, WICHE is pursuing multiple partnerships with those organizations that were selected. WICHE was previously selected by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium to facilitate its efforts to develop an effective data infrastructure and staff capacity. This will in turn aid in AIHEC's work to support Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and provide leadership on American Indian and Alaska Native higher education issues. WICHE staff will continue to review other opportunities to partner with Intermediaries for Scale where the opportunities fit with WICHE's mission and staff expertise.
No Holding Back: Using Data to Review and Revise Administrative Hold Policies among Public Postsecondary Institutions in the Western Region*	A/S; A/F	Programs and Services, Policy Analysis and Research	Projects and Initiatives (grant-funded)	WICHE's Programs and Services unit and Policy Analysis and Research unit are collaborating with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions to provide institutions in the West with tools to (re)evaluate their administrative hold policies to improve student success and to better use their data in policy formation.
Scaling Technology-Assisted Skill-Building in Rural Areas	A/S; W/S	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	New Directions (seeking funding)	This proposed project would leverage technology (and WCET expertise) to scale work-based learning to serve communities of need.
Serving Student Soldiers of the West	A/S; W/S	Policy Analysis and Research, Behavioral Health Program	New Directions (seeking funding)	This proposed project would increase higher education access and success for members of the military and their families, incorporating distinctive behavioral health attributes of these populations.

* Project is currently funded