



COMMISSION MEETING

May 5-6, 2025 | Park City, Utah

AGENDA AND
MEETING MATERIALS

Creating an Effective State-Federal
Partnership to Enhance the Value of
Postsecondary Education



McPolin Barn, Park City, Utah

WICHE COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

Creating an Effective State-Federal Partnership to Enhance the Value of Postsecondary Education

May 5-6, 2025 (May 4 - New Commissioner Orientation and Certifying Officers Meeting)
Lodges at Deer Valley | 2900 Deer Valley Dr. East, Park City, UT 84060

Sunday, May 4, 2025

Noon <i>Brass Tag, 2nd Floor</i>	Optional Lunch for New Commissioners, Certifying Officers, and WICHE Staff	
1:00 - 4:00 p.m. <i>Spruce B Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</i>	Certifying Officers Meeting	
1:00 - 4:00 p.m. <i>Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</i>	New Commissioner Orientation	
5:45 p.m. <i>Meet in Lobby</i>	Dinner for New Commissioners New WICHE Commissioners, WICHE Officers, and the Senior Leadership team are invited to dinner at Grappa Restaurant at 151 Main Street. The group will meet in the lobby and depart together.	
5:45 p.m. <i>Meet in Lobby</i>	Dinner for Certifying Officers Certifying Officers and WICHE staff are invited to dinner at Loma at 900 Main Street. The group will meet in the lobby and depart together.	

Monday, May 5, 2025

7:00 - 9:00 a.m. <i>Brass Tag, 2nd Floor</i>	Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests	
8:00 - 9:00 a.m. <i>Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</i>	Executive Committee Meeting (Open and Closed Sessions)	1-1
9:15 - 9:45 a.m. <i>Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor</i>	Welcome and Opening Remarks Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair	2-1

9:45 – 11:00 a.m.
*Evergreen Meeting Room,
 3rd Floor*

Plenary Session I – Understanding and Navigating the Federal Landscape to Ensure an Effective State Role in Higher Education **3-1**

Facilitator:

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair, and Professor, College of Nursing and School of Medicine, Senior Advisor to the Director of Project ECHO®, University of New Mexico

Panelists:

Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (CNMI), Vice President, Administration and Advancement, Northern Marianas College

Commissioner Geoffrey Landward (UT), Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education

Christopher T. Murray, Partner, Thompson Coburn, LLP

The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions aimed at providing commissioners with the opportunity to leverage various perspectives to explore relevant topics aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities. Those in the room who are not commissioners or facilitators, please observe only.

11:15 - 12:30 p.m.
*Spruce B Meeting Room,
 2nd Floor*

Roundtable 1 – State Policy Levers and Quality Assurance for Nondegree Credentials **4-1**

Facilitators:

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Heather McKay, Senior Vice President of Employer Engagement and Executive Director of the Strada Institute for the Future of Work

11:15 - 12:30 p.m.
*Oak Meeting Room,
 2nd Floor*

Roundtable 2 – The Price-Cost Paradox in Distance Education: Unraveling the Disconnect **4-2**

Facilitator:

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET, and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE

12:30 - 1:45 p.m.
Brass Tag, 2nd Floor

Networking Lunch

1:45 - 3:00 p.m.
*Oak Meeting Room,
 2nd Floor*

Programs and Services Committee Meeting **5-1**

1:45 - 3:00 p.m.
*Spruce B Meeting Room,
 2nd Floor*

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting **6-1**

3:15 - 4:30 p.m.
*Evergreen Meeting Room,
 3rd Floor*

Plenary Session II – Leveraging a State-Federal Partnership to Enhance Postsecondary Affordability and Improve Student Outcomes **7-1**

Facilitator:

Commissioner Robert Shireman (CA), Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

Panelists:

Commissioner Ben Cannon (OR), Executive Director, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), WICHE Vice Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature

Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, National Conference of State Legislatures

5:00 - 8:30 p.m.*Butcher's Chophouse on Main Street***Networking Dinner**

The group will meet in the Lodges lobby to coordinate departure to the restaurant.

Tuesday, May 6, 2025**7:00 - 8:30 a.m.***Brass Tag, 2nd Floor***Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests**

State delegations meet to discuss the Committee of the Whole – Action Items.

The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions aimed at providing commissioners with the opportunity to leverage various perspectives to explore relevant topics aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities. Those in the room who are not commissioners or facilitators, please observe only.

8:30 - 9:45 a.m.*Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor***Roundtable 3 – Navigating Federal Changes in Higher Education: A Forum for Discussion and Response****8-1****Facilitator:**

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

8:30 - 9:45 a.m.*Spruce B Meeting Room, 2nd Floor***Roundtable 4 – Unlocking the Workforce Development Potential of Agricultural Extension Services in Rural Communities****8-1****Facilitator:**

Brian Prescott, President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.*Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor***Committee of the Whole – Business Session****9-1****11:30 a.m.****Closing Remarks**

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, May 5, 2025

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Oak Meeting Room

2nd Floor

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

Committee Members

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Antwan Jefferson (CO), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
David Lassner (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Agenda (Open)

	Approval of the March 13, 2025, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes	1-2
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Other Business

Agenda (Closed)

	Review of the WICHE President's Performance in FY 2025 and Adoption of the FY 2026 Performance Objectives	1-7
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Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the March 13, 2025, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Bob Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO) *proxy for Antwan Jefferson*
David Lassner (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Hilda Rosselli (OR) *proxy for Ben Cannon*
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Antwan Jefferson (CO), Immediate Past Chair
Ben Cannon (OR)

Additional Commissioners Present

Danita Bye (ND)

Staff Present

Ray Burgman Gallegos, Vice President,
Programs and Services
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the
President and the Commission
Demarée Michelau, President
Craig Milburn, Chief Financial Officer
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
Communications

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m., and quorum was confirmed.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of February 6, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Damron asked for any corrections to the February 6, 2025, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of up to \$75,000 to Conduct an Executive Compensation Analysis for WICHE and to Delegate the Authority to Select the Firm to the WICHE Officers

Chair Damron requested approval for a compensation study for the president of WICHE, with a budget not exceeding \$75,000. Several agencies specializing in executive compensation studies have been identified and contacted, and the study is expected to

stay within the budget limit. She also asked the committee to authorize the officers, in collaboration with President Demarée Michelau, to review proposals and select a firm on behalf of the Commission. Several comments were made during the discussion of the action item:

- ▶ The compensation study should include the entire benefits package plus the base salary.
- ▶ Engaging a third-party firm specializing in executive compensation studies adds significant value to the necessary research. It would be time-consuming for the Commission to undertake a thorough independent study. The firm selected will have access to comparable salaries and benefits to those of chief executive officers in the higher education sector.
- ▶ The \$75,000 budget would be the maximum approved expenditure, aligning with the typical cost for executive compensation studies.
- ▶ President Michelau suggested conducting additional compensation studies for the WICHE senior leadership team and other positions within the organization at a later date, contingent upon any remaining funds from the president's compensation study. Additionally, she emphasized the value of evaluating staff compensation every three to five years.
- ▶ Assessing the president's workload alongside compensation would provide valuable insights. The role has evolved over the years, and understanding how the workload compares to other executives in similar positions could lead to a more realistic and comprehensive assessment of the compensation package. The risk of burnout is significant given the extensive responsibilities and the broad range of stakeholders the role oversees. Comparing the practicality of the workload and responsibilities with those of other executives would benefit the study of the work of the WICHE president.
- ▶ Ensuring compliance with IRS requirements for the annual submission of the 990 form necessitates a solid justification of a third-party study of the president's compensation. The 990 form signed by WICHE requires that the Executive Committee has established and approved the president's compensation package. An external third-party study would provide an unbiased opinion and the necessary support to meet IRS standards of the 990 form.
- ▶ Information sharing with the other regional compacts is essential.

Chair Damron MOVED TO APPROVE a budget of \$75,000 for a president's compensation package study. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Update on the Evaluation of the President

Chair Damron reported on the status of President Michelau's annual evaluation. The Commission had the opportunity to provide feedback on her performance through an

online survey distributed to commissioners in February 2025. The survey results and a job performance summary from the WICHE Officers will be presented to the Executive Committee at the May 2025 Commission Meeting. The documents, including President Michelau's self-evaluation, will be reviewed on the Commission portal in April 2025. The primary focus of the May 2025 Executive Committee meeting will be to meet with and evaluate President Michelau.

DISCUSSION ITEM

A Refresh of WICHE's Vision

President Michelau provided a status update on revising WICHE's vision statement, incorporating feedback from the February 2025 Executive Committee meeting. The discussion emphasized regional collaboration among Western states and Pacific Island members, and the inclusion of Pacific Islands in the vision and mission statements. Additionally, a suggestion is to include civic activity and make the vision statement more active. President Michelau confirmed she had gathered the necessary feedback and would present a revised vision statement at the May 2025 meeting for the Executive Committee to review, revise as necessary, and for the Commission to vote on.

DISCUSSION ITEM

May 2025 Commission Meeting Update and Agenda Review

President Michelau provided an update on the agenda, plenary sessions, and roundtable discussions. Some plenary sessions and roundtable topics were adjusted in response to the committee's feedback during the February 2025 Executive Committee meeting. The session on financial aid was rescheduled to be a part of the November 2025 Commission meeting to allow for better timing as the federal government fluctuations in the area settle. A roundtable discussion that allows for flexibility and relevancy was added to the slate of roundtable discussions to address the most pressing higher education topics at the time of the meeting. Additionally, the order of plenary sessions was switched to provide an update first, followed by a discussion on engaging in a more effective state-federal partnership.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Update on WICHE's Budget

President Michelau gave a budget update. The FY 2025 budget is on track with projections, and there are no concerns. The budget numbers are positive, and federal funding was holding steady, particularly for behavioral health program projects. Although uncertainty remains due to ongoing federal government funding cuts, there are no reports of a cessation of funding for WICHE projects. All drawdowns have been completed, which is

reassuring. The Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) Technical Assistance Program (TAP) grant for Pacific Islands-membership funding was secured for FY 2025, and letters of support have been obtained for the next TAP application process for funding in FY 2026. While the grant competition is currently closed, field representatives for the OIA have indicated it may reopen on the grants.gov website sometime in March 2025.

Additionally, President Michelau reported on the following:

- ▶ A regional compact collaboration is underway with McAllister & Quinn, a Washington, D.C., firm specializing in federal funding strategy and perspective. The firm is in the discovery phase, engaging with regional compact senior leadership teams to discuss funding strategy activities. They will deliver a draft strategy plan in two to three months to the compacts once the discovery phase and study are complete.
- ▶ The Audit Committee met with the Forvis Mazars auditor to discuss FY 2026 audit planning and to review detailed information on the 2025 Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) pronouncements. One pronouncement requiring compliance pertains to staff vacation and sick time accrual; this will change the presentation of liabilities and the footnote in the financial statements.
- ▶ Chief Financial Officer Craig Milburn will retire from WICHE on June 30, 2025, after more than 25 years of service. He will assist in preparing the financials for a successful audit and remain on-call for any questions during the audit process. An extensive professional executive search for a new chief financial officer will begin in March 2025. Committee members expressed their appreciation for Milburn's exceptional contributions during his tenure. His final Commission Meeting will be in May 2025, in Park City, Utah.

President Michelau sought feedback from committee members regarding the FY 2026 salary and benefit increases. She consulted with peer organizations, including regional compacts and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), which reported a 3% increase plus a bonus pool. She wanted WICHE to align and be consistent with state members. The committee members' feedback provided information ranging from 2.5% to 3.5% for their staff salary and benefit increases in their states.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Institutional Eligibility Requirements for Student Access Programs

President Michelau presented information about the developing eligibility considerations for the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). She explained there are guidelines and a well-defined list of eligible program offerings through PSEP. However, there are no established standards or guidelines followed for institutional eligibility if an institution wants to offer a PSEP program. Currently, PSEP includes programs from public, private, nonprofit, and limited proprietary institutions. The following ideas were discussed:

- ▶ Emphasize the need for clear and consistent guidelines to help staff make approval decisions when programs or institutions express interest in joining PSEP.
- ▶ Clear program eligibility and requirements of the program to remain eligible, such as minimum pass exam rates for relevant exams in PSEP fields, to address any program quality concerns.
- ▶ Programmatic review would require intensive time for staff to review the set criteria for every participating institution and every program, to remain eligible.
- ▶ Already established programmatic and institutional accreditation would be a valid guideline/criterion to follow and implement, and would save staff time to approve participation.
- ▶ Once an institution and program participate, periodic reviews or renewal process could be needed to ensure quality programming and institution integrity.

The consensus of the committee members was that the topic should be discussed further during the Programs and Services Committee meeting at the May 2025 Commission meeting.

INFORMATION ITEM

Update on the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC)

President Michelau reported at the last CONAHEC board meeting that they did not have a quorum, so there were no action items to approve. The student transfer program has almost entirely transitioned to CETYS University. They may partner with City University of Seattle to continue the exchange with no program or financial loss to the participating students.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Review of the President's Performance in FY 2025 and Adoption of the FY 2026 Performance Objectives

Proposed President FY 2026 Goals and Objectives

The following performance objectives for the WICHE President are proposed for FY 2026. They are intended to build upon the foundation of the president's goals, objectives, and performance from FY 2025.

VISION: Position WICHE for long-term success through thought leadership, trusted and high-quality work, and meaningful partnerships.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1: REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Goal: Ensure that WICHE is recognized as a trusted partner of the WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions

Objectives

1. Engage meaningfully with the commissioners and other key stakeholders to understand and respond to the region's needs and anticipate what the West may face in years to come.
2. Engage in official visits or WICHE-relevant occasions in at least six WICHE states, territories, and freely associated states.
3. Participate in and contribute to national and regional conversations in higher education.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2: PROGRAMMATIC RELEVANCE

Goal: Ensure that WICHE programs and services are relevant, forward-thinking, and meet the needs of the West

Objectives

1. In collaboration with staff, examine the current suite of programs and services to make improvements and identify new strategies for serving the region.
2. Engage with at least three philanthropic partners as part of the broader strategy to ensure stability in external financial support.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3: POLICY AND RESEARCH SUPPORT

Goal: Provide high-quality policy guidance, research, and technical assistance to WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions

Objectives

1. Further develop and sustain technical assistance capacity to support specific state and interstate needs for expertise on higher education and behavioral health policy issues.
2. Ensure the successful development, implementation, management, and oversight of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) for the WICHE region.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4: Internal Operations

Goal: Successfully administer daily WICHE operations

Objectives

1. Maintain a balanced budget for FY 2026 and find a way within a balanced budget to provide modest merit-based salary increases for staff.
2. Maintain the morale of WICHE staff to achieve the highest possible level of productivity and professionalism.
3. Implement continuous improvement principles to ensure our internal operations meet the needs of a complex organization.
4. Prepare for and complete the annual financial audit resulting in “no material” findings.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Monday, May 5, 2025

9:15 – 9:45 a.m.

Evergreen Meeting Room

3rd Floor

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 9:15 – 9:45 a.m. | *Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor*

Opening Remarks

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair
Demarée Michelau, WICHE President

Introduction of New Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

NEW COMMISSIONERS



Patricia Charlton (NV)

Patricia “Patty” Charlton, interim chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents, is a distinguished leader with close to 30 years of experience in Nevada’s higher education landscape. A product of NSHE herself, Charlton holds degrees from the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Her extensive career at CSN, including key leadership roles, culminated in her retirement with the title of Emerita in 2022.

In 2023, Charlton assumed the role of acting vice chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs before being appointed interim chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education in August 2023. Beyond her administrative roles, Charlton is actively involved in community service, serving on boards and committees for organizations like the United Way of Southern Nevada and the Clark County School District. Her commitment extends to various community causes, including educational initiatives, youth development, and community advisory roles.

Throughout her career, Charlton’s significant contributions to higher education, coupled with her expertise in policy development, financial acumen, and dedication to transparency and communication, have established her as a respected leader in the higher education sector.



Terrence George (HI)

When you move from the prairies of Minnesota at age three to the urban sophistication of Tokyo in 1961, it’s hard to move back. This is what happened to Terry, who has spent most of his life in archipelagoes: the world’s largest (Indonesia), the second largest (the Philippines), and the absolute finest (Hawai’i). Vibrant democracies also seem to be a theme for him, with much work to deploy private philanthropic dollars to improve social justice and good governance in the world’s first democracy (the United States), one of its most raucous (the Philippines), and its largest (India). Along the way, he has studied and forgotten eight languages, made thousands of grants to hundreds of nonprofit organizations and universities in 14 countries, and eaten a lot of good street food.

Terry is a 1976 graduate of Punahou School. He received his bachelor’s degree from Stanford University, his master’s degree in law and diplomacy from Tufts University, and his executive MBA from the Shidler College of Business at the University of Hawai’i.

From 1989 to 1998, Terry served in the Ford Foundation's field offices in Manila and New Delhi as program officer for rights and social justice, local governance, and regional security and cooperation. Terry moved back to Hawai'i in 1998 to marry his wife, Julie, a first-grade teacher at Kamehameha Schools, and to raise their two children, Gracie and Geoffrey. From 1998 to mid-2003, Terry was chief program officer for the Consuelo Foundation in Hawai'i.

Terry is president and chief executive officer of the Harold K. L. Castle Foundation, which he has served since 2003 and is retiring in June 2025. The foundation invests about \$7 million a year in grants to schools, universities, and nonprofit organizations throughout Hawai'i to achieve its mission of:

- ▶ Closing the achievement and preparation gaps in public education
- ▶ Restoring nearshore marine ecosystems
- ▶ Increasing communities' ability to adapt to climate change
- ▶ Strengthening the vibrancy of Windward Oahu's communities

Terry lives in Kaimuki in a three-generation household. He serves on the boards of the Hawai'i Business Roundtable, Hawai'i P20 Council, HMSA, and Hanahau'oli School. Terry also serves on the Summer Internship Selection Committee for the Hawai'i Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund. He is past chair of the board of the National Kidney Foundation of Hawai'i and past president of the Rotary Club of Honolulu. Terry enjoys spending his spare time reading, cooking, and hiking.



Chad Sampson (AZ)

The Arizona Board of Regents named Chad Sampson executive director in August 2024. He joined the board in 2010 as associate general counsel and transitioned to vice president of strategic planning before serving most recently as vice president of academic affairs and institutional analysis. A member of the State Bar of Arizona since 2002, Sampson has also worked in private law practice with Quarles & Brady and in the Arizona Attorney General's Office as counsel for the Arizona Department of Education.

Sampson is active in the education community, serving on the WestEd Board of Directors. He has previously served on the board at Tempe Preparatory Academy, Center for After School Excellence and the Arizona State Board of Education's Professional Practices Advisory Committee. He has also worked as an adjunct professor at Mesa Community College.

Sampson earned bachelor's degrees in sociology and political science from the University of Utah and a juris doctorate from the University of Iowa College of Law. Sampson and his wife, Amber, have five children.



Mike Smith (WY)

Mike Smith is the vice president for governmental affairs and community engagement at the University of Wyoming (UW). In addition to serving as the university's chief liaison to local, state, and federal governments through the Office of Governmental Relations, Smith oversees Institutional Marketing and Communications, and the Office of Engagement and Outreach.

Prior to joining the UW in 2022, Smith was an attorney in several Western regional law firms where his practice included representing clients before the Wyoming Legislature in addition to regulatory and litigation matters. He also spent 12 years in the oil and gas sector as the manager of regulatory affairs at QEP Resources, working mostly in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and North Dakota. He first worked in politics as a college intern with Wyoming's U.S. Representative Craig Thomas in Washington, D.C., and then served on Representative and Senator Thomas' staff for five years. His ties to the University of Wyoming run deep. Smith received a bachelor's degree in secondary education from UW in 1991 and his juris doctorate degree in 1999. Both his parents received degrees from UW, his father worked in the financial aid office for 25 years, and his youngest daughter is currently attending UW. His community service includes over 20 years as a volunteer with Cheyenne Frontier Days.



Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD)

Ashley Wenger-Slaba serves as Sanford Health's senior vice president of employee experience, education, and workforce relations. Through her leadership of Sanford's Employee Experience, Leadership Education & Development (LEAD), Employee Relations, and Labor Relations teams, Wenger-Slaba creates synergies across these areas and partners with

Sanford leaders to influence operational decisions that reflect Sanford's core belief that its people are its greatest resource. A labor and employment lawyer by training and first career, Wenger-Slaba graduated from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in 2004 and the University of Minnesota law school in 2007.

Wenger-Slaba is active in the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, community where she lives with her four children. Ashley serves on the Board of Directors and Human Resource Committee for Volunteers of America-Dakotas, and sits on the Annual Meeting and Thought Leadership Committees for Sanford Health.



Joshua Whitworth (ID)

Born and raised in Idaho, Joshua graduated from Idaho State University with a bachelor's degree in marketing and a master's degree from Boise State University in business administration. Prior to assuming his role as executive director of the Idaho State Board of Education, he served as the chief deputy controller of the Idaho State Controller's office for eight years.

He and his wife, Kala, live in Boise with their two daughters. Joshua and his family also spend time at the family ranch in Mackay, Idaho, which has been in operation for four generations.

Plenary Session I

Understanding and Navigating the Federal Landscape to Ensure an Effective State Role in Higher Education

Monday, May 5, 2025

9:45 – 11:00 a.m.

Evergreen Meeting Room

3rd Floor

PLENARY SESSION I

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 9:45 - 11:00 a.m. | *Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor*

Understanding and Navigating the Federal Landscape to Ensure an Effective State Role in Higher Education

An unprecedented combination of executive orders, sweeping cuts to grants and contracts, and severe staffing reductions at federal agencies have left many in higher education with questions about the future. Federal policies on Title IV, accreditation, and accountability directly impact how states and institutions operate, making it critical to understand the implications of recent and upcoming developments for the West. This plenary session aims to highlight the most recent actions related to higher education at the federal level and how they impact the region; provide an opportunity for institutional, system, and state leaders to share how they are responding to these numerous changes; and allow commissioners to gain a deeper understanding of how federal and state roles interact to support higher education goals.

FACILITATOR

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair, and Professor, College of Nursing and School of Medicine, Senior Advisor to the Director of Project ECHO®, University of New Mexico

PANELISTS

Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (CNMI), Vice President, Administration and Advancement, Northern Marianas College

Commissioner Geoffrey Landward (UT), Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education

Christopher T. Murray, Partner, Thompson Coburn, LLP

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair, and Professor, College of Nursing and School of Medicine, Senior Advisor to the Director of Project ECHO®, University of New Mexico

Barbara Damron is a tenured professor at the University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Nursing and the UNM School of Medicine's Department of Family & Community Medicine; she is also the senior advisor to the director for Project ECHO®. Prior to that, she served as the chief government relations officer for UNM. She was also New Mexico's Cabinet Secretary of Higher Education for four years.

On the national level, Damron has been a National Academy of Medicine/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Congressional Fellow in the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP); an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow in the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions; a Congressional Fellow for Senator Lamar Alexander; Commissioner of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE); Commissioner of the Education Commission of the States; and sits on the Board of Directors of Complete College America.

Damron's long professional history spans over 45 years (26 in New Mexico) including being a leader in education, a healthcare executive, an advanced practice nurse, a college professor, an international consultant, and a cancer scientist. She has built positive and extensive relationships within the state's higher education community, as well as within the legislative and executive branches. She has also worked alongside community and state leaders on the promotion of civic engagement and was featured as a panelist at the Hispanic Leadership Institute's (USHLI) "Latinas in Politics" forum previously at UNM.

Damron received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Panelists



Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (CNMI), Vice President, Administration and Advancement, Northern Marianas College

Frankie Eliptico is vice president of administration and advancement at Northern Marianas College (NMC). He previously served as the interim president of the college for three years and led recovery efforts in the aftermath of the unprecedented damage caused by Super Typhoon Yutu, which destroyed nearly 85% of all college facilities. His work on NMC marketing and branding efforts has been recognized nationally, and he was named Communicator of the Year in the District VI (Western U.S.) region of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations. In addition to being a WICHE commissioner, he is involved in numerous local and regional educational and environmental work throughout the Pacific, and he sits on the board of governors of the Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies.



Commissioner Geoffrey Landward (UT), Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education

Geoffrey Landward was appointed commissioner of the Utah Board of Higher Education in March 2024 after having served as interim commissioner since September 2023. He previously served as deputy commissioner and secretary to the Utah Board of Higher Education. In addition to over a decade of public policy work, he has extensive executive leadership experience and 20 years of legal expertise in administrative law, education law, and employment law. He is a graduate of the Brigham Young University (BYU) J. Reuben Clark Law School.

Landward also engages in freelance writing and editing. He recently started using only one space after periods, which has had astonishingly little impact on his life.

He has four children, including two who are applying to college this year, and three cats who mistakenly believe they can pay rent with dead mice and unending looks of disdain.



Christopher T. Murray, Partner, Thompson Coburn, LLP

A Washington D.C. political advocate, policy analyst, and strategic advisor for the education sector, Chris Murray has a particular interest in supporting organizations with ideas on how to disrupt the status quo. Chris advises corporate and nonprofit leaders on the best tools to realize their goals.

Chris understands education policy, which spans all corners of education, from pre-K through primary, secondary, and postsecondary, from institutions and trade associations to technology companies and investors. Drawing on his intuitive knowledge of political and business dynamics, Chris proactively spots opportunities so his clients can work collaboratively with policymakers and stakeholders to support their growth. Conversely, when an agency takes an adverse action, he shapes and executes strategies that lead to favorable conclusions.

A consummate lifelong learner, Chris has a diverse, global network of experts to whom he can turn for more information or the occasional policy debate. Governments and NGOs have hired Chris as a subject matter expert on projects all over the world. If he does not know the answer, he knows who does.

Throughout his career, Chris been an advisor to and board member of startup nonprofits that seek to shift economic paradigms for individuals and families living in poverty. If there is one throughline of his work, it is supporting those who have devoted their lives to fostering economic mobility in their communities.

Chris chairs the Lobbying & Policy practice and also co-chairs the Regulatory Practice Group at Thompson Coburn. Chris has been recognized for his work with various awards. Most recently, ALM media named our Lobbying & Policy practice as one of the top six policy firms in the nation.

Roundtable Discussions Session I

Monday, May 5, 2025

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

2nd Floor Breakout Rooms

Spruce B Meeting Room Roundtable 1

*State Policy Levers and Quality
Assurance for Nondegree Credentials*

Oak Meeting Room Roundtable 2

*The Price-Cost Paradox in Distance
Education: Unraveling the Disconnect*

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION I

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Roundtable 1

Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

STATE POLICY LEVERS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS

(Affordability & Finance; Workforce & Society; Value & Accountability)

There is increasing demand from prospective postsecondary students for flexible, short-term offerings with workforce relevance. However, this rising demand is accompanied by a lack of clarity around the quality of existing options and how they fit into state approaches to postsecondary education and workforce development. While states have many policy mechanisms they can use to impact short-term credentials, there is great variation in how these levers are used and how they interact. This discussion will center on how different state policy functions can play a role in shaping short-term credential quality and the critical role of data.

The roundtable will begin with a brief overview of WICHE's exploration of state approaches to short-term credentials and the Strada Education Foundation's initiatives to leverage data to drive alignment between postsecondary offerings and employer needs in this space.

Potential discussion questions:

- ▶ How, if at all, is your state integrating short-term credentials into your workforce and economic development strategies?
- ▶ Do they have more or less relevance depending on the sector?
- ▶ Do you anticipate these types of credentials playing a growing role in your state's postsecondary landscape? If so, how? If not, why not?
- ▶ Who in your state offers these types of credentials — and is that balance shifting (e.g., between two- and four-year institutions)? How are various types of providers incentivized to offer them?
- ▶ For those offering or investing in short-term postsecondary credentials, what are the key elements of quality you are measuring and what outcomes are you tracking?
- ▶ How are you thinking about alignment with employer needs? What structures are in place to ensure a feedback loop with industry?

FACILITATORS

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Heather McKay, Senior Vice President of Employer Engagement and Executive Director of the Strada Institute for the Future of Work

Roundtable 2

Spruce B Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

THE PRICE-COST PARADOX IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: UNRAVELING THE DISCONNECT

Access & Success; Affordability & Finance

Distance education continues to play a significant role in higher education even after the shift to emergency remote instruction that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas postsecondary enrollments overall have experienced notable fluctuations over the past several years, distance education enrollments continue to increase. In 2024, WCET conducted a national survey to better understand the factors contributing to the cost of distance education as well as the relationship between the cost and price of distance. That study found that distance education is not inherently cheaper than face-to-face instruction and, in some cases, may be more expensive.

This roundtable will discuss the report's findings and consider such questions as:

- ▶ What are the cost factors that could make distance education more expensive than face-to-face courses?
- ▶ Are there ways to leverage distance education to reduce instructional costs?
- ▶ How should states be thinking about the role of distance education in improving student access to high-quality educational opportunities?
- ▶ How can states support the development of high-quality distance education offerings?

FACILITATOR

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET, and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 1

FACILITATORS



Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Christina Sedney is the director of policy and strategic initiatives at WICHE, where she supports states and territories across the West in developing, implementing, and sharing solutions to higher education policy challenges. Her portfolio includes state-level approaches to short-term credentials, postsecondary behavioral health, and alignment between postsecondary education and the workforce. Sedney's past work has ranged from helping states to better serve underrepresented student populations and adult learners to examining higher education governance issues. Prior to WICHE, Sedney worked for international nonprofit Teach For All and completed a fellowship with the Kenneth Rainin Foundation. She also held multiple roles with the AmeriCorps program City Year, from classroom-based corps member to project manager on their public policy team. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley.



Heather McKay, Senior Vice President of Employer Engagement and Executive Director of the Strada Institute for the Future of Work

Heather McKay is Strada's senior vice president of employer engagement and executive director of Strada Institute for the Future of Work. McKay's career has spanned a wide range of education and workforce development topics, including educational alignment with the labor market, career and technical education, transfer pathways, prior learning assessment, nondegree credentials, STEM programs, work-based learning, career coaching and navigation, student decision-making and major choice, workforce development systems and funding, and performance-based funding models for higher education.

At the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE), McKay developed the Virginia Skills Initiative, a dataset designed to help the state understand where Virginia graduates end up and what skills they possess. She also coordinated the state's \$1 billion Tech Talent Investment Program, a nationally recognized endeavor that is building a pipeline of graduates skilled for the tech workforce. McKay and the VOEE team also developed dashboards and data visualizations to make state and regional education and labor market data available to practitioners and policymakers. Previously, McKay was the founding director of the Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University's School of Labor and Management Relations.

McKay earned a Master of Science and a Master of Arts from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, as well as a Bachelor of Arts from Bryn Mawr College.

Roundtable 2

FACILITATOR

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET, and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE



Van Davis joined WCET in 2021 as chief strategy officer, and in 2025, he became WCET's executive director and WICHE's vice president for digital learning. Davis oversees all strategic and operational responsibilities of WCET's membership, the State Authorization Network (SAN) that assists institutions with interstate compliance, and Every Learner Everywhere, which advocates for successful academic outcomes for all postsecondary education students through advances in digital learning.

Davis has over 25 years of experience in higher education as a faculty member, academic administrator, state policymaker, and edtech leader. He holds a master's degree and doctorate in 20th century U.S. history with an emphasis in civil rights from Vanderbilt University and a bachelor's degree in history from Southwestern University. Prior to joining WCET and WICHE, Davis served as principal at Foghlam Consulting, associate vice president at Blackboard Inc., director of innovation at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and a faculty member and academic administrator at several public and private universities with historically underrepresented student populations.

His expertise includes artificial intelligence policy, federal and state distance education policy, degree completion initiatives, competency-based education, the cost and price of distance education, and the future of higher education and digital learning.

Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Monday, May 5, 2025
1:45 – 3:00 p.m.
Oak Meeting Room
2nd Floor

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 1:45 – 3:00 p.m. | Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

Committee Members

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair
Pearl Brower (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Angie Paccione (CO)
Terrence George (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Mark Haggerot (ND)
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
Patricia Jones (UT)
John Carmichael (WA)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Agenda



PRESIDING

Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

STAFF

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Margo Colalancia, Director of Student Access Programs
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation
Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director, Student Access Programs

Action Items

	Approval of the November 14, 2024, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes	5-3
	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the FY 2026 Workplan Section Pertaining to the Programs and Services Unit	5-11

Information Items

Student Access Programs Highlights	5-18
Academic Partnerships Update	5-20
Cost-savings Partnerships Update	5-22

Discussion Items

Institutional Eligibility for Student Access Programs	5-25
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Questions:

- ▶ *Please provide feedback on the categories presented and the proposed approach.*
- ▶ *Are there any aspects that staff is not considering that we should be?*

Alliance and Forum Consultant Report

Question:

- ▶ *What are your thoughts on the staff's FY 2026 priorities in addressing the recommendations?*

Programs and Services Outreach Opportunities: WUE and Cost-savings Partnership

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the November 14, 2024, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair
Sean Parnell (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Antwan Jefferson (CO), *proxy for Angie Paccione*
John Morton (HI)
Rick Aman (ID), *proxy for Matt Freeman*
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV), *proxy for Dale Erquiaga*
Barbara Damron (NM), *proxy for Patricia Sullivan*
Kyle Davidson (ND), *proxy for Danita Bye*
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
John Carmichael (WA)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Angie Paccione (CO)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Dale Erquiaga (NV)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
Danita Bye (ND)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
Patricia Jones (UT)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Margo Colalancia, Director of Student Access Programs
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Vice Chair Todd Haynie called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m. Kay Hulstrom called the roll, and a quorum was established.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the May 7, 2024, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Joseph Schaffer MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes, and Commissioner Hilda Rosselli SECONDED. The motion was approved.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Report from the Vice President

Committee Vice Chair Haynie called upon Vice President Raymonda Burgman Gallegos to present an overview of the Programs and Services unit's work.

Burgman Gallegos presented a slide of the Programs and Services unit, which included Peace Bransberger, who worked in both the Programs and Services and Policy Analysis and Research units. This was a bridge position created for work across both units. Since May

2024, Burgman Gallegos attended conferences by EDUCAUSE, University Risk Managers and Insurance Association (URMIA), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Institute on Teaching and Mentoring. This institute brought together underrepresented graduate students to learn about the professoriate. These students networked and grew their community as they contemplated becoming faculty members at colleges and universities. Burgman Gallegos also made two site visits to North Dakota and South Dakota institutions for the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities, a grant-funded program through the Mellon Foundation.

Burgman Gallegos reported on trends regarding technology, artificial intelligence, and enrollment management. During the URMIA conference, participants discussed falling enrollments and the impact on the campus physical facilities. These spaces could be used for online or distance delivery. Other trends include faculty, staff, and leadership pipelines and transition. In the past, presidents' tenure ranged from five to seven years; now, their tenures were much shorter.

The Programs and Services unit listened to these trends and produces concept papers to present these concerns to funders. One concept paper included a partnership with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) or a similar organization to educate campus leaders in strategic finance and administrative reforms for student success. NACUBO, also funded by Ascendium Education Group, had a similar project but lacked WICHE's convening capacity to connect directly with chief academic officers. The Programs and Services unit was also looking at how institutions serve Indigenous students with sustainable solutions at Tribal colleges and Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTI). Building off WICHE's previous NASNTI project, the Programs and Services unit was looking at opportunities for a planning grant to begin discussions with stakeholders. Regarding artificial intelligence, there are many areas in which it could be utilized to support the pedagogical development of faculty in specific fields and improved use of campus resources. Cybersecurity was another campus technology challenge and part of the unit's Workplan. This included training non-IT staff on the risks of exposure regarding remote employees. Another cybersecurity concern was the infrastructure for safe transfer and credit mobility between institutions.

Student Access Programs Update

Margo Colalancia reported on the tuition savings programs, which include the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). WUE had 47,248 students who saved close to \$560 million in academic year (AY) 2023. Enrollment reported for AY 2024 is 49,201 students (an increase of approximately 4%) at 169 participating institutions. Colalancia noted that enrollment numbers were preliminary and were being vetted. New WUE

institutions in AY 2025 will include San Francisco State University, San Jose State University, and likely California State University, Los Angeles. The Hawai'i community colleges had shown some interest in joining WUE. Due to restructuring with the main campus, the University of Arizona's Sierra Vista campus was no longer participating in WUE.

Commissioner Schaffer asked how many WUE institutions offer less than 150% of in-state tuition. Colalancia replied that several North Dakota institutions offer in-state tuition to students from border states. [NOTE: Seven out of 11 North Dakota institutions' WUE rate is 100% to 125% of in-state tuition.] The three freely associated states (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia) now qualified for in-state tuition at all public institutions in the United States. Commissioner Schaffer reported that Laramie County Community College (LCCC) was piloting a program to waive 50% of the WUE tuition (essentially charging in-state tuition) to students from Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota. If successful, LCCC would likely offer in-state tuition to all of Wyoming's border states, which include Utah, Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota. Commissioner Schaffer noted that there was a perception that WUE institutions must charge 150% of in-state tuition and that LCCC was trying to challenge that.

WRGP enrollment appeared to have increased to 4,000 students in fall 2024 (from 2,877 in fall 2023), which was approximately a 39% increase. Colalancia noted again that these WRGP enrollment numbers were preliminary and must be vetted, and that tuition savings data should be available within a few weeks. San Jose State University and the University of Washington Bothell had shown interest in joining WRGP. Commissioner Antwan Jefferson asked what contributed to the substantial increase. Colalancia replied that at least 1,000 more enrollments were reported by South Dakota WRGP institutions, and that staff was contacting states and institutions with substantial changes in enrollment to ensure accuracy.

Colalancia then shared PSEP enrollment data: 566 students were enrolled through PSEP in AY 2024 with a \$15 million investment by the student's home states and territories. This was a 1.6% increase in enrollment over AY 2023. She noted that there typically would be some additional, late-funded students added to that total in spring 2025. The support fee increase that was approved in May 2024 would take effect in AY 2025.

Of note:

- ▶ Guam's inaugural PSEP cohort consists of four students: one doctor of osteopathic medicine and three pharmacy students. In AY 2025, Guam will offer support in all 10 PSEP fields.
- ▶ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) anticipated resuming PSEP support on a limited basis in AY 2025.
- ▶ WICHE was working with Alaska to examine the structure of their PSEP approach and

potentially consider alternatives to its status as a loan program.

- ▶ States sponsoring the most PSEP students include Arizona (138), Wyoming (91), and Montana (88).
- ▶ The most popular fields for students are veterinary medicine (135), dentistry (121), and optometry (106).

Colalancia then reported that Proposition 129 passed in the November 5, 2024, election in the State of Colorado. The proposition establishes a new “veterinary professional associate” (VPA) position to extend routine veterinary care. It is similar to a physician assistant (PA) in human medicine. A veterinary professional associate (VPA) must practice under the direction of a DVM (doctor of veterinary medicine). Initially, these practitioners would be limited to working with dogs and cats in shelter medicine. In the future, the plan was to create a second module for VPAs to focus on the care of rural livestock.

Colorado State University (CSU) was preparing to offer one of three VPA programs in the nation starting in fall 2025. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) agreed to serve as the accreditor for the VPA programs. Applicants for the VPA must hold a bachelor’s degree. Students will spend three semesters learning online, one semester on campus, and their final semester in a practicum or internship.

Commissioner Maryrose Beasley asked which bachelor’s degrees were required for admission to the program. Colalancia responded that applicants must have a strong science background to be considered, and that CSU defined the necessary prerequisites. Committee Vice Chair Haynie asked why creating the VPA position required a ballot initiative. Colalancia replied that there were only two ways for the VPA position to exist in Colorado: by ballot initiative (a proposition) or by changing state legislation.

Commissioner Hilda Roselli asked if it was possible for an undergraduate student to be unaware of the WUE tuition discount. Colalancia responded that with the high turnover and limited staffing of college advisors at high schools, it was possible. Committee Vice Chair Haynie commented that in Arizona, it seems that it was the responsibility of WUE institutions to let student applicants know about the program. Colalancia said that WICHE does its best to get the word out by working with organizations like the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and Western Association for College Admission Counseling (WACAC) for WUE, and the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) for PSEP. Burgman Gallegos acknowledged there was more that WICHE could do to increase awareness of the programs. WICHE’s Communications staff recently purchased a high school counselor list for marketing purposes and would be working with Student Access Programs to promote WUE. WICHE’s hope was that direct contact with the high school counselors would result in more students and parents learning about WUE. Commissioner Fred Lokken commented that, in Nevada, most students and parents did know about WUE, and that once

there was awareness of the program, it becomes part of the state’s “culture” and takes off.

Academic Partnerships Update

Burgman Gallegos then reported on the activities in the Academic Partnerships team. The Academic Partnerships team primarily works with chief academic officers and their staff in the WICHE region. The membership levels of the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) and Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) have remained stable. The Alliance membership comprises of chief academic officers from two-year institutions; currently, there are 69 institutions in eight systems participating in the Alliance. Its sister organization, the Forum, is for four-year chief academic officers; its membership is slightly smaller, with 53 institutions and 10 systems. Both executive committees of these groups asked about increasing membership numbers. The Programs and Services unit hired a consultant to investigate how these groups can improve their recruitment efforts. The draft report was received and was under review. There will be a joint annual meeting of the Alliance and Forum on April 23-25, 2025, in Reno, Nevada. Joint meetings are expected to occur every three years. The 2025 theme will be Partnerships: Stronger Together. Keynote and plenary speakers have been identified.

Burgman Gallegos then reported on the two leadership academies. The Western Academic Leadership Academy (the Academy) had a cohort of 18 aspiring leaders participating. These cohort members met in person in July and continued to participate in webinars and receive mentorship from one of the faculty members. The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities had eight cohort participants in both Year 1 and Year 2 for a total of 16 participants. Cohort 1 participants wondered why they were chosen for this opportunity. They were told their campus had identified them as faculty leaders who may enter campus administration. Six of the eight cohort members were expected to continue in leadership roles. Cohort 2 leaned more toward campus activism. They also took advantage of the leadership opportunities presented to them. Broad regional participation exists in both cohorts from Alaska, Colorado, California, Idaho, New Mexico, North Dakota, Nevada, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. Burgman Gallegos will conduct additional site visits next year.

Burgman Gallegos also reported on the Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success project that involves former Interstate Passport network members and others working on new transfer practices. These institutions are paired in dyads and will report on their future progress.

Cost-savings Partnerships Update

Burgman Gallegos reported that the Cost-savings Partnerships consist of all four regional interstate compacts, including WICHE, Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC),

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE). In the past, MHEC offered a property insurance program and discontinued it in June 2023. To assist a few institutions, WICHE began a program sponsoring five small, private institutions that could not secure property insurance when the Master Property Program dissolved. The two contract programs WICHE shared with MHEC were student health insurance and technology contracts. United Healthcare Student Resources is student health insurance for institutions that may not have a full waiver set up where students waive health insurance. It also offers two teletherapy programs, Meta Teletherapy and TAO Connect, in addition to HealthMarkets. TAO Connect is available in the Pacific territories and freely associated states.

The technology contracts are available for more than just postsecondary institutions. These include K-12 districts, nonprofits with an educational foundation, and state and local governments and municipalities. More than 20 solutions partners offer a range of hardware, software, and other technology services. Last year, the savings were approximately 9% (or \$9.9 million) across the WICHE region alone on the technology contracts. Under these contracts, Dell and HP Enterprises are available in the Pacific. HP Enterprises can only support the solutions aspect of its program because support services are only available on the mainland U.S. The revenue for WICHE from these contracts has been substantial and will continue to be so for the next three to five years. The Programs and Services unit plans to reach out to institutions utilizing United Healthcare to increase awareness of the MHEC contract. The Programs and Services unit will develop a campaign to reach out to the other institutions in the WICHE region. Commissioner Kyle Davidson asked about requirements for using United Healthcare (e.g., full-time or part-time students and staff). Burgman Gallegos responded that there were requirements, but she would need to research the complete answer. She also believes that HealthMarkets could be used by broader groups than United Healthcare, including part-time students, faculty not qualifying for campus benefits, and alumni. Commissioner Jefferson asked if there was a role for WICHE to build collaboration to provide support for the Pacific. Burgman Gallegos informed him that WICHE could gather information about support needs and evaluate if there is a role for WICHE.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Commission Priorities for the Programs and Services Workplan for FY 2026

Burgman Gallegos reviewed the Workplan and mentioned grant-funded work initiatives pursued by the Programs and Services unit. This included ongoing conversations with Ascendium to build on the work done with No Holding Back (the administrative hold project). Ascendium was also driving the idea of a partnership with NACUBO as WICHE can bring several areas of campus together, including both chief academic officers and

chief financial officers, to achieve campus goals. Burgman Gallegos also participated in monthly calls with the other compacts to discuss current and potential projects that might encourage collaboration. One such project is the Compact for Faculty Diversity, which began about 30 years ago and was now being revisited. Mellon's proposal wants the compacts to provide data and information on humanities faculty. Mellon was interested in the compacts learning more about campus human resources' processes: recruitment, retention, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure faculty activities. Two other funders, Sloan and Simons Foundation, were also interested in this work.

Burgman Gallegos then solicited ideas from the commissioners regarding potential priorities they see for inclusion in the FY 2026 Workplan:

- ▶ Commissioner John Morton inquired about the positive and negative aspects of artificial intelligence (AI) and enrollment and how that fits into Programs and Services unit work. Burgman Gallegos commented that there have been conversations with Ascendium, but Ascendium did not ask WICHE about faculty development around AI and how faculty uses AI. They are more interested in AI, the workforce, and how AI will impact specific fields and industries. The Programs and Services unit talked with WCET and Every Learner Everywhere about their efforts in this area. Commissioner Morton also asked about discussions with the Forum and/or Alliance chief academic leaders in this area. Burgman Gallegos replied that the executive committees of these groups have expressed an interest in the impact of AI. She also informed the commissioners that, when she attended the EDUCAUSE conference. Commissioner Barbara Damron commented that Complete College of America (CCA) was working in AI and it has a committee that is publishing, meeting frequently, convening other meetings, etc. She suggested connecting with CCA in this area.
- ▶ Commissioner Lokken expressed concern about the affordability of AI for underrepresented populations. Also, any work that WICHE could do on the future of work and the role of higher education in that future would be good. These discussions would be of tremendous value to the elected officials and campus planners as programs are evaluated for retention or deletion as the nature of work continues to change. Burgman Gallegos replied that a session at the last Alliance meeting focused on public and private partnerships. How do campuses become nimbler to make the changes necessary to meet workforce needs?
- ▶ Commissioner Schaffer asked if WICHE had a role in international student engagement, especially in geographical areas that lack experience in this arena. This impacts the workforce pipeline issue, which can affect rural areas. Historically, immigrants have accounted for much of the labor growth in these geographical areas. He questioned whether smaller institutions in the West were looking at international students and how they may be a part of the solution to the workforce dilemma. Commissioner Schaffer

also expressed concern about dual and concurrent enrollment, especially being more purposeful regarding the college-going rates of disadvantaged populations. He would like to see data or programs on the purposeful dual and concurrent enrollment used across different socioeconomic statuses. Dual or concurrent enrollment should be used in conjunction with career planning in high school to avoid taking college credits to take college credits with no end plan. Commissioner Damron agreed with this assessment. She cited that New Mexico scaled up its dual enrollment with no guardrails, resulting in students acquiring credits or associate degrees that were not accepted elsewhere. In addition, she expressed concern about students not being prepared for college. Higher education needs to work in concert with K-12 to solve this problem.

- ▶ Commissioner Rosselli expressed the need for strong transfer agreements at the state level. These are as important as credits at the high school level that count.

ADJOURNMENT

Committee Vice Chair Haynie adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEM

**Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the
FY 2026 Workplan Section Pertaining to the Programs and Services Unit**



FY 2026 WORKPLAN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (PAS)

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 & Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
MHEC Technology Contracts	A/F, V/A	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.12	21 vendors offering hardware, software, printers and peripherals, data and networking, security services, and other technology services
Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)	W/S, V/A	Western	.17 and consultants	Forum and Alliance members
Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) • Professional Development: 2025 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.50	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 51 institutions, 11 systems
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) • Professional Development: 2025 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.50	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 70 institutions, 8 systems
Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	1.2	All WICHE states, CNMI, and Guam fund and/or enroll students through PSEP's 130+ cooperating programs
Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.04	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 67 participating institutions
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.05	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 169 participating institutions
Academic Leaders Toolkit	A/S	Western	0.02	Forum and Alliance members

MHEC TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS enables institutions to purchase off competitively bid master purchasing agreements for various hardware, software, and technology services. Several contracts are available to K-12 districts, state, county, 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 **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (ACADEMY)** is an annual professional development initiative to enhance the pool of chief academic leaders for both two- and four-year institutions in the Western region. The Academy's sessions focus on the intricacies of academic leadership, establishing academic objectives and priorities, and cultivating the essential skills needed by chief academic officers. The eighth cohort, nominated by Forum and Alliance members, began in July 2024.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM (FORUM)** brings together WICHE-region chief academic leaders from four-year institutions, 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 **PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)** provides affordable access for students to 130+ healthcare professional programs at approximately 60 institutions and in 10 healthcare fields. In academic year (AY) 2024-25, 556 students from 10 WICHE states, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam received \$15 million (reflecting investment by their home state/territory legislatures) in tuition benefits through PSEP. Since 1953, PSEP has supported more than 16,100 students, many of whom return to their home states and territories to fill key healthcare positions.

The **WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)** allows WICHE-region residents to pay reduced out-of-state tuition rates for over 2,000 master's degrees, graduate certificates, and doctoral programs at 67 participating public universities. In AY 2024-25, 3,987 students saved an estimated \$48.4 million in tuition through WRGP. Structured similarly to the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), Western public universities may offer any graduate program at the WRGP tuition rate at their discretion. Participating institutions may charge WRGP students up to 150% of resident tuition, but most charge in-state tuition.

The **WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)** is WICHE’s signature undergraduate tuition savings program and the nation’s largest of its kind, saving 49,177 students an estimated \$615.5 million in tuition in AY 2024-25. Currently, 170 public two- and four-year WICHE-region institutions charge WUE students no more than 150% of out-of-state tuition instead of in-state tuition. Staff continue to expand the marketing of WUE and WRGP to benefit more students and institutions through targeted, state-specific outreach and activities, as well as increased communication with high school counselors and admissions advisers.

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

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

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

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Joint Compact for Faculty Development and Opportunity	A/S, W/S	U.S.	Mellon Foundation \$150,000 grant	.05 12/24 - 11/25	NEBHE, SREB
Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success	A/S, I	U.S.		0.1 2/24-10/26	13 institutions in 5 states are participating in the Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiative to pilot technological solutions to improve pathways for students transferring between postsecondary institutions
WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities	A/S, W/S	Western	Mellon Foundation \$1.5 million grant	1.18 1/23-9/26	Western postsecondary institutions

The **JOINT COMPACT FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY:** Staff are collaborating with the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three other higher education regional compacts, on a project that aims to educate and inform parties interested in faculty demographics. Funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, the deliverables include a landscape analysis of faculty demographics and will culminate in a national convening. The proposed work will also include the creation of a data dashboard to distribute the findings.



TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFER SUCCESS: Interstate Passport® was a national initiative that facilitated the block transfer of lower-division general education based on multistate, faculty-developed learning outcomes, and proficiency criteria. Network member recruitment ceased when the original program ended in 2023. The decision to sunset the program occurred after assessing the program's impact, financial viability, and results from a survey of network members. Subsequently, a request to pivot grant funding from an anonymous funder that would have supported the technology infrastructure of the Interstate Passport® program to a new initiative called Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success was approved by the funder. A call for proposals opened in spring 2024, from which six projects between 13 institutions in five states were chosen for funding and participation in a community of practice to support the implementation of technology solutions that help students move credit between the partner institutions. Grant activities will continue through fall 2026.

The **WICHE ACADEMY FOR LEADERS IN THE HUMANITIES** offers leadership development to tenured humanities faculty members. WICHE is collaborating with the Mellon Foundation and other key stakeholders to develop a two-year, campus-based immersive experience for faculty leaders. These leaders attend a three-day WICHE Institute for Leaders in the Humanities in Boulder, Colorado, focused on three key competencies: career planning and development, project management, and organizational design and agility. They will collaborate with upper-level academic administration to learn more about daily campus operations, how to execute successful change projects, receive internal and external mentoring, and gain a new professional network with the fellows appointed at other institutions. There are currently two cohorts of fellows.

New Directions

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

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice	A/S		U.S.	Seeking additional external funding to assist NASNTIs further and sustain an institutional network	TBD	NASNTI's Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, higher education organizations
No Holding Back – Assessing the Use of Administrative Holds	A/S, A/F		U.S.	TBD	TBD	National Association of Collegiate and University Business Officers (NACUBO), members of the Alliance and Forum, and Policy Analysis and Research

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 Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students 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 culturally relevant high-impact practices and fostering institutional and Tribal collaborations to share and expand sustainable student support systems on campuses. Another primary objective 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 AI/AN students.

NO HOLDING BACK – ASSESSING THE USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HOLDS: WICHE’s PAS unit and Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) unit collaborated 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 use their data in policy formation better. WICHE staff have been collaboratively socializing the toolkit through work with the National Association of College and University Business Officers through presentations at national conferences. We will continue distributing these resources and seek new partners interested in continued application of the tools and policy implications.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff are considering pursuing and bringing to the Commission for approval, along with ideas generated by 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.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Student Access Programs Highlights

The annual report, *Student Access Programs: By the Numbers*, for academic year (AY) 2024-25 was published in March 2025 and is available online at <https://www.wiche.edu/resources/student-accessprograms-by-the-numbers-ay-2024-25/>.

WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)

The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) allows eligible students in the West to attend college across the region and pay no more than 150% of in-state tuition. Through WUE, residents of 15 western states and three Pacific territories (Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa) can expand their educational access without the typical financial burden of out-of-state tuition. During AY 2024-25, 49,177 students and their families saved \$615.6 million in tuition costs through this program. The average WUE student saved \$12,517.

Comparing AY 2023-24 and AY 2024-25, WUE saw several enrollment shifts. Overall, enrollment increased by 4%, with four-year universities experiencing a 5% growth, while two-year colleges saw a 4% decrease.

Students can choose from 170 WUE-participating two- or four-year public colleges or universities. San Francisco State University and San Jose State University are the newest institutions to join. Staff also recently learned that Arizona State University's main Tempe campus will, on a limited basis, begin using WUE to promote its new Bachelor of Science degree in ocean futures and coastal and marine sciences programs.

Thanks to WICHE Communications' expertise and partnership, Student Access Program staff participated in a strategy-driven process to increase awareness of WUE to key audiences: students and their families, high school counselors, and postsecondary institutional administrators.

The first goal was to improve the search engine optimization (SEO) of WUE on the WICHE website and increase the visibility and placement of WUE content when web users search online for tuition savings. For context, in 2024, the WUE webpages were the most popular pages on wiche.edu, constituting almost 443,000 total visitors and 2.2 million views, which is about 75% of all web traffic to the site. Site visitors downloaded a PDF handout listing the 170 WUE participating schools more than 146,000 times. Staff anticipates their work with a SEO consultant to determine the most searched keywords by users, improve headlines, and create new webpages, which will further increase those web metrics in 2025.

The second goal was to create video content promoting awareness about WUE, as research

shows that the potential college-going person consumes video content more than any other format. The Communications staff collaborated with a professional videographer to create a video that explains the eligibility criteria and application process for the WUE rate. The video was shown to the WICHE Commission during the November 2024 meeting, and staff later shared it on the website, social media and newsletters. As of March 2025, the video had well over 2,800 views, making it the most popular video on the WICHE YouTube channel so far.

Finally, in March 2025, Communications staff sent an email campaign promoting WUE resources to more than 14,000 high school counselors in the West. Resources included links to the WUE video, a PDF handout of participating WUE schools, the WUE website, and a slide deck discussing the benefits of WUE to students and their families. Additionally, staff sent a similar email campaign with these resources to approximately 500 WUE contacts at its 170 participating WUE schools. In a few months, Student Access Program and Communications staff intend to analyze metrics associated with these efforts to develop additional outreach promoting tuition savings.

WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) allows eligible graduate certificate, master's, and doctoral students who are residents of WICHE states and Pacific territories to affordably enroll in some 2,100 graduate programs at 67 public institutions in the West. Students can enroll as out-of-state and pay up to 150% of in-state tuition, though most WRGP institutions charge students in-state tuition.

In AY 2024-25, 2,867 students saved \$40 million in tuition through WRGP. WRGP enrollment dropped by 10 students from the previous year. The average savings for a WRGP student was \$13,961. This year's most popular programs were law, education, business management, and several professional health programs. WRGP's 310 online programs offer further accessibility for placebound residents.

PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)

The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) has been an essential mechanism for WICHE states and the Pacific jurisdictions to increase the supply of physicians, dentists, optometrists, veterinarians, physical therapists, and other healthcare professionals. Since 1953, WICHE has supported the education of more than 16,100 Western residents with affordable access to professional healthcare degrees through PSEP. More than 135 accredited programs are offered through PSEP at some 65 institutions.

In AY 2024-25, 10 WICHE states and Guam invested \$15 million to grow their healthcare workforce by reducing the educational costs of 566 students. In AY 2023-24, a total of 566

students received a revised total of \$14,734,626 in PSEP support after three states made additional late awards in Spring 2024 to nine more students. Alaska and CNMI plan to resume supporting PSEP students by Fall 2025.

CERTIFYING OFFICERS MEETING

Certifying officers are staff members at higher education state agencies or institutions where states or territories do not have higher education state agencies. They are integral in maintaining and supporting WICHE region participation in the Student Access Programs. In the PSEP-supporting locations — 10 Western states, Guam, and CNMI — certifying officers review prospective students' applications for certification to determine whether they meet residency criteria and are eligible for support consideration. Certifying officers administer all aspects of PSEP for their residents and serve as liaisons for the WUE and WRGP programs.

Certifying officers will meet on May 4, 2025, just before the WICHE Commission meeting in Park City, Utah.

VETERINARY MEDICINE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

The Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council (VMAC) serves as a forum for communication and as a liaison among WICHE staff, states (no Pacific jurisdictions participate currently), and the region's schools of veterinary medicine to ensure that the region's workforce needs are met. Each WICHE state may appoint two members to the council. Candidates are nominated by the respective state's commissioner serving on the WICHE Executive Committee, in consultation with each state's higher education agency and its state veterinary association.

Council members may include legislators with professional expertise in veterinary medicine or some other related agricultural field, state veterinarians, and practicing veterinarians who are members of state veterinary associations. Ex officio nonvoting council members include the deans of the colleges of veterinary medicine and select WICHE staff (the director and assistant director of Student Access Programs and vice president, Programs and Services). Council members will meet in Bozeman, Montana, on June 4-6, 2025.

Academic Partnerships Update

THE ALLIANCE AND THE FORUM

The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) provide support and networking for senior academic leaders at colleges and universities across the West. These two membership organizations, managed by WICHE, serve as incubators for collaboration and problem-solving. Annually, each group meets to discuss current issues and trends of interest to academic leaders in the West. Every three years, the Forum and Alliance hold a joint meeting where both

organizations come together; they held the Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting, which was scheduled for April 23-25, 2025, in Reno, Nevada. The theme was *Partnerships: Stronger Together* and had 110 registrants as of March 10, 2025. The meeting also had a pre-meeting workshop, delivered in partnership with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). NACUBO developed a series of strategic finance toolkits, and our communities of chief academic officers benefited greatly from learning about them. These practical tools helped chief academic officers and their teams understand their financial situation. The meeting allowed both organizations' leadership to collaborate on programming of interest to leaders in two-year and four-year postsecondary sectors.

In July 2024, the Alliance reported 69 institutions and eight systems as members, while the Forum reported its membership of 53 institutions and 10 systems. Though membership has remained steady, lower meeting attendance and higher meeting expenses in recent years have impacted the overall budgets of both organizations. WICHE staff had conversations with the Alliance and Forum Executive Committees about member engagement and programming, boosting membership, and increasing the number of sponsors. WICHE invested in both organizations by assisting the staff with contracting with a former chief academic officer to learn more about member engagement by interviewing staff, the Alliance, and the Forum members. Staff have the final report and have begun working on some aspects of the recommendations.

THE WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Over the last 10 years, 140 institutions and systems of higher education paid membership dues to WICHE to enable their chief academic officers, provosts, and others to participate in the Forum and the Alliance. Drawing participants from the Forum and the Alliance organizations, 18 aspiring academic leaders were nominated to participate in WICHE's yearlong 2024 Academy. This cohort had its final session and a formal graduation ceremony in Reno, Nevada, at the Academic Partnership's Annual Meeting. The recruitment for and selection of the 2025 cohort is complete. The 2025 cohort is the 10th Leadership Academy cohort. Staff plans to invite graduates to an event to commemorate this milestone.

CREDIT MOBILITY EFFORTS AND TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS (GRANT-FUNDED)

WICHE's interest in credit mobility remains strong. WICHE received funds from an anonymous granting agency to support the technology capacity and student-facing support for the Interstate Passport Network and others working on new transfer practices. WICHE revised the focus of these funds to support technological innovations that address credit mobility and student success in the WICHE region. Institutional partners are developing technological innovations that improve their communication and student success. The developed request for proposal received responses from several regional institutions, and WICHE put together a selection committee to provide feedback on the proposals.

The process concluded in May 2024, and WICHE met with the participating institutions in June 2024. The entire community of practice met in September 2024 and March 2025 in preparation for upcoming interim reports and summer/fall site visits.

Related to this effort to continue advancing credit mobility and transfer work, President Michelau, past Interstate Passport team members, and the Communications team worked on the final Interstate Passport report. The report includes the names of individuals who worked on creating and administering the Interstate Passport, a 10-year overview of the program, and lessons learned.

THE WICHE ACADEMY FOR LEADERS IN THE HUMANITIES (GRANT-FUNDED)

The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities is supported by a \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation. The Humanities Academy is a two-year fellowship program that includes a three-day leadership workshop for its fellows. Its first cohort of fellows runs 2023-2025, and its second cohort runs 2024-2026. Cohort 1 formally graduated during the April 2025 Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting.

Each fellow meets with an on-campus mentor monthly, has quarterly group sessions with an external advisor, and is exposed to various leadership experiences during their two-year fellowship. The monthly online sessions have been robust as the fellows navigate small and big leadership challenges.

Initially, the grant ended on June 30, 2025, but WICHE requested a no-cost extension for a fourth year in October 2024. Mellon awarded the extension on March 11, 2025, for WICHE staff to offer a second year of programming to Cohort 2 and work on a plan to sustain the faculty leadership program.

Cost-savings Partnerships Update

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) cost-savings programs are competitively awarded contracts. MHEC's technology and student health insurance initiatives leverage the benefits and potential volume of the region's purchasing power while saving institutions and other entities time and money by simplifying the procurement process. The technology contracts are available to benefit WICHE-region higher education institutions of all sizes, K-12 school districts, and state and local governmental agencies. The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) regions also participate in the cost-saving partnerships. The WICHE Group Property Insurance is separate from the MHEC partnership and solely staffed by WICHE staff.

MHECARE STUDENT HEALTH SOLUTIONS

MHECare Student Health Solutions offers campuses with a school-sponsored student health insurance plan the flexibility to tailor injury and sickness plans specifically

for domestic and international students with national carrier UnitedHealthcare StudentResources (UHCSR). Emergency medical travel services, vision and dental plans, and insurance for specific groups — like study abroad and special summer programs — are also available from UHCSR.

The most recent addition to MHECare is HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, Inc. HealthMarkets offers institutions of higher learning an easy avenue for students and their dependents to find health insurance that meets their needs. As one of the largest health insurance agencies in the United States, HealthMarkets is licensed to market and sell health insurance in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. HealthMarkets partners with over 200 insurance carriers, bringing choice and convenience to the insurance buying process. Institutions of higher education interested in offering access to this service will be provided an institution-specific website that connects students, their dependents, and graduates searching for health insurance to HealthMarkets' services. Users can shop online or receive personal assistance from a licensed insurance agent at no cost. HealthMarkets offers access to health insurance plans, injury and sickness plans, and supplemental plans like dental and vision. HealthMarkets can also help shoppers determine possible eligibility for premium tax credits and subsidies. In addition, institutions can provide faculty and staff not eligible for employee benefits access to HealthMarkets where appropriate.

Staff are working on an outreach plan to increase the use of these programs.

MHEC TECHNOLOGIES

MHEC's Technologies Committee and staff use extensive competitive procurement processes to select and negotiate favorable agreements with several vendors, reducing the duplication of procurement processes and helping eligible campuses and other entities save money and increase their purchasing options. The technology contracts website details vendors and eligible entities and links to the vendor contracts. For example, the Dell Technologies contract offers innovative and cost-effective virtualization and data center modernization solutions to assist higher education institutions of all sizes, K-12 districts, and state and local governments throughout 47 states to transition their infrastructure to data centers and networks across various public and private cloud providers. Technology contracts is one of the most accessed programs in the suite of cost-saving programs. Across the West, over 1,000 entities used these contracts to save around 9% above what they would have without the MHEC technology-contracted services.

Staff attended EDUCAUSE this past year to learn about institutions' technology needs and policy implementation concerns.

WICHE GROUP PROPERTY PROGRAM

As of July 1, 2023, WICHE assisted five independent colleges and universities that could not

secure property insurance quotes and policies by sponsoring the WICHE Group Property Program. These institutions are College Liability Insurance Company (CLIC) members. WICHE staff consulted with then-Commission Chair Matt Freeman on whether WICHE could serve as the group sponsor. These institutions secured a policy and may have collectively saved \$2 million to \$3 million.

WICHE is in its second year of the program. Staff attended the University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) annual meeting to build capacity in this area in September 2024, where they learned about aspects of college and university life impacted by risk managers and how this work is connected to other areas of work within the Programs and Services unit.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Institutional Eligibility for Student Access Programs

Background

The Student Access Programs are foundational to the formation and enduring mission of WICHE, giving students in the West access to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.

The primary goal of this discussion item is to establish a clear policy around institutional and program eligibility for the Student Access Programs which include the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).

The policies and practices are typically outlined in the WUE, WRGP, and PSEP memoranda of agreement (MOA) between WICHE and the postsecondary institutions, as well as in the PSEP Administrative Manual. However, these policies are not always clearly presented, and in many cases, there are elements governed by long-standing practices rather than formal policies.

President Michelau presented the staff review of eligibility requirements, discussed the gaps in WICHE policy, and began a conversation about possible ways to address those gaps with the WICHE Officers during the officers' retreat in January 2025, as well as the commissioners serving on the WICHE Executive Committee on February 6, 2025, and on March 13, 2025. WICHE staff also met with the state certifying officers to gather their feedback on February 11, 2025. The table on the next page summarizes the gaps identified with potential ways to address those gaps (proposed changes highlighted). Staff are asking the Programs and Services Committee to provide feedback.

For Reference: PSEP Administrative Manual: <https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PSEP-ManualSept2020.pdf>

	Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)
Sector	As stated in the MOA, the agreement is between WICHE and the accredited postsecondary public institution located within a WICHE member state or territory.	As stated in the MOA, the agreement is between WICHE and the accredited postsecondary public institution located within a WICHE member state or territory.	Public and private institutions, nonprofit and limited proprietary (but not stated in the agreement or clearly elsewhere).
	PROPOSE: Clearly lay out in policy, not just in the MOA.	PROPOSE: Clearly lay out in policy, not just in the MOA.	PROPOSE: Clearly lay out in policy, not just in the MOA.
Institution Location	As stated in the MOA, the agreement is between WICHE and the accredited postsecondary public institution located within a WICHE member state or territory.	As stated in the MOA, the agreement is between WICHE and the accredited postsecondary public institution located within a WICHE member state or territory.	Physically located in the WICHE region, with the exception of a few historical arrangements still operating with programs in non-WICHE states. Examples: Dentistry: Creighton, U Nebraska, U Missouri Kansas City; optometry: Illinois College of Optometry, and a few others.
	PROPOSE: Clearly lay out in policy, not just in the MOA.	PROPOSE: Clearly lay out in policy, not just in the MOA.	PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the institution is physically located, as determined solely by WICHE, in the WICHE region. Programs offered by institutions located outside the region are approved by the Commission per WICHE-approved guidelines.
Institutional Accreditation Status	CURRENT LANGUAGE IN MOA: The institution confirms that it is accredited and in good standing.	CURRENT LANGUAGE IN MOA: The institution confirms that it is accredited and in good standing.	Currently, there is no language that speaks to institutional accreditation status, only program accreditation.
	PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution confirms that it is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If the institution experiences a change in accreditation status, the institution must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.	PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution confirms that it is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If the institution experiences a change in accreditation status, the institution must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.	PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If the institution experiences a change in accreditation status, the institution must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.

	Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)
Program/ Professional Accreditation	N/A	N/A	<p>CURRENT LANGUAGE IN PSEP AGREEMENT WITH INSTITUTION: The university's field/ program is fully accredited, and the accrediting body has not cited any requirements or concerns about the program as of the signing of this agreement.</p> <p>Only fully accredited programs may participate in PSEP. If a cooperating program experiences a change in accreditation status (i.e., is put on probation or has its accreditation revoked), the program must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.</p> <p>NOTE: In May 2009, the Commission approved a small number of provisionally accredited programs for early participation in PSEP. The Commission also established the following criteria for any future requests from new and provisionally accredited schools in high-need healthcare fields located in the WICHE region that wish to become cooperating PSEP programs. The criteria are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The institution must be (a) fully accredited by a regional accrediting agency OR (b) hold candidacy status (in the regional accrediting agency) and be actively pursuing regional accreditation. The institution must be authorized to offer the new professional program (if applicable) by its regional accrediting agency. The new professional program must be approved by the state higher education agency assigned to review new programs (in states where this is required). The professional program must hold provisional (or initial) accreditation by its professional accrediting body and not have any specific requirements or recommendations of major concern cited in its most recent accreditation report. The proposed school must offer a program of study in a critical need field where there is substantial competition for admission and the number of currently cooperating WICHE schools is proportionately small, compared to the demand for seats. <p>Provisionally accredited programs must meet all of the above criteria to be considered for early participation in PSEP.</p>

	Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)
Program/ Professional Accreditation (continued)	N/A	N/A	<p>PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution's relevant field(s)/ program(s) must meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be accredited by a professional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. • Must have graduated its first class. • Must be free of any requirements or concerns by the accrediting body as of the signing of the agreement. <p>If a cooperating program experiences a change in accreditation status, the program must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days. Also review the 2009 policy for potential updates.</p>
Authorization Status	<p>CURRENT LANGUAGE: The institution agrees to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization or accreditation issues, as soon as they become known to the institution.</p> <p>PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution is authorized by the state or territory in which the institution is located. The institution agrees to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization issues, as soon as they become known to the institution.</p>	<p>CURRENT LANGUAGE: The institution agrees to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization or accreditation issues, as soon as they become known to the institution.</p> <p>PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution is authorized by the state or territory in which the institution is located. The institution agrees to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization issues, as soon as they become known to the institution.</p>	<p>CURRENT LANGUAGE: There is no language that speaks to state authorization status.</p> <p>PROPOSE: Clearly laying out in policy that the postsecondary institution is authorized by the state or territory in which the institution is located. The institution agrees to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization issues, as soon as they become known to the institution.</p>

	Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)
Field/Major	Any major at the certificate, associate's, or bachelor's level.	Any graduate program at the graduate certificate, master's, or doctoral level.	<p>CURRENT LANGUAGE IN THE PSEP ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL: The Commission determines which fields will be available through PSEP. When two or more members request the addition of a new field, staff identify accredited programs within the region and determine the interest within other WICHE members in sending students in the field. Currently, only healthcare fields are offered.</p>
	N/A	N/A	<p>PROPOSE: Establishing a formal process that is clear to the Commission and follows a regular timeline about how to propose fields for consideration.</p>
MOA Renewal	WUE institutions sign the MOA when they join the program, and then annually.	WRGP institutions sign the MOA when they join the program, and then annually.	New programs must sign an MOA when they sign on as a cooperating PSEP program.
	N/A	N/A	<p>PROPOSE: Establishing renewal agreements every three years after initial onboarding.</p>
WICHE Discretion	<p>PROPOSE: The Commission, at its sole discretion, may determine that a postsecondary institution is ineligible to participate if such participation would be contrary to the organization's mission. In assessing an institution's eligibility, WICHE staff may request such additional information from the institution as it deems necessary to make a determination.</p>	<p>PROPOSE: The Commission, at its sole discretion, may determine that a postsecondary institution is ineligible to participate if such participation would be contrary to the organization's mission. In assessing an institution's eligibility, WICHE staff may request such additional information from the institution as it deems necessary to make a determination.</p>	<p>PROPOSE: The Commission, at its sole discretion, may determine that a postsecondary institution is ineligible to participate if such participation would be contrary to the organization's mission. In assessing an institution's eligibility, WICHE staff may request such additional information from the institution as it deems necessary to make a determination.</p>

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Monday, May 5, 2025

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Spruce B Meeting Room

2nd Floor

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 1:45 – 3:00 p.m. | *Spruce B Meeting Room, 2nd Floor*

Committee Members

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair
Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair
Sean Parnell (AK)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Bill Soules (NM)
Danita Bye (ND)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Mike Smith (WY)

Agenda



PRESIDING

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

STAFF

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Colleen Falkenstern, Director, Evidence and Strategic Initiatives
Christina Sedney, Director, Policy and Strategic Initiatives

Action Items

	Approval of November 15, 2024, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes	6-3
	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve a Project Titled “The National Task Force on College Closures”	6-10



**Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the
FY 2026 Workplan Section for the Policy Analysis and Research Unit** **6-13**

Discussion Items

Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2025 Meeting **6-23**

Knocking at the College Door: Distribution and Next Steps **6-24**

***State Approaches to Short-Term Postsecondary Credentials: Analysis and
Next Steps***

Federal Postsecondary Policy Developments

Information Items

Update on Unit Staffing

Update on Leadership Tabletop Exercises (LTTX) for Institutional Leadership

***Tuition and Fees, Appropriations, and Financial Aid in the West: Trends and Implications,
2024-25***

Additional Research Priorities

Update on Unit Activities

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of November 15, 2024, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Christopher Cabaldon (CA), Committee Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Jim Chavez (CO)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Llew Jones (MT)
Bill Soules (NM)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD) *proxy for Nathan Lukkes*
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Ann Millner (UT)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Mark Hagerott (ND)
Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Vice Chair

Other Commissioners Present

Bob Shireman (CA)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Ben Cannon (OR)

Staff Present

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Russell Poulin, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Technology-Enhanced Education
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA
Van Davis, Chief Strategy Officer, WCET
Melanie Sidwell, Director of Communications

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Christopher Cabaldon called the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee meeting to order and asked Vice President Patrick Lane to call the roll. A quorum was established.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of November 9, 2023, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Chair Cabaldon asked if there were any corrections to the May 7, 2024, PAR Committee meeting minutes. There were no corrections requested. Commissioner Jim Chavez MOVED TO APPROVE and Commissioner Colleen Sathre SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve Updated WICHE Positions on Federal Policy and the Federal and State Roles in Postsecondary Education

Committee Chair Cabaldon introduced the first action item and asked Lane to present the item. Lane directed the committee to the agenda book and referenced the committee's previous work on the position under consideration and potential minor edits to the existing positions that were discussed at the May 2024 meeting. Lane reminded committee members of the process by which positions are adopted and their role in guiding the work of staff on federal policy issues, emphasizing the importance of having high-level and general positions that allow staff to engage with policymakers and other organizations on legislation and regulations as they arise.

Lane then summarized the new position sharing that it was modeled on existing Executive Order 13132 on the federal and state relationship in federal rulemaking. The position emphasizes states having the lead role in higher education policy and that federal efforts that infringe on state discretion should be limited, involve close consultation with states, and rely on robust data and research. Lane reminded the committee members that they had reviewed this potential position at the May 2024 meeting and that staff requested a recommendation from this committee to the Committee of the Whole to adopt the new position. Committee Chair Cabaldon then called for questions and discussion.

Commissioner Larry Tidemann asked about the intended audience of the position. Lane replied that the position does not have a specific audience but instead gives commissioners a sense of guardrails for how staff may interact on particular issues and gives staff direction about where and how to focus on federal issues. Lane discussed how this proposal would have guided staff actions on current regulatory issues, in particular citing the example of recent federal mandates for public institutions to provide data on student outcomes without a clearly articulated research base for how such a mandate would benefit students.

Commissioner Ann Millner said that she supported the position and referenced her own work on a task force through the National Conference of State Legislatures. Placing the states in the lead role on higher education policy was extremely important, given the impact of federal policy and the potential to lose opportunities to pursue state priorities. She stressed the bipartisan agreement in the task force on the importance of the federal and state relationship and the need for state collaboration.

Commissioner Gerry Pollet questioned whether the federal government's provision of data resources to potential students would be supported. The state of Washington's data resources were important and expressed concerns based on Lane's example about potential disagreement with the new federal rules on data reporting. Lane agreed with Commissioner Pollet about the importance of data but said that existing research showed

that the approach the U.S. Department of Education was pursuing is unlikely to positively impact students or change their behavior while imposing a substantial burden on public institutions in particular. Commissioner Pollet said a potential approach would be for the federal government to ensure data are effectively distributed.

Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger supported the position. It was broad enough that support should not focus on a particular example but on the need to balance federal and state positions and allow staff to engage on important issues. She praised the committee's lengthy efforts to craft this position at previous meetings.

Commissioner Joshua Whitworth agreed and said that states had an important role in defining what should be in a policy and gives the organization the opportunity to come back to states and keep them informed of key issues. Lane agreed and emphasized the pieces of the position that would allow WICHE to push federal policymakers to engage directly with states to adjust and improve policies. Commissioner Whitworth agreed and stressed the importance of partnership in policymaking between the federal government and states.

Committee Chair Cabaldon reminded the committee again of its long-term work on this particular position and noted that the timing was unfortunate, coming right after the U.S. presidential election even though the position was crafted independently of current events. The position should be stronger and more assertive and that states should not approach this relationship as supplicants asking to be consulted or requesting good data and evidence. Instead, he pointed out that the 10th Amendment of the Constitution establishes states, not as equal partners with the federal government in higher education, but as having the primary authority over postsecondary education, noting that other constitutional amendments, particularly on equal protection and civil rights, allow for some federal involvement. He emphasized that it is they as commissioners, under the Western Regional Education Compact, who represent the states. He noted that he did not believe that the criteria envisioned in the position were stringent enough and that states should not cede authority to the federal government merely because the federal government has reasonable researchers. He concluded that states should be considered the primary partners in this policy domain and that the federal role should be complementary.

Commissioner Millner agreed with Committee Chair Cabaldon but expressed concerns about the proposal, stressing the need to adopt a position to move forward with a combined voice. Commissioner Tom Begich sought clarification from Committee Chair Cabaldon, who summarized his views again. Commissioner Begich motioned to replace language referring to states as "significant partners" in policymaking with "primary partner." Commissioner Whitworth seconded this edit. Commissioner Goeppinger asked whether edits would also have to be approved by the Executive Committee prior to consideration by the Committee of the Whole. Committee Chair Cabaldon replied that the Policy Analysis

and Research Committee has the primary responsibility for this issue so it could go forward. Commissioner Llew Jones proposed deleting the clause following “Federal efforts” that read “that infringe on state roles, authorities, responsibilities, and policies should.” He suggested simply replacing that clause with “should” so that the federal government would not believe that there are certain criteria under which it would be acceptable to infringe on states responsibilities. Committee Chair Cabaldon and Commissioner Begich supported this change. Commissioner Begich revised his motion to amend the proposal in line with Commissioner Jones’ suggestion. Commissioner Whitworth seconded the motion. The committee unanimously approved these amendments to the language for consideration.

Commissioner Millner then MOVED TO APPROVE a recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to adopt the new position as amended. Commissioner Fred Baldwin SECONDED the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation to the Committee of the whole to approve Oregon’s Renewal application to continue participation in state authorization reciprocity agreement through W-SARA

Committee Chair Cabaldon introduced the next item for the committee to consider, which was Oregon’s renewal application to continue participation in W-SARA, and asked Molly Hall-Martin to present the item. She reminded committee members of their responsibility in reviewing states’ SARA applications following the Regional Steering Committee’s assessment and recommendation. She provided background information about Oregon’s compliance with SARA policy and the state’s participating institutions. Commissioner Ben Cannon provided brief additional context about the institutions participating in SARA and the need to consider a broader view of the impact of reciprocity on students. Commissioner Sathre thanked staff for the background information and context provided by staff in the agenda book. Committee Chair Cabaldon expressed support for Oregon’s application and emphasized the importance of sharing promising approaches and effective strategies between states. Commissioner Bill Soules MOVED TO APPROVE a recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to approve a recommendation approving Oregon’s continued participation in SARA. Commissioner Whitworth SECONDED the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Lisa Skari abstaining.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

WICHE’S Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2024 Meeting Summary

Committee Chair Cabaldon then introduced the next discussion item and asked Commissioner Baldwin to provide a summary of the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting. Commissioner Baldwin shared information about attendance and the key topics of accreditation, artificial intelligence, nondegree credentials, changing demographics,

and student basic needs. He emphasized the importance for members to share differing opinions on key issues and ultimately learn from one another. All members who attended indicated that on meeting evaluations all attendees indicated that it was worth their time to attend and that they all intended to use the information shared in their upcoming sessions. He reminded committee members of the importance of working with WICHE staff to ensure up-to-date appointments and shared the dates of the 2025 LAC meeting.

Commissioner Pollet agreed with Commissioner Baldwin and said that the topics were extremely relevant and said that timing and scheduling were issues that prevent some legislators from attending. Commissioner Begich asked to work with staff on Alaska's appointments and questioned why some of Alaska's appointees were not listed. Lane said that he would work with staff who work directly on LAC membership, but it may be that their terms expired. Commissioner Cannon suggested that it may be helpful for commissioners to work with current LAC members to encourage participation.

Commission Priorities for the Policy and Analysis and Research Workplan for FY 2026

Committee Chair Cabaldon then asked if committee members had any suggestions or recommendations for the FY 2026 Workplan, which the committee will consider and approve at the May 2025 meeting. None replied.

National Commission on College Closures

Committee Chair Cabaldon then introduced the next discussion item, which focused on a potential national commission on college closures, and asked staff to summarize the item. Lane shared that institutional closures, particularly those that are unplanned, create huge burdens for students and state agency staff and that numerous policy and practice gaps could be addressed. The purpose of such a commission would be to bring together the many different actors that would be involved in an institutional closure. Commissioner Robert Shireman shared that he was meeting with researchers focusing on closures and stressed the importance of focusing on gaps in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) policy. Commissioner Pollet said that it was important to look at different states' protections, including surety bonds and data. Committee Chair Cabaldon said that this would be an ambitious undertaking. Lane responded that it was important to think about it at a national level and that there was not a single clear entity to undertake this work because of the nature of the triad and there was limited collaboration. He cited the example of one accreditor saying they wished they had access to state records retention policies and that WICHE has such information because of its SARA work and provided it to the accreditor. Committee members supported staff working to develop this project and to return to the WICHE Commission with a formal project proposal.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Update on Unit Activities

Committee Chair Cabaldon then introduced the next item and asked Lane to provide an update on activities by the PAR unit. Lane explained that WICHE was receiving funding for parts of two projects that are on the Workplan. One was funding to examine approaches to effective nursing education in rural areas. This was related to the existing Workplan item on helping states meet health workforce needs. The second was funding that will support work on college completion that is related to the broader Workplan item on ensuring the value of postsecondary education. Lane also shared that staff member Liliana Diaz Solodukhin had accepted a position with the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

Committee Chair Cabaldon said the news was good but expressed concern about how the value of work was framed and urged staff to move beyond the focus on wage differences to establish the value of postsecondary education. This framing depends on lower wages for the comparison, citing the example of California's decision to increase minimum wages, which could reduce the value proposition of higher education.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) Policy Modification Process and Unified Agreement Technical Fixes

Committee Chair Cabaldon then introduced the next item, focusing on the SARA policy process and potential amendments to the Unified Agreement. Lane noted that the second annual SARA policy process has been completed, reminding commissioners that each must approve policy amendments of the four regions. One of the approved Western policies added new reasons for states to remove institutions, which added important student protection. He also shared that some amendments that staff hoped would get through did not receive approval by all four regions, but staff would continue working with the other regions on that. Hall-Martin said that an additional important change removed the time limit on institutions placed on provisional status, which allowed some institutions to be returned to regular status before addressing the underlying issue.

Lane then provided background on the Unified Agreement for State Authorization Reciprocity. There was not yet a process for amending this agreement analogous to the SARA policy modification process. There also was an understanding that the SARA Policy Manual and the Unified Agreement have different purposes, with the Unified Agreement meant to focus on high-level governance and roles and responsibilities, while the Policy Manual was meant to focus on operational issues, but there were some operational criteria in the Unified Agreement. Required amendments to the Unified Agreement shift criteria to the Policy Manual. Further, he shared that WICHE led a working group to develop an approach to amend the Unified Agreement, which would require approval by all four

regions and NC-SARA. He expected changes to the Unified Agreement would be minimal and would likely be brought to the Commission for consideration. Committee Chair Cabaldon supported the process and stressed the importance of ensuring that states, as represented through WICHE, had the authority to approve changes.

ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Cabaldon asked if there was any other business. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve a Project Titled “The National Task Force on College Closures”

Summary

This project was discussed with the PAR Committee at the November 2024 Commission Meeting, at which the committee signaled its interest in staff formally proposing a full-scale project. WICHE intends to partner with the other three higher education regional compacts and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) to convene key actors from across the postsecondary ecosystem to identify policy and practice gaps related to institutional closures, emphasizing precipitous closures. This task force would ideally consist of key members of the regulatory triad and others with relevant higher education, finance, regulatory, and legal expertise.

The work stems from a recognition that enrollment and fiscal pressures could lead to an increase in institutional closures as well as reports from state regulators and others about the difficulties in managing these complex processes in ways that produce the best possible outcomes for students. The work will include a focus on proactive prevention and reactive response.

Relationship to WICHE’s Mission

This work is related to WICHE’s mission through promoting sound public policy that can enhance student success in postsecondary education throughout the region.

Background

Higher education has a long and consistent track record in predicting increases in college closures. Some predictions, such as half of college institutions would close by the late 2020s, provoke substantial discussion but are based more on theory than data. Other assessments, including those of bond rating agencies and data-driven research, indicate that while Christiansen’s predictions may be off the mark, there is still reason for increased concern in the coming years. These detailed analyses include assessments of institutional finances, broad evaluations of economic trends, inclusion of demographic data (including WICHE’s Knocking at the College Door), and other key factors.

Smaller nonprofit institutions and proprietary institutions are the primary areas of concern for most researchers. While the West features a more significant proportion of public institutions than other regions, this is still an important issue for the region as historical closures of large for-profit institutions have had substantial impacts across the region.

In preliminary and previous discussions with state regulators, accreditors, and U.S. Department of Education staff, staff believe there are potentially numerous improvements

in practice, primarily through improved coordination, collaboration, and communication among members of the regulatory triad. There are also policy gaps where better regulations and requirements across the triad could lead to improvements in student outcomes when institutions close, particularly when those closures are rapid in nature.

Prevention will necessarily be an important thread of this work but must be approached thoughtfully. For example, a warning mechanism that is not well-designed could lead to closures that would not otherwise have happened. Further, if policies aimed at preventing closures merely drag out what is an inevitable process, there is the potential that additional students could be impacted. Still, an essential thread of this work will be understanding what additional metrics and analysis could give the regulatory triad useful information to try to address challenges with unstable institutions as early as possible.

While WICHE staff have identified certain areas of concern that appear ripe for action, the primary approach for this effort will be as the convener. First in convening the core group of organizations to pursue funding and then in convening those with substantial expertise and research backgrounds to develop appropriate recommendations and action steps. While the specifics of the project may evolve based on that expert guidance, the current, high-level, envisioned approach would be as follows:

- ▶ *Establishment of the task force of experts.* This phase would include a face-to-face meeting with substantial discussion, expert presentations, and case studies led by regulators and agencies that have worked through precipitous closure.
- ▶ *Identification and staffing of working groups.* The convening organizations would staff working groups focused on specific policy and practice areas, gathering input and feedback from members and external stakeholders as well.
- ▶ *Task force review and revision of recommendations.* At an additional face-to-face meeting; members would review and revise recommendations.
- ▶ *Distribution, implementation, and next steps.* The work would conclude with a substantial distribution plan, including a focus on implementing recommendations where possible and identifying specific areas for further research and policy efforts.

With the complexity of numerous project partners, staff will provide regular updates to WICHE commissioners on a formal basis (as part of these committee meetings) and informally as requested.

Staff Fiscal Impact

If successful in securing funding, this project would have fiscal and staffing impacts that the external funding would cover. Our initial estimate (that assumes a substantial and

equivalent effort from the other regional compacts) is that this would involve approximately 1.5 FTE over 18 months and a budget of \$750,000 to be split among the partner organizations at levels equivalent to staffing levels.

Action Requested

Staff request that the PAR Committee recommend that the Committee of the Whole approve this project, adding it to the New Directions section of the Workplan.

ACTION ITEM

**Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the
FY 2026 Workplan Section for the Policy Analysis and Research Unit**



FY 2026 WORKPLAN

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH (PAR)

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 & Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
<i>Benchmarks: WICHE Region</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.025	N/A
Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.25	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.15	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
<i>Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.025	N/A
State Policy and Data Profiles	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	U.S.	0.2	N/A
<i>Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West</i>	A/F	Western	0.025	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
<i>WICHE Insights</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.1	N/A
WICHE Policy Webinar Series	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.1	Variable
WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)	A/S, I, V/A	Western	2.25	NC-SARA; Western SARA member states; MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB

The regularly updated **BENCHMARKS: WICHE REGION** data resource 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 (PARD), the *Benchmarks* data dashboard also includes state information and regional metrics.

The **LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)** informs the Commission and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education, and 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. Each WICHE Executive Committee member can appoint up to four legislators to serve on the LAC. Commissioners who are also legislators are ex officio members of their LAC delegation.

PAR unit staff provide support to the region through bimonthly **PEER- TO-PEER VIRTUAL CONVENINGS** on federal issues, student access and success, improving the value proposition for postsecondary education, and sharing promising approaches and strategies to common challenges in the West. This convening of state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues.

The **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 supplements the core data sources as much as possible to keep this resource contemporary and examines the overall utility of the full suite of data resources.

WICHE is continuing to identify what would be most useful for the **STATE POLICY AND DATA PROFILES** that could provide additional state and Pacific Island jurisdictions postsecondary contexts and data. The Policy Analysis and Research Database (PARDB) enables the PAR unit to provide more detailed and relevant information specific to each WICHE state and Pacific Island jurisdiction. Staff will work with agency and institutional staff from across the region to determine how this resource could be structured to be most beneficial.

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, and Pacific Island jurisdiction, over the past one, five, and 10 years, as well as what proportion of total tuition and fees they represent. WICHE also annually provides a second analysis examining the implications and state finance and financial aid trends.

The **WICHE INSIGHTS** 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 the annual *Tuition and Fees* or the quadrennial *Knocking at the College Door* report).

The **WICHE POLICY WEBINAR SERIES** features staff, partners, and higher education stakeholders periodically hosting digital forums for registrants on selected higher education topics of interest. In FY 2026, WICHE will continue to identify webinar opportunities that will be of interest and use to the region.

The **WICHE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (W-SARA)** is a voluntary agreement among states designed to establish comparable standards for U.S. states, territories, and freely associated states regulating postsecondary distance education. SARA expands access to postsecondary educational opportunities while ensuring meaningful consumer protections. WICHE coordinates and oversees 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 agreement's implementation.

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants, contracts, or fees.

All work in this category is considered high priority.

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Increasing Access, Affordability, and Equity Using OER: A National Consortium	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	\$553,000	.95 10/24 - 10/26	Hewlett Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB
Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	\$132,833	0.75 07/25 - 07/26	Wyoming Community College Commission, Wyoming Governor's Office
<i>Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates</i>	A/S, W/S	U.S.	\$190,000	1.25 01/24 - 06/27	College Board, Lumina Foundation

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Rural Higher Education Center – Evaluating Train-in-Place Rural Nursing Programs	W/S, A/S, I, V/A	Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming; WICHE region	\$249,970	.22 01/25 - 06/30	Institute for Education Sciences; MDRC
A Landscape Analysis of Completion Strategies in the West	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	WICHE region	\$201,443	.6 01/25 - 12/25	ECMC Foundation
Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative Planning Grant	W/S, A/S, I	Colorado	\$75,000	.025 4/25-7/25	Anonymous funder

INCREASING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND EQUITY USING OER: A NATIONAL

CONSORTIUM: The PAR unit has received an additional round of funding to continue work with the three other regional higher education compacts — the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) — focused on scaling the successful adoption of high-quality open educational resources to improve student outcomes, increase equity, and improve affordability.

SUPPORT FOR THE WYOMING INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP: WICHE was contracted by the Wyoming Community College Commission to provide project management for a broad initiative that seeks 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. Additionally, WICHE works closely with the Wyoming governor’s office on this initiative.

KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR: PROJECTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES: In December 2024, the PAR unit successfully released the 11th edition of state forecasts of high school graduates. During FY 2026, staff will continue the distribution, presenting to a range of audiences and conferences while continuing to pursue additional enhancements and follow-up analyses on this important topic. The staffing level for this project is primarily concentrated during FY 2025, though staff will be engaged through FY 2027 and beyond.

RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER – EVALUATING TRAIN-IN-PLACE RURAL NURSING PROGRAMS: WICHE has received federal funding as part of a larger consortium focused on rural higher education to evaluate rural train-in-place programs at three sites in the West. Although this work is focused on three states, WICHE expects to broadly share and

distribute the findings from this work (as well as that of our consortium partners). This is one component of WICHE’s broader efforts to support the region in meeting workforce challenges. This project is expected to run for five years.

A LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF COMPLETION STRATEGIES IN THE WEST: As a first step in broader work on the value in postsecondary education, WICHE has been funded to carry out a landscape analysis of completion initiatives currently underway in the West. This work will help address one major area of concern when it comes to ensuring value in higher education as non-completers are likely a population that receives little or no value for their time, effort, and expense. WICHE staff will complete this work while also identifying potential partners for further work on the value of postsecondary education.








COLORADO POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS PLANNING GRANT: WICHE will serve as the fiscal agent for Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative, which seeks to create a dynamic two-sided marketplace that connects Colorado’s opportunity seekers with high-quality education, training, and career opportunities. This four-month planning grant will establish the foundation for a statewide coalition that will ultimately bridge the gap in messaging and advocacy between K-12 education and employers by leveraging strategic partnerships with postsecondary providers. Staff believe that, if successful, this project will lead to important lessons for the entire region.

New Directions

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

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Building Evidence for Scale – Policy and Practice Solutions for Adult Learners	A/S, W/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	U.S.	\$1.5M - \$2M	1.75 4 years	TBD
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	TBD	TBD	Western states

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Policy Paper Series on Affordability	A/F, A/S		Western	\$500,000	1.5 2 years	TBD
Western Postsecondary Data Users Network	A/S, W/S, V/A		Western	\$50,000	0.5 6 months	Western states
Articulating the Value of Postsecondary Education in the West	TBD		Western	TBD	TBD	Western states
Policy and Practice Solutions for Workforce Shortages	A/S, W/S, I		Western	\$400,000	1.0 2 years	TBD
A Hole in State Policy – Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A		WICHE region	\$300,000	1.5 2 years	TBD
National Task Force for College Closures	A/F, A/S, V/A		U.S.	\$750,000	1.5 18 months	SHEEO, SREB, MHEC, NEBHE
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I, W/S		Western	In-kind	.05 07/24 - 06/25	WCET, DHS, FEMA

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR SCALE – POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR ADULT

LEARNERS: Building on its Adult College Completion Network and other work related to adult learners, WICHE proposes pursuing new approaches to achieve four objectives: a) build the evidence base for effectively serving adult learners; b) facilitate collaboration among network members; c) share scalable solutions across the field; and d) link adult college completion work with the broader agenda to ensure the equity of opportunity. The project will also seek to partner with WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions 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.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS:

The PAR unit will continue exploring ways to improve behavioral health in postsecondary

education, building on a recently completed successful project. This work will likely focus on several potential approaches, including meeting future behavioral health workforce needs, building supportive state- and system-level networks to improve the distribution of promising approaches, and catalyzing the adoption of broad-based approaches to student health and wellness.

POLICY PAPER SERIES ON AFFORDABILITY: The PAR unit will commission a series of papers focused on policy and practice actions to improve postsecondary affordability. The papers (including WICHE as a lead author) will aim to provide rigorous, actionable research accessible to policymakers.

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 to 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 states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, to address common questions, provide technical assistance, and assist in professional development. This network would ensure that Western policymakers have access to high-quality evidence to develop, assess, and improve education and training policies and programs.

ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE WEST: The PAR 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.

POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR WORKFORCE SHORTAGES: The PAR unit regularly convenes key staff from the WICHE region 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.

A HOLE IN STATE POLICY – ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

Having recently completed a portion of the broad project envisioned here (and approved by the Commission), staff are returning this project to the New Directions section of the Workplan. The PAR unit intends to work with WCET and key partners on work to operationalize evidence-based approaches to support high-quality short-term credential pathways and examine appropriate policies and practices to fulfill consumer protection responsibilities.

NATIONAL TASK FORCE FOR COLLEGE CLOSURES: WICHE will pursue resources to support an in-depth expert task force focused on identifying policy and practice gaps related to precipitous college closures and recommending concrete, evidence-based approaches for addressing them. This conversation necessitates the broad engagement of state regulators, federal agency staff, accreditors, and other key education leaders. WICHE believes the regional compacts are well-placed to foster the necessary engagement and participation in this important work.

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 states and Pacific jurisdictions to provide training for institutional nontechnical leaders for cyber protection.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff are considering pursuing and bringing to the Commission for approval, along with ideas generated by commissioners.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: The PAR unit will continue to identify areas where WICHE can help build policy- and practice-relevant research focused on organizational priorities, including student access and success, postsecondary value, and reaching underserved populations, including rural students, military and veteran students, adult learners, incarcerated individuals, and students of color. Additionally, this work could include topic-specific research and analysis.

LEVERAGING WORK-BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND MEET WORKFORCE DEMANDS IN RURAL AREAS: 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. Staff believe this approach may have particular benefits for rural areas.

STATE POLICIES TO SUPPORT MEETING STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS: 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 student outcomes, 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 2025:

STATE APPROACHES TO SHORT-TERM POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POLICY GAPS: The PAR unit, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, completed an initial project producing a white paper on gaps and needs in state policies focused on short-term credentials. Although this work was completed, staff have returned the project to the New Directions section because the completed work only represents one component of the effort initially approved by the Commission.

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE PARTNERSHIPS: WICHE has completed multiple partnerships with the organizations that were selected to be one of the intermediaries for scale grantees of the Gates Foundation. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium previously brought in WICHE to facilitate its efforts to develop an effective data infrastructure and staff capacity.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2025 Meeting

Based on feedback from the 2024 meeting and WICHE's ongoing assessment of the postsecondary education landscape, the meeting topics under consideration include:

- ▶ **Effective Models for Collaboration between Postsecondary Education and Legislatures.** This discussion would highlight different approaches for collaboratively developing policy agendas.
- ▶ **Higher Education and the Rural West.** The West is truly a unique region, and public institutions have a variety of approaches meeting the needs of rural students, communities, and employers.
- ▶ **Artificial Intelligence: Tangible Legislative Approaches for a Brave New World.** Legislators valued a general AI session last year but are interested in specific and actionable approaches in a rapidly changing environment.
- ▶ **Navigating Federal, State, Accreditor, and Other Roles in the Regulatory Triad.** Commissioner Ann Millner (UT) co-chaired a recent effort by the National Conference of State Legislatures (with Senator Michael Dembrow from Oregon, a former LAC member) on the differing roles for federal and state policy in postsecondary education. This session would build on a well-received session from last year about accreditation and include additional background information for LAC members about the regulatory triad.
- ▶ **Knocking at the College Door: Projections and Implications for the West.** WICHE would share updated information and discuss policy and other responses to changing demographics.
- ▶ **Alignment between Postsecondary Education and Workforce Systems to Meet States' Needs.** This is a perennial topic that is always of focus and interest to legislators. While few, if any, states have truly solved this constant challenge, a number of innovative models for enhancing these connections have emerged across the West.
- ▶ **State-level Approaches to Behavioral Health and Postsecondary Education.** WICHE continues to be heavily involved in emerging state-level approaches to better meet the behavioral health needs of students, faculty, and staff — an area where legislators are often critical partners in developing sustainable solutions.
- ▶ **Federal Updates Impacting State Postsecondary Policy.** In a rapidly changing environment, WICHE will ensure there is time to discuss actual and potential federal policy changes and their impact on states.
- ▶ **Navigating Discussions Around Postsecondary Value.** Data and research are clear: Americans are raising new questions about the value of higher education as those concerns seem to reach new levels with each release of a new survey. However, the same surveys also include a shocking consensus: 94% of adults believe credentials earned after high school are essential to career success.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Knocking at the College Door: Distribution and Next Steps

After a successful December 2024 release, staff have focused on distribution across communications channels and responding to numerous inquiries for speaking engagements. The following pages share information about each. The PAR staff remain available for further presentations and discussions.

Speaking Engagements

Organization/Institution	Summary
Laramie County Community College	WICHE presented Wyoming-specific information to the President's Advisory Board.
National Panhellenic Conference	This organization closely follows <i>Knocking</i> information and regularly requests presentations.
Central New Mexico Community College	WICHE staff presented data on Knocking and other postsecondary trends and participated in a panel (along with WICHE Chair Barbara Damron) at a campus event focused on higher education trends.
SHEEO Equity and Adequacy in Funding Partners Convening	WICHE provided a virtual presentation to this convening, focusing on demographic trends across the country.
National Institute for Standards and Technology Community Coordinating Council	WICHE provided a virtual presentation for this convening.
Future Trends Forum	WICHE participated in this unique virtual venue to discuss <i>Knocking</i> trends, hosted by Bryan Alexander, who has previously presented to the WICHE Commission.
Adams State University Board of Trustees	WICHE shared a Colorado-focused presentation with the board of this regional institution.
American Council on Education: ACE Experience 2025	WICHE staff were included on a plenary panel focused on demographic trends and workforce needs at this convening.
National Council of Higher Education Resources	WICHE was invited to share a Knocking-presentation at this convening for the national trade association for student loan servicers, guaranty agencies, lenders, and others.
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) Board	WICHE staff presented a <i>Knocking</i> overview to the NCHEMS Board.
NSHE Board of Regents	WICHE was invited to present at a March board meeting to the Nevada State Higher Education Board of Regents.

Organization/Institution	Summary
S&P Global Credit Forum	S&P Global, a key credit rating agency, invited WICHE to present demographic data on a panel focused on the future of higher education.
Colorado Commission on Higher Education	WICHE staff presented at Colorado's commission convening.
WICHE Academic Partnerships Meeting	Staff led a plenary session focused on <i>Knocking</i> data at WICHE's combined Academic Partnerships convening.
National Federation of Municipal Analysts	WICHE presented to this convening of financial analysts involved in higher education bond markets.
Education Writers Association	WICHE was invited to present to the leading organization for education news reporters on <i>Knocking</i> and other higher education data.
American Association of State Colleges and Universities	Proposed session.
National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC)	Proposed session.
College Board Forum	Proposed session.
SHEEO Policy Conference	WICHE is leading a plenary panel focused on the <i>Knocking</i> data that will include several state co-speakers at SHEEO's Higher Education Policy Conference.
Midwest Higher Education Compact	WICHE is developing a virtual presentation focused on the Midwest region.
New England Board of Higher Education	WICHE is developing a virtual presentation focused on the New England region.
Southern Regional Education Board	WICHE is developing a virtual presentation focused on the Southern region.
Sanford Health	WICHE is in communication with Sanford's Chief Nursing Officer regarding a presentation to the executive team.

Communications

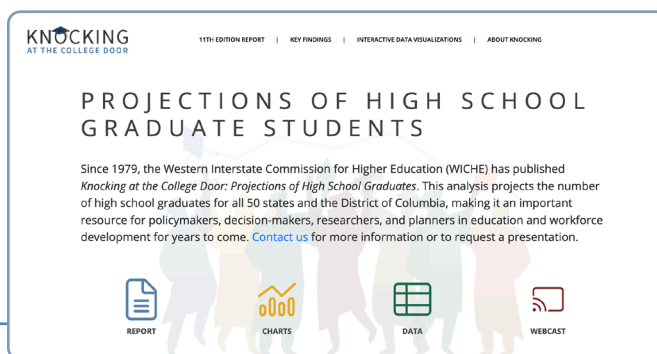
Thanks to WICHE's Communications team, *Knocking* has generated substantial media coverage, social media impressions, and website traffic since December 2024. The overall distribution strategy has been data-driven and proved highly successful in reaching audiences at the national and state level, as well as in traditional media and new media outlets such as blogs, podcasts, and social media. The following provides a snapshot of communications outcomes through February 2025.

KNOCKING DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Communications Goals



- ▶ Raise awareness of Knocking and WICHE
- ▶ Increase use of Knocking and WICHE experts as a resource
- ▶ Create attractive and clear report and additional materials
- ▶ **Switch from separate microsite to wiche.edu**



Email Campaigns (October - December 2024)



Campaign Segment	No. of Emails Sent	Audience Size
Policy Unit	3	2,000+
Student Access Programs	1	1,100+
Partner Organizations	1	30
WICHE eNews	6	2,000+
CommunicationWorks Media Outreach	3	200+
TOTAL	14	5,330+

Press and Media



- ▶ Media interview training and talking points
- ▶ 1:1 pitching to **50+ national/regional reporters** and 25 bloggers/podcasters
- ▶ Education Writers Association press release

Webcast

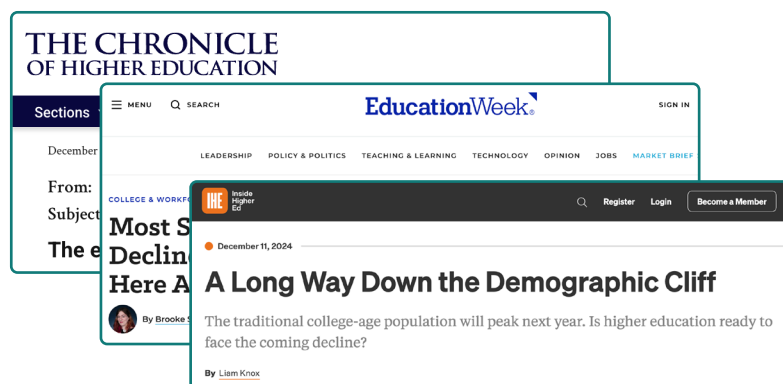


- ▶ **646 registrants/384 attendees**
 - 22 staff
 - 18 media
- ▶ Approx. **60% event attendance** (normally 30-40%)
- ▶ 32 comments/questions
- ▶ **220 views** on YouTube

KNOCKING DISTRIBUTION RESULTS (SO FAR)

Media Coverage

More than **60 media mentions**, including news articles, podcast episodes, and blog posts



A Tale of Two Knockings: 2024 vs. 2020

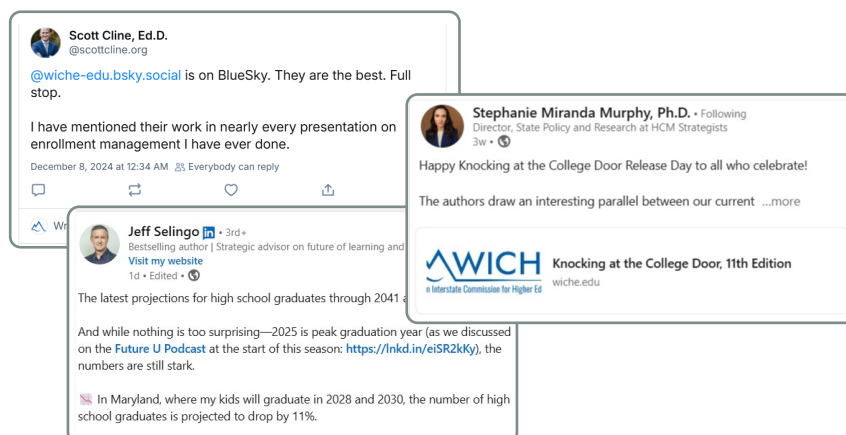
2024 Knocking Metrics	2020 Knocking Metrics
39,704 webpage views in first three months	500 webpage views in first month
13,810 users in first three months	43,000 users in four years
2,856 PDF downloads in first three months	620 PDF downloads in four years

Social Media

Boosted **LinkedIn** post metrics:

- ▶ **\$500** for one week
- ▶ **34,000** impressions
- ▶ **427** post clicks
- ▶ **12,119** unique viewers

New LinkedIn followers: **335**



Plenary Session II

Leveraging a State-Federal Partnership to Enhance Postsecondary Affordability and Improve Student Outcomes

Monday, May 5, 2025

3:15 – 4:30 p.m.

Evergreen Meeting Room

3rd Floor

PLENARY SESSION II

MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 | 3:15 - 4:30 p.m. | *Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor*

Leveraging a State-Federal Partnership to Enhance Postsecondary Affordability and Improve Student Outcomes

The federal higher education policy landscape has experienced monumental shifts in recent months, which are impacting states, postsecondary institutions, and students. This, combined with public discourse questioning the value of higher education, creates a complex set of challenges, but it also presents an opportunity to examine and reimagine a state-federal partnership in higher education. Many students struggle to complete their degrees, and some who do graduate find their credentials offer limited economic value. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative approach among states, institutions, and the federal government.

This session will explore findings from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Task Force on Higher Education Affordability and Student Outcomes, which examined strategies to make college more affordable, boost completion rates, and mitigate unrepayable student debt. Participants will engage in a discussion about how states and institutions can work with federal partners to increase the value of postsecondary education and ensure better outcomes for students. Additionally, the Commission will explore opportunities for collaboration with WICHE to strengthen a state-federal partnership that enhances affordability and improves educational and workforce results.

FACILITATOR:

Commissioner Robert Shireman (CA), Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

PANELISTS:

Commissioner Ben Cannon (OR), Executive Director, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), WICHE Vice Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature
Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, National Conference of State Legislatures

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Commissioner Robert Shireman (CA), Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

Robert Shireman is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, working on higher education policy with a focus on affordability, quality assurance, and consumer protections.

He advises the U.S. Department of Education on accreditation issues through his appointment (by Speaker Nancy Pelosi) to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), and serves as a California Governor appointee to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Shireman served in the Obama administration as deputy undersecretary of education, having previously worked in the U.S. Senate and at the National Economic Council in the Clinton Administration. In 2004, he founded The Institute for College Access & Success, and in 2011, launched the policy organization California Competes.

In his various roles since 1989, Shireman has led successful efforts to reform student loans, streamline the financial aid process, promote campus diversity, and protect consumers from predatory colleges. He has shepherded the evolution of the nation's income-based student loan repayment system from its initial adoption in 1992 to its expansion and improvement by President Barack Obama. He organized the federal response to emerging signs of predatory for-profit career training in 2009, leading to a widely discussed set of regulatory reforms and enforcement actions. He led an effort that significantly simplified the process of applying for federal college aid, and pressed for and ultimately won the elimination of costly middlemen from the federal loan programs so that more grant aid could be made available to low-income students.

Shireman holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California at Berkeley, a master's in education from Harvard, and a master's in public administration from the University of San Francisco.

Panelists



Commissioner Ben Cannon (OR), Executive Director, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Ben Cannon has served as the executive director of the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission since 2013. In this position, Cannon oversees state funding allocations, policy setting, and coordination for Oregon's postsecondary education and training system, including community colleges, public universities, and various workforce boards. Cannon is a former teacher, state representative, and education policy advisor to the governor. Elected three times to the Oregon House of Representatives (2006-11), he chaired House committees with jurisdiction over environment, energy, and water policy. From 2003 to 2011, he taught humanities at a middle school near Portland, Oregon. He earned his bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and attended Oxford University in England on a Rhodes Scholarship where he earned graduate degrees in comparative and international education and philosophy, politics, and economics.



Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), WICHE Vice Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature

Senator F. Ann Millner represents Senate District 5, encompassing parts of Davis, Morgan and Weber counties in Utah. Elected to the Senate in 2015, she serves as chair of the Economic Development and Workforce Services Committee, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, School Security Task Force and Senate Ethics Committee. Additionally, Senator Millner contributes her leadership and expertise to several legislative collaborative organizations across the nation, including the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Foundation Board of Directors and Executive Committee. She is a distinguished member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Commission, Education Commission of the States (ECS) Commission, ExcelinEd Policy Leaders Network member and chair of the NCSL Higher Education Task Force.

Born in Middlesboro, Kentucky, and raised in Clarksville, Tennessee, Senator Millner's academic journey includes a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Tennessee, a master's degree from Southwest Texas State University, and a doctorate from Brigham Young University. She is distinguished as a regents professor of health administration and served as president of Weber State University from 2002 to 2012. Under President Millner's leadership, Weber State University expanded into a multi-

campus institution, saw a nearly 40% rise in enrollment and strengthened its community partnerships.

Senator Millner's legislative efforts are driven by a deep commitment to enhancing Utah's education system and fostering economic development. She has championed policy aimed at strengthening workforce preparation, improving public and higher education, bolstering our aerospace defense industries and expanding access to affordable healthcare.



Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, National Conference of State Legislatures

Austin Reid is a federal affairs advisor for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) where he covers federal education policy and represents NCSL's education interests before U.S. Congress and the federal administration. Prior to joining NCSL, Reid worked at the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) where he was a senior policy advisor and served as a legislative fellow for U.S. Senator Chris Coons. He began his career as a high school teacher and has a Master of Education in education policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Roundtable Discussions Session II

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

2nd Floor Breakout Rooms

Oak Meeting Room Roundtable 3

Navigating Federal Changes in Higher Education: A Forum for Discussion and Response

Spruce B Meeting Room Roundtable 4

Unlocking the Workforce Development Potential of Agriculture Extension Services in Rural Communities

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION II

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025 | 8:30 - 9:45 a.m.

Roundtable 3

Oak Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

NAVIGATING FEDERAL CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION AND RESPONSE

(Affordability & Finance; Access & Success; Workforce & Society; Innovation; Value & Accountability)

Recent changes in the federal higher education landscape are reshaping the context for institutions, states, and postsecondary systems. This session provides an open forum for discussion on how to navigate these changes, share concerns, and explore strategic responses. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in dialogue, exchange insights, and collaborate on solutions to ensure their states and institutions are prepared to adapt effectively.

FACILITATOR

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

Roundtable 4

Spruce B Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

UNLOCKING THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

(Access & Success; Innovation)

Cooperative extension, a public service of land-grant colleges and universities, has long played a vital role in finding solutions and developing skills through trusted, practical education. As the nation's largest provider of noncredit education, cooperative extension represents an often overlooked but powerful driver of workforce and economic development, especially in rural and remote areas where access to postsecondary education and job training can be limited.

This interactive roundtable, facilitated by Brian Prescott, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), will explore how cooperative extension services can help bridge workforce gaps, support rural economic growth, and strengthen educational opportunities. Drawing on NCHEMS' ongoing research and insights from thought leaders in cooperative extension services, rural education, public policy, and economic development, participants will engage in a dynamic discussion about strategies to maximize cooperative extension's potential as a key player in workforce development.

FACILITATOR

Brian Prescott, President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 3

FACILITATOR



Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

Demarée K. Michelau is the president of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). As WICHE's president, Michelau serves as the chief executive officer of the organization and at the pleasure of the 48-member, gubernatorially appointed WICHE Commission. Prior to serving as WICHE's president, Michelau was WICHE's vice president of policy analysis and research, a role in which she managed the unit and oversaw externally funded projects. The author of numerous reports and policy briefs, she has experience in a variety of higher education policy issues, including those related to postsecondary attainment, governance, strategic planning, adult learners, transfer, accelerated learning options, affordability, and workforce. She serves on the board of directors for the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Previously, she held positions with the National Conference of State Legislatures and with former Colorado Congressman David Skaggs. Michelau received her bachelor's degree in public law from Northern Illinois University and her master's degree and doctorate in political science from the University of Colorado Boulder.

Roundtable 4

FACILITATOR

Brian Prescott, President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems



Brian Prescott is president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), where he sets the organization's strategic direction and leads a team of accomplished and committed policy experts, information analysts, and creative thinkers working to improve how postsecondary education serves the nation's needs. He also leads and supports projects on behalf of states, state agencies and systems, and institutions related to state strategic planning, postsecondary finance and affordability, governance and organization, demographics, and student success and workforce outcomes. Before joining NCHEMS in 2016, he served as director of policy research and analysis at WICHE. He is a board member of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and a past board member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling. He has degrees from the University of Virginia, the University of Iowa, and the College of William and Mary.

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Evergreen Meeting Room

3rd Floor

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – BUSINESS SESSION

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025 | 10:00 –11:30 a.m. | *Evergreen Meeting Room, 3rd Floor*

Agenda

Call to Order

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

 **Approval of the November 15, 2024, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes** 9-3

Report of the Chair

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report of the President

Demarée Michelau

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Review of Action Items of the Executive Committee Between November 2024 and May 2025 9-16

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report on the President's Evaluation

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Programs and Services Committee

Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Commissioner Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

 **Approval of the “National Task Force on College Closures” Project** 6-10








Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Council

Commissioner Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)

Report of the WCET Executive Council

Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV)

Action Items

	Approval of a Super Catch-Up Provision under the SECURE 2.0 Act	9-25
	Approval of the FY 2026 Salary and Benefit Recommendations	9-26
	Approval of the FY 2026 Annual Operating Budget – General and Non-General Fund Budgets	9-28
	Approval of Dedicated Reserve Levels for Non-General Fund Activities	9-36
	Approval of the Revised WICHE Vision Statement	9-41
	Approval of the FY 2026 Workplan	9-42
	Affirmation of Codes of Ethics for the WICHE Commission, President, and Staff	9-82

Other Business

Adjourn Committee of the Whole — Business Session

Meeting Evaluation

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/May2025CommMtg>



Thank you for your feedback!

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the November 15, 2024, Committee of the Whole Meeting – Business Session Minutes

Commissioners Present

Antwan Jefferson (CO), Chair
Barbara Damron (NM), Vice Chair
Matt Freeman (ID), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Sean Parnell (AK)
Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
Todd Haynie (AZ)
Christopher Cabaldon (CA)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
John Morton (HI)
Rick Aman (ID)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Llew Jones (MT)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Bill Soules (NM)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Ann Millner (UT)
John Carmichael (WA)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Pearl Brower (AK)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Angie Paccione (CO)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Danita Bye (ND)
Mark Hagerott (ND)
Dale Erquiaga (NV)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
Nathan Lukkes (SD)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)
Patricia Jones (UT)
Geoffrey Landward (UT)

Staff Present

Sherri Artz Gilbert, Senior Director, Operations and Membership Administration, WCET
Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Janell Daly, Senior Administrative Coordinator, Behavioral Health Program
Van Davis, Chief Strategy Officer, WCET
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and the Commission
Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead – Psychologist, Behavioral Health Program
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Research and Analysis
Todd Helvig, Director of Education and Training, Behavioral Health Program
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President

Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health and Co-Director, Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)
Russell Poulin, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President for Technology-Enhanced Education
Melanie Sidwell, Director of Communications

Guests Present

J.R. Damron
Carole Jones
Senator Denley Loge (MT)
Tyler Shortt

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Antwan Jefferson called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. Laura Ewing reported to Chair Jefferson that the Committee of the Whole had a quorum.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the May 7, 2024, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Chair Jefferson asked for any additions or corrections to the minutes. There were none, and the minutes were approved as submitted.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

The Chair's report was included in the November 2024 agenda book. Chair Jefferson gave an additional overview of his leadership work since January 2024. He mentioned the following:

- ▶ The successful 2024 annual review of President Demarée Michelau.
- ▶ New appointments of committee members for the Audit and Nominating Committees.
- ▶ Oversaw the development of a month-by-month Commission activity schedule that outlines the Chair of the Commission's responsibilities throughout the year. The document serves as a valuable resource for the Chair during their tenure.
- ▶ Chairing productive meetings of the Executive Committee in the summer and fall of 2024.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

The Report of the President was included in the November 2024 agenda book. President Michelau thanked the staff for their contributions to a successful meeting in Hawai'i. Additionally, she thanked the Hawai'i delegation and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa for their excellent advice and counsel with the meeting logistics. She reported on the following:

- ▶ Travel within the WICHE region to engage with the states to respond to and track the

trends affecting higher education. She invited continued opportunities to visit states within the region, offering her assistance with institutional and legislative outreach.

- ▶ In addition to the release of *Knocking at the College Door*, staff have also been focused on ensuring that WICHE's Student Access Programs remained relevant.
- ▶ A public relations campaign to increase awareness about the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE). As part of the effort, she shared a promotional video created by staff to be used across all media channels. The campaign also aimed to reach over 14,000 high school guidance counselors throughout the WICHE region, informing them about WUE program activities and updates.
- ▶ Programs and Services staff collaborated with a consultant to enhance the reach and effectiveness of their work with the Western Academic Leadership Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders to better support the membership base. The enhancements would aim to improve recruitment, retention, and the overall value proposition of these networks.
- ▶ She acknowledged the retirement of Russell Poulin, Executive Director of WCET and Vice President for Technology-Enhanced Education, in December 2024, expressing gratitude for his many years of dedicated service to WCET and WICHE. She then introduced Van Davis, who will assume the leadership role in January 2025.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair Jefferson presented a report on the business conducted by the Executive Committee and summarized the action items between May 2024 and November 2024.

- ▶ Code of Ethics revision.
- ▶ November 2024 Commission Meeting agenda planning.
- ▶ Update on process for technical fixes to the Unified State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement.
- ▶ Approved the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewals for continued state participation in Arizona, Oregon, and South Dakota.
- ▶ Reviewed options for WICHE's participation in the continuation of the leadership realignment of the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC).
- ▶ Discussions about collaboration with the three regional compacts to engage McAllister & Quinn, a grants consulting firm, that will help the compacts develop a federal funding strategy.

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Commissioner Todd Haynie (AZ) provided the report of the November 15, 2024, Programs and Services Committee meeting. A summary of the report included:

- ▶ WUE enrollments reached an all-time high of 49,201 students, a 4% increase from the previous year.
- ▶ WRGP enrollments also hit a record high of 4,000 students, a 39% increase from the previous year.
- ▶ PSEP enrollments saw a slight increase of 1.6%, with 12 states and territories investing over \$15 million to help 566 students save on professional healthcare studies.

Additionally, a new professional position, the “veterinary professional associate” (VPA), was established in Colorado through Proposition 129. Colorado State University will launch one of the first VPA programs in fall 2025, offering a master’s degree with a mix of online and on-campus learning.

Academic Partnerships:

- ▶ Efforts to enhance member engagement within the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders and the Western Academic Leadership Forum.
- ▶ A joint annual meeting will be held in Reno, Nevada, in April 2025, themed *Partnerships: Stronger Together*.
- ▶ Leadership academies continued to support the development of academic leaders through online sessions and mentorship.

Cost-savings Partnerships:

- ▶ Increased the institution’s utilization of technology contracts for student cost savings.

Programs and Services Priorities for FY 2026:

The committee discussed proposed priorities and agreed that the focus areas should include:

- ▶ Increase student access to and affordability of artificial intelligence.
- ▶ The need for workforce data on shortages and increased retention in various fields and industries.
- ▶ Transfer and credit mobility, and exploring state transfer agreements and how credits earned by students can translate into degree programs and completion.
- ▶ Partner with K-12 to better understand the science of reading.
- ▶ Best practices in dual and concurrent enrollment.
- ▶ International student enrollment and retention.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Christopher Cabaldon provided the report and recommended action from the November 15, 2024, Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee.

He reported the committee discussed the recommendation for WICHE’s updated position on federal policy with the federal and state roles in postsecondary education.

Staff proposed minor revisions to three existing policy positions to make them more general. Additionally, a new position was proposed to clarify the division of roles between states and the federal government. The committee discussed and emphasized that the revised position should affirm states' primary responsibility for higher education. The committee agreed on the overarching principle and the proposed position for the updated federal policy. The principle adopted by the committee was that states and territories, along with their postsecondary systems and institutions, are the primary partners in ensuring students have access to high-quality higher education and maintain accountability for the nation's postsecondary enterprise. There is to be an appropriate balance between federal and state authorities that is essential for maintaining and developing effective postsecondary education authorization and oversight. Further, it may be appropriate for the federal government to consider evidence-based criteria for institutions and states to be eligible to participate in funding programs. Federal agencies should be deferential to states when taking actions that could affect state policymaking discretion. The PAR committee approved a motion to recommend to the Committee of the Whole that the updated WICHE position on federal policy and federal and state roles in postsecondary education should be approved.

Committee Chair Cabaldon MOVED TO APPROVE the updated WICHE positions on federal policy and the federal and state roles in postsecondary education. Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

The committee also discussed the renewal of Oregon's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). W-SARA's Regional Steering Committee and WICHE staff fully endorsed Oregon's renewal application. They confirmed that Oregon remained in full compliance with SARA policies. The Committee approved a motion to recommend to the Committee of the Whole that Oregon's renewal application for continued participation in SARA be approved.

Committee Chair Cabaldon MOVED TO APPROVE the renewal of Oregon's participation in SARA. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. The Commission passed the motion with one abstention from the state of Oregon.

Committee Chair Cabaldon said additional committee discussion included:

- ▶ FY 2026 Workplan and goals for the PAR staff to pursue:
 - A project aimed at improving policies and practices related to the sudden closure of institutions.
 - Commit to explore and acquire potential funding opportunities.
- ▶ Policy modifications to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement.
- ▶ A new process that would allow modifications to the Unified Agreement for SARA.

REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)

Commissioner Fred Baldwin reported on the activity of the LAC:

The LAC met in Denver, Colorado, on September 11-12, 2024, focusing on changes in higher education, including student demographics, nondegree credentials, accreditation, behavioral health, student basic needs, and the role of artificial intelligence.

There were 22 legislators from 13 WICHE states and territories that attended. The meeting received positive feedback, with 100% of respondents finding it worthwhile and anticipated using the information in their legislative work.

WICHE staff will work with commissioners to begin appointing LAC members for 2025 in December 2024. The next LAC meeting will be in Seattle, Washington, on September 8-9, 2025, with future dates for 2026 being determined.

REPORT OF THE WCET EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Commissioner Fred Lokken reported on WCET membership, the State Authorization Network, and Every Learner Everywhere. The report included:

WCET Membership

- ▶ 449 members across all 50 states, with over a third in the WICHE region.
- ▶ Developed information on federal digital learning regulations, new accessibility regulations, generative AI, and other digital innovations.
- ▶ Research focused on the cost and price of distance education.

State Authorization Network

- ▶ Over 950 institutions and agencies are members.
- ▶ The network helped members implement statutory and regulatory requirements to improve student protection in digital learning and cross-state activities.
- ▶ Provided policy analysis, training, tools, and networking for compliance strategies.

Every Learner Everywhere

- ▶ Gates Foundation-funded network to aid higher education institutions to use digital learning and evidence-based teaching practices.
- ▶ Focused on improving student success, especially for poverty-affected, first-generation, and racially minoritized students.
- ▶ The program consists of 13 national partner organizations and has served over 1,200 institutions through various services.

LTTX Cybersecurity Exercise

- ▶ Developed in 2018 by WICHE, it was initially with Homeland Security and now with FEMA.

- ▶ Supported senior nontechnical leaders in WICHE states handling cyber incidents at their institutions.

WCET Outstanding Work (WOW) Awards

- ▶ Excellence in digital learning: The winner was the University of Hawai'i System awarded for its zero-cost textbook for anatomy and physiology, saving students over \$433,000 in one year. A video presentation of the project was shown to the Commission.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Commissioner Matt Freeman reported on the FY 2024 audit. Forvis Mazars, the auditing firm, met with the committee on October 7, 2024, and reviewed the FY 2024 financial statements and the auditor's opinion: an unmodified ("clean") opinion with no disagreements with staff. The committee met privately with the auditors and then with the staff.

The Audit Committee recommended that the Commission accept the FY 2024 audited financial statements.

Commissioner Freeman MOVED TO APPROVE the acceptance of the FY 2024 audited financial statements. Commissioner Ann Millner SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Commissioner Matt Freeman reported on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee met via videoconference on September 26, 2024, to consider vice chair nominations. After thorough deliberation during their meeting, the Nominating Committee recommended Commissioner Ann Millner (UT) as the incoming 2025 vice chair of the WICHE Commission. Commissioner Millner was consulted prior to the nomination about her availability and willingness to serve if selected. She stated that she would be honored to serve WICHE as vice chair. In addition, the committee recommended Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM) as chair and Commissioner Antwan Jefferson (CO) as the immediate past chair.

Commissioner Freeman MOVED TO APPROVE Commissioner Damron, Commissioner Millner, and Commissioner Jefferson as the 2025 officers of the Commission. Commissioner Lassner SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Update on WICHE's FY 2025 Budget

Craig Milburn provided a budget update. He reported that FY 2024 ended strongly, and the FY 2025 budget began positively. He presented the following FY 2024 budget details:

- ▶ The budget had an excess revenue of \$775,000, which was added to the reserves for FY 2025.
- ▶ Higher interest rates resulted in more revenue than anticipated; and the amount exceeded expectations by \$346,000.
- ▶ Expenditure projections for all budgets were lower than anticipated, except for the miscellaneous general fund, which was higher due to consultant work on invoice enhancements in Salesforce.
- ▶ Nearly all units exceeded their revenue projections and added to their reserves.

President Michelau provided additional information about the \$20,600 deficit for the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) budget. This was due to work that began on Knocking at the College Door earlier in FY 2024 than expected, and the funding from Lumina Foundation and College Board was not applied until FY 2025. She said there were no concerns with the PAR budget. She also reported that dues had been collected from all but two states, and she had no concerns about those states that would be paying soon. She also reported about the dues for the Pacific Island jurisdictions and the TAP grant through the Office of Insular Affairs. That funding will be received for FY 2025, and the application for the FY 2026 funding will be started soon and submitted.

INFORMATION ITEM

Non-General Fund Reserves for FY 2025

President Michelau reported that all units stayed within their financial limits set by the Commission. Units are encouraged to reinvest their reserve funds into program development. For example, WCET invested in resources for AI research, which has been beneficial. WCET and the Behavioral Health Program are performing exceptionally well.

FINAL REMARKS

Chair Jefferson expressed his gratitude to the Commission for its support during his tenure in 2024, describing the experience as enriching and memorable. Incoming Chair Barbara Damron also gave some remarks. She expressed her gratitude to the Commission for its vote and highlighted that just over 71 years ago, in November 1951, one of the first organizing meetings for WICHE took place. The significance of that moment was pivotal in launching the mission to cultivate and develop WICHE's work in postsecondary education for the residents of the West. She reminded everyone that the Commission's strength lies in unity — working together to seize opportunities for the organization to expand and elevate WICHE's work across the region.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee of the Whole adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Barbara Damron, New Mexico

Fellow Commissioners,

What an incredible meeting we had last November in Honolulu, Hawai'i! I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the outstanding Commissioner Antwan Jefferson for his exceptional leadership as Chair in 2024. Now serving as Immediate Past Chair, he has set a high standard. I am honored to have been elected as your Chair, alongside Commissioner Ann Millner as Vice Chair.

To ensure I serve WICHE effectively in this role, I visited the WICHE offices in Boulder, Colorado, in December 2024. This visit allowed me to prepare thoroughly by engaging with President Demarée Michelau and WICHE senior staff. Over the course of two highly productive days, I gained deeper insights into our programs and administrative functions. I am deeply grateful for the time and expertise that Demi and her senior staff shared with me, as well as for the logistical support provided by Laura Ewing.

In January 2025, we held our annual Officers' Retreat, where we assessed the impact of the latest edition of *Knocking at the College Door*. As we reflected on WICHE's accomplishments in 2024, we also looked ahead to 2025, discussing federal policy strategies and reviewing our Student Access Programs — particularly the WUE strategy in response to shifting demographics and enhancements to PSEP. Additionally, we addressed WICHE retirements and succession planning, during which I informed the President and my fellow officers of my intent to conduct a compensation analysis of the WICHE President. Our discussions also encompassed the President's evaluation, goals, and the WICHE Vision statement. As we began the development of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, we carefully reviewed the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, including updates and annual dues. Robust conversations about WICHE's federal funding strategies and the evolving landscape of higher education in the West — including state legislative turnovers — further enriched our retreat.

A key responsibility as Chair is presiding over our Executive Committee meetings, which I have done in February and March 2025. Additionally, I have worked closely with Demi to plan this Commission meeting, and we are already preparing for the November 2025 Commission Meeting.

Beyond leading the total compensation analysis for the WICHE President, I also wanted to ensure that all commissioners had a voice in the President's review. To achieve this, I worked with Demi to find an existing survey that we could adapt. Fortunately, WICHE had conducted such a survey previously, so I was able to work with this survey and align it with our current needs. I extend my sincere appreciation to Immediate Past Chair Jefferson for

his significant contributions to refining the survey instrument, which you all received and (hopefully) completed!

I was also delighted to host two WICHE visits to New Mexico thus far. On January 22, 2025, Drs. Michelau, Lane, and I spoke at the Central New Mexico Community College Speaker Series on demographic and economic trends. Additionally, I collaborated with New Mexico Senate Education Committee Chairperson (and WICHE Commissioner) Bill Soules and New Mexico House Education Committee Chairperson Andres Romero to arrange for President Michelau to present before and be recognized by both committees on February 28, 2025. At my request, Commissioner Soules graciously hosted President Michelau and me as guests on the floor of the New Mexico Senate, where we were also recognized.

I also have been working consistently and steadily with President Michelau and Vice President Dennis Mohatt regarding the behavioral health needs in Guam. Last year, we initiated the placement of University of New Mexico School of Medicine Psychiatry Residents at two clinics in Guam, and we continue to explore additional residency and other healthcare provider rotations. On February 19, 2025, I met with WICHE staff and Art San Agustin from the Governor's Office in Guam via Zoom to discuss further opportunities. Additionally, I convened a Zoom meeting with behavioral health providers from the island, WICHE staff, and Project ECHO® staff to explore offering telementoring services to our colleagues in Guam.

As Chair, I have also represented WICHE at key events. By the time you read this, I will have attended and moderated a panel at the Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting of the Western Academic Leadership Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders in Reno, Nevada, April 23-25, 2025. I will also represent WICHE at the WCET Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, October 21-23, 2025.

Please know that as officers of this remarkable higher education organization, we are working tirelessly to advocate for the needs of the Pacific Islands, territories, and the broader Western region. Of all the leadership roles I have had the privilege to hold, serving as Chair during the 72nd year of both WICHE and my life (!) is an honor I embrace with the utmost dedication and humility. It is a privilege to serve you, my fellow commissioners, and the students whose futures we are shaping through this important work.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Demarée K. Michelau

Welcome to Park City, Utah! The past six months have been marked by a series of exciting accomplishments across multiple initiatives. In December 2024, WICHE released its flagship analysis, *Knocking at the College Door*, which provides projections of high school graduates. Published approximately every four years, these data inform policy decisions at both the state and institutional levels, offering a clearer picture of future student populations. The Policy Analysis and Research unit collaborated closely with the Communications team to produce the most impactful edition of *Knocking* to date. Since its release, Policy staff have presented these findings to a broad range of audiences across the country, and we look forward to producing additional enhancements in the coming months.

As we anticipate these shifting demographics, we remain committed to ensuring that our Student Access Programs meet the evolving needs of the region. To enhance awareness of the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Communications team partnered with Student Access Programs staff to develop video content aligning with research that indicates younger generations prefer video over other formats. Working with a professional videographer, the team produced a video outlining the eligibility criteria and application process for WUE. First previewed at the November 2024 Commission meeting, the video has since been featured on the WUE webpage, social media, and e-newsletters. As of March 2025, it has garnered over 2,800 views, making it the most popular video on the WICHE YouTube channel. Additionally, it was promoted through two targeted email campaigns — one reaching 500 contacts at WUE-participating schools and another reaching over 14,000 high school counselors across the West — to serve as a resource for tuition savings for students in the West.

The WICHE website remains one of our most vital communication tools for engaging with partners and stakeholders. On April 24, 2024, the Department of Justice issued a final rule updating its regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which outlines specific requirements for ensuring that web content and mobile applications are accessible to individuals with disabilities. In response, WICHE has been working closely with WCET (as well as legal counsel, the Communications team, and hopefully WebAIM at Utah State University) to develop a cost-effective strategy to achieve compliance with these new regulations.

WICHE has long partnered with the Midwest Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to provide institutions with access to competitively bid master purchasing agreements for hardware, software, and technology services. These contracts are also available to K-12 districts, government entities, and education-related nonprofits. Currently, over 1,600 institutions and organizations in the WICHE region benefit from volume-based purchasing, reducing costs, and saving time. We see an opportunity to expand these benefits further,

and are increasing staff capacity to ensure more entities in our region can take advantage of these cost-saving opportunities.

One of WICHE's most successful workforce development initiatives is supporting psychology internships in rural and remote areas of the West. The newest consortium is being developed in Guam, where the WICHE Behavioral Health Program (BHP) is working with key partners to develop an American Psychological Association (APA) accreditable psychology internship consortium to build its behavioral health workforce. The WICHE BHP assists by guiding all phases of developing a psychology internship consortium to attract and retain qualified and highly trained behavioral health professionals in the territories. WICHE was also pleased to share that in February 2025, the New Mexico Health Care Authority and the New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortia received full accreditation from the APA for their psychology internship program, which is dedicated to training, recruiting, and retaining behavioral health providers in rural and underserved New Mexico.

Over the past six months, WICHE has deepened its regional engagement, expanded strategic partnerships, and advanced key initiatives in higher education and behavioral health. Additionally, the senior leadership team has closely monitored rapid federal-level changes and their potential impact on our states, institutions, and students. In addition, WICHE is supported by a number of federal grants and contracts, and while we have not had any federal grants or contracts canceled, we continue to monitor developments.

As we gather for the Commission meeting in Park City, Utah, we have an opportunity to reflect on our collective progress and the meaningful impact we continue to make in the Western region. However, our discussions will take on new urgency as we work to not only interpret the implications of shifting federal policies for the West but ensure that our collective interests are expressed and heard. Many commissioners — as well as I — have emphasized the vital role WICHE plays as a forum where people from both red and blue states (and even sometimes purple!), often with unique and different perspectives, can come together in support of students and families across the West and Pacific Island region. In this era of rapid change and deep polarization, this role that WICHE plays is more important than ever.

As we go forward, I encourage us all to stay focused on our mission: *The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.* This commitment has been our foundation for more than seven decades — and will continue to guide us into the future.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Between November 2024 and May 2025

WICHE Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Honolulu Hawai'i – November 14, 2024

Committee Members Present

Antwan Jefferson (CO), Chair
Barbara Damron (NM), Vice Chair
Matt Freeman (ID), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK) *proxy for Pearl Brower*
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
David Lassner (HI)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)

Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Ann Millner (UT)
Mike Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Pearl Brower (AK)

Staff Present

Demarée Michelau, President

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Antwan Jefferson called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m., and quorum was confirmed.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of September 17, 2024, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Chair Jefferson asked for any corrections to the September 17, 2024, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Chair Jefferson declared the minutes approved as submitted.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Discussion of Priority Issues Pertaining to the Workplan Activities for FY 2026 for Consideration in May 2025

Chair Jefferson opened discussion by asking commissioners to think about priority issues that they would like the commissioners to consider for the FY 2026 workplan. Before engaging in that discussion, he asked President Demarée Michelau to provide an update on

the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC). President Michelau shared that there had been forward momentum made in that the exchange program is being administered by CETYS University, but that other progress has stalled. There is interest among key CONAHEC board members to shore up the organization, but obtaining key information has proven difficult. President Michelau will continue to update the Executive Committee.

Chair Jefferson then asked committee members to share their priorities, and the committee discussed their interest in WICHE playing a more active role in federal policy. Recognizing that the states within the region have diverse perspectives, potential areas of mutual interest included awareness of the impact of federal policy developments on states, institutions, and students in the West. Specifically, if the Higher Education Act is reauthorized, analyzing its impact on states.

President Michelau shared that she is working in partnership with the three other regional compacts to secure an engagement with McAllister & Quinn, a grants consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., to help WICHE develop a federal funding strategy. Commissioners recommended agencies of opportunity including the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Commerce. Commissioners also recommended working with key partners already engaged in federal policy advocacy and education, including the National Conference of State Legislatures.

ADJOURNMENT

The Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 8:15 a.m.

WICHE Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Videoconference – February 6, 2025

Committee Members Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Antwan Jefferson (CO), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
David Lassner (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Clayton Christian (MT)
Mike Meotti (WA)

Other Commissioners Present

Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Terrence George (HI)

Guests Present

Carley Blim, Student at University of
Colorado, Boulder

Staff Present

Ray Burgman Gallegos, Vice President,
Programs and Services
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the
President and the Commission
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy
Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Craig Milburn, Chief Financial Officer

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m., and quorum was confirmed.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of November 14, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Damron asked for any corrections to the November 14, 2024, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of New Mexico's Renewal Application to Continue Participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Hall-Martin presented the details of New Mexico's SARA renewal application. South Dakota has 25 total participating institutions, including 16 public, five private not-for-profit, three for-profit, and one tribal college. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2023), New Mexico's SARA institutions enrolled 4,424 distance education students through SARA, and 11,828 students located in New Mexico were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions based on other SARA member states/territories. The state recently made changes to its rules related to transcripts and records retention, making New Mexico Higher Education (NMHED) the custodian of the record. The state reported two complaints during the renewal period. Both were resolved in favor of the institution. No institutions were placed on provisional status, denied renewal, no institutional closures, and no institutions underwent a change of ownership. She reported two institutions are on Heightened Cash Monitoring due to late audits. WICHE SARA (W-SARA) staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) have found New Mexico to be in compliance with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Chair Damron MOVED TO APPROVE the approval of New Mexico's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Fred Baldwin SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed; there was one abstention from Chair Damron.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of Wyoming's Renewal Application to Continue Participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Hall-Martin presented the details of Wyoming's SARA renewal application. Wyoming has eight total participating institutions; all are public institutions. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2023), Wyoming's SARA institutions enrolled 738 distance education students through SARA, and 5,133 students located in Wyoming were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions based on other SARA member states/territories. The state reported no complaints during the renewal period. No institutions were placed on provisional status, denied renewal, no institutional closures, and no institutions underwent a change of ownership. She reported one institution is on Heightened Cash Monitoring as it recovers from a cyberattack. WICHE SARA staff and the W-SARA (RSC) have found Wyoming to be in compliance with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Baldwin MOVED TO APPROVE the approval of Wyoming's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed; there was one abstention from Commissioner Baldwin.

ACTION ITEM

Approval for WICHE to Serve as a Fiscal Agent for the Colorado Postsecondary Pathway's Initiative

President Demarée Michelau presented the action item that seeks Commission approval for WICHE to serve as the fiscal agent for the Colorado Postsecondary Pathways initiative. She reminded the committee that the Commission approves externally funded initiatives over \$50,000; the initiative is \$60,000. The duration of the initiative's work is four months. The Colorado consultant, Alison Griffin is the lead in the project; the initiative aims to link K-12 and postsecondary education. Serving in the fiscal agent role would have minimal staff impact. WICHE would charge a 10% indirect fee for its service to the initiative, and that would yield earnings of \$6,000. The proposal for WICHE to serve as the fiscal agent aligns with WICHE's role to support state initiatives.

Commissioner Ann Millner MOVED TO APPROVE that WICHE serves as the fiscal agent for the Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative. Commissioner Antwan Jefferson SECONDED the motion.

During the discussion, Chair Damron noted that at some point, the Commission should consider increasing the \$50,000 threshold requiring its approval. There was a request for a further description of the work, the fiscal agent role, and whether there would be any liability risk with the project. President Michelau said no staff would be hired, the initiative reporting would be monitored for compliance to ensure that charitable guidelines are met so that the funding is spent responsibly. The validity of the initiative work would be documented and submitted to the funding source. Additionally, it was requested that the Commission receive a report of the work and outcomes of the initiative at its completion. President Michelau committed to requesting a report at the conclusion of the work to be shared with the Commission. She will report back on the report request at the March 2025 Executive Committee meeting.

The motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

A Refresh of WICHE's Vision

President Michelau gave an overview on a proposed refresh of WICHE's vision statement with the understanding that the Executive Committee will see a proposed new statement presented during the March 13, 2025, Executive Committee meeting.

President Michelau gave several reasons to consider updating and refreshing WICHE's vision statement.

1. The current vision statement overlaps with the mission statement instead of being complementary.
2. The current vision statement is verbose.
3. The current vision statement fails to convey WICHE's envisioned future.
4. The term "equitable" in the current vision statement is potentially contentious.

She referenced the meeting packet that contained three possible options for a refreshed statement.

President Michelau recommended the next steps for a revised statement for Executive Committee to include:

1. Determine if a refresh of the vision statement is needed.
2. If so, compose a statement that is complementary to the mission statement, is concise, and is in alignment with the envisioned future of WICHE.

During the discussion, the following recommendations were made about crafting a vision statement refresh:

- ▶ Specifically mention the Pacific Island members.
- ▶ In two of the options presented (Options A and B), the language "all residents of the West will access" — is presumptuous to say "all residents". Throughout the discussion, Options A and B were not favored for consideration.
- ▶ It was noted that Option C was preferred by several committee members. The option which state "We believe higher education is a catalyst to building a stronger West"— is brief and positive and could also include a reference to access and quality. There was additional support for working with Option C to further make the statement clear and succinct and ensure the language used has relevance over time.
- ▶ A suggestion was made when using the word "access" in the statement: "Everyone should have access" is a stronger statement than "Everyone will have access". Additionally, "those who access shall succeed" would be a robust statement, as well.
- ▶ Incorporate the concept of non-partisan shared values across the WICHE region.
- ▶ The vision statement should be aspirational and not a restatement of WICHE's mission and values.
- ▶ Consider incorporating a commitment to leading the West in promoting student access and success in higher education.
- ▶ Consider removing the current vision statement from the WICHE website until the refresh of the statement is approved.

Committee members were encouraged to contact President Michelau or Laura Ewing with additional suggestions. A solid and refreshed vision statement will be proposed at the March 13, 2025, Executive Committee meeting. Once the committee approves the language, it will be presented to the Commission for a vote at the May 2025 meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Discussion of the May 2025 Commission Meeting Update and Agenda

President Michelau provided information about the agenda goals and objectives for the upcoming May 2025 Commission Meeting.

Roundtable Topics

She specifically requested feedback and discussion about the proposed roundtable discussion topics with the plan to have two rounds of roundtable discussions. The proposed roundtable discussions include five topics that she wants to narrow down to four topics:

- ▶ State Policy Levers and Quality Assurance for Nondegree Credentials
- ▶ Cost and Price of Distance Education
- ▶ Effective Partnerships and Collaborations in Higher Education
- ▶ Exploring Financial Aid Models in Increase Postsecondary Affordability
- ▶ Extension Campuses: An Underutilized Resource in Rural Communities (Agriculture Extension Campuses)

During discussion, several comments were made about the need for roundtable topics to have flexibility in order to stay relevant as critical matters could arise and the higher education landscape could change significantly by May 2025, with the possible discontinuation of federal programs and funding that affect states and territories. For example, the agriculture extension campuses funded by land grants have already affected students and opportunities for CNMI students. Commissioner Frankie Elipitico shared that CNMI students in programs that have funding for Land Grant institutions, are on hold and are being affected by the indefinite closure of institution portals that they need to access to continue their studies in the Continental U.S.

Committee members agreed to keep all of the current topics and decide closer to the May meeting which topics should remain on the agenda for the roundtable discussions to ensure relevancy.

Monday, May 5, Dinner Activity

President Michelau explained that an activity such as the Olympic Park museum in addition to a catered group dinner is proving to be an expensive endeavor. She asked for feedback on the options 1) an activity (such as a museum in downtown Park City) in addition to a group dinner, 2) only a group dinner or 3) “dinner on your own.” The feedback received was the value of having time to interact with one another in a casual atmosphere over a meal, and to move forward with a group dinner-only for the evening of May 5, as the preferred, budget-conscious option.

Transportation Options for the Meeting

President Michelau said she would contact the Officers and review airport transportation options for feedback.

INFORMATION ITEM

Update on WICHE's Budget

President Michelau reported that the FY 2025 budget was satisfactory with no concerns. The audit committee will meet with the auditor in February or March to determine if new pronouncements need immediate attention. Staff are working on FY 2026 budgets; she will meet with the leadership team to assess if budgeting is on track and in good shape heading into May 2025.

INFORMATION ITEM

Update on the Distribution of Knocking at the College Door report

President Michelau gave a brief overview of the launch press results of the *Knocking of the College Door* report. To save time for the remaining meeting agenda items, she mentioned that the two-page information overview in the February 2025 meeting materials was sufficient and did not require further explanation. She said that the *Knocking* report's penetration was superb and praised the Policy and Communications staff for their excellent work on the project.

INFORMATION ITEM

Update on Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) Institutional Eligibility

President Michelau reported that staff are currently working to improve the institutional eligibility criteria for PSEP institutions. Since the PSEP program began, institutional programming in the PSEP field has evolved significantly, necessitating clearer guidelines. Currently, the requirement for full accreditation is vague for the PSEP fields. Programs must be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Other topics for discussion include whether PSEP institutions must be located solely in the West. There are several legacy PSEP programs that reside outside of the WICHE region. There will also be discussions about determining if there is a need for regular renewal agreements with participating PSEP, Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), and Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) institutions. Issues will be further explored at the March Executive Committee meeting, the May Programs and Services Committee, and the Commission Meeting. The goal is to ensure all of the programs' rules and requirements are clear, up-to-date, and enforced.

INFORMATION ITEM

Update on the Consortium for North America Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC)

President Michelau said no progress was made since her last report in September 2024 and despite efforts, the necessary information and cooperation were not obtained to transition the CONAHEC organization into something sustainable. She said that Sanchez University has taken over the exchange program, and students are moving through it successfully; CONAHEC has no role in it. At the CONAHEC board meeting later in the month of February, it is expected to result in a vote to dissolve the organization. She reported that she is covered by Director's Insurance per the Executive Committee's prompting in September 2024. One final update will be provided to the Executive Committee once the dissolution of CONAHEC is complete.

CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS THE 2025 EVALUATION OF THE WICHE PRESIDENT

The meeting went to a closed session at 4:04 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of a Super Catch-Up Provision Under the SECURE 2.0 Act

Summary

Congress passed the SECURE 2.0 Act in 2022, which provides a slate of changes designed to strengthen the nation's retirement system. Among the many changes is a provision related to higher catch-up contributions. The Commission approves all staff benefits, and staff are requesting approval of a change to the TIAA retirement benefit that allows eligible WICHE staff to take advantage of the Super Catch-Up provision.

Background

In 2022, Congress passed the SECURE 2.0 Act, which, among other things, changed provisions related to higher catch-up contributions. A catch-up contribution is an additional contribution permitted to be made to a retirement plan by employees aged 50 or older over the normal contribution limit. In November 2023, the Commission approved a change to the TIAA retirement benefit for staff that complies with the SECURE 2.0 Act and requires that employees whose prior-year wages from WICHE exceeded \$145,000 make any catch-up contributions as Roth (post-tax). WICHE has implemented this change.

Currently, employees over the age of 50 may contribute an additional catch-up amount of up to \$7,500 for 2025. The Super Catch-Up provision of the SECURE 2.0 Act, effective in 2025, enhances retirement savings opportunities for individuals aged 60 to 63.

This provision increases catch-up contribution limits for 403(b) plans, allowing eligible participants to contribute the greater of \$10,000 or 150% of the standard age 50+ catch-up limit. For 2025, this means individuals in this age range can contribute up to \$11,250 in catch-up contributions, compared to the standard \$7,500 for those 50 and older. Once participants turn 64, they return to the standard age 50+ catch-up limits.

Implementation is optional for employers and there is no cost, but it can help older staff bolster their retirement savings and potentially reduce taxable income. The Commission approves all benefits, and to provide an opportunity for staff to take advantage of the Super Catch-Up provision, staff are requesting approval by the Commission to offer this benefit as part of WICHE's 403(b) plan.

Approval Requested

Approval to update WICHE's 403(b) plan to allow eligible WICHE staff to take advantage of the Super Catch-Up.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2026 Salary and Benefit Recommendations

Summary

All standard salary increases at WICHE are provided based on performance; WICHE does not provide across-the-board raises, step increases, or cost-of-living adjustments. President Demarée Michelau recommends a 3% FY 2026 performance-based increase to staff who have performed at exceptionally high levels over the past year.

Background

All standard salary increases at WICHE are provided on the basis of performance; WICHE does not provide across-the-board raises, step increases, or cost-of-living adjustments. Occasional exceptions to the “merit-only” policy are made if a staff member is promoted; salary surveys indicate a position is out of alignment with other positions within the organization; or, within reason, to retain a valued individual who has been offered a more lucrative position elsewhere.

Salary

As reflected in the proposed budget agenda item, President Demarée Michelau is pleased to recommend a 3% FY 2026 performance-based increase to staff who have performed at exceptionally high levels over the past year.

Benefits

The proposed budget also includes a 3% increase in benefits for staff, all of which are related either to benefits directly associated with salary (i.e., WICHE contributions to the retirement plan, life insurance, workers’ compensation, unemployment compensation, and Social Security) or to projected changes in the costs of general benefits (i.e., health/dental insurance premiums, Social Security, and workers’ compensation). Major benefits to staff include the following:

- ▶ Participation in WICHE’s retirement plan, which provides two-to-one matching for contributions up to a combined 15% (5% from staff, 10% from WICHE) in TIAA-managed accounts.
- ▶ Health and dental insurance, which includes participation in a health savings account (HSA) plan through insurer UnitedHealthcare. WICHE provides a set portion of the health and dental insurance payment, with the staff members paying the remainder, which varies depending upon the plan they select. WICHE also contributes an amount annually to each staff member’s health savings account. An optional flexible spending account (FSA) is available for eligible medical expenses and dependent care.

- ▶ Generous vacation, sick leave, paid holidays, and personal business leave.
- ▶ Up to 12 weeks of paid family leave at approximately 75% (to a max of \$1,500 weekly) of the employee's base pay for disability and family, bonding, and military leaves.
- ▶ Life, accidental death, and long-term disability insurance.
- ▶ Voluntary vision plan and voluntary supplemental life insurance.
- ▶ Conversion of up to 900 hours of accumulated sick leave for most individuals retiring from WICHE (requires at least five years of service and combined age and tenure at WICHE of at least 70 years).

The full amount of a 3% average salary increase is approximately \$330,066. The General Fund portion is \$80,207, and the Non-General Fund portion is \$249,859. These proposed increases are reflected in the proposed FY 2026 budget.

Action Requested

Approval of a 3% average salary increase for WICHE staff for FY 2026.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2026 Annual Operating Budget – General Fund and Non-General Fund Budgets

Background

The General Fund budget proposed by staff for FY 2026 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026) is for a suite of WICHE programs that provide services to members and support a wide range of highly significant projects. General Fund revenue not only supports basic program activities, such as the work of the Student Access Programs, the Policy Analysis and Research unit, Communications, the President's Office, and the Commission, but it also provides an organizational structure that allows WICHE to become involved in other regional resource-sharing and collaborative activities in postsecondary education, many of which are supported by non-state dollars. The proposed FY 2026 budget shows a slight budget surplus and reflects annual dues at \$174,500 (approved in May 2024). The four budgets, following the General Fund budget, reflect the projected Non-General fund budgets for each of the four primary programmatic units within WICHE. Non-General Fund activities include all projects supported by external sources, such as fees, grants, memberships, or contracts. Of these four Non-General Fund budgets, the WCET and Behavioral Health Program units are self-funded.

Action Requested

Approval of the FY 2026 Annual Operating Budget

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

General Fund Budget

Feb 2025

Comparing FY 2025 with FY 2026

Revenue and Expenditures

					FY 2025		FY 2026				
					FY 2025 Budget	FY 2025 Projection	Projection Higher or (Lower) than Budget	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2026 Budget Higher or (Lower) than FY 2025 Budget	FY 2026 Budget Higher or (Lower) than FY 2025 Projection	
Revenue											
4102	Indirect Cost Reimbursements		\$1,200,000	\$1,755,287	\$555,287	46.3%	\$1,246,000	\$46,000	3.8%	(\$509,287)	-29.0%
4104	Indirect Cost Sharing-WICHE		(\$600,000)	(\$713,904)	(\$113,904)	19.0%	(\$618,000)	(\$18,000)	3.0%	\$95,904	-13.4%
4201	Members/Fees States/Institutions	a	\$2,704,000	\$2,704,000	\$0	0.0%	\$2,792,000	\$88,000	3.3%	\$88,000	3.3%
4300	Interest		\$730,000	\$1,049,983	\$319,983	43.8%	\$770,000	\$40,000	5.5%	(\$279,983)	-26.7%
4560	SHEPC excess rents		\$36,000	\$12,000	(\$24,000)	-66.7%	\$20,000	(\$16,000)	-44.4%	\$8,000	66.7%
4600	Other Income		\$30,000	\$20,981	(\$9,019)	-30.1%	\$24,000	(\$6,000)	-20.0%	\$3,019	14.4%
4850	Credit Card Transaction Rev. / Units		\$30	\$10	(\$20)	-66.7%	\$24	(\$6)	-20.0%	\$14	140.0%
Total Revenue			\$4,100,030	\$4,828,357	\$728,327	17.8%	\$4,234,024	\$133,994	3.3%	(\$594,333)	-12.3%
Expenditures											
0102	Student Access Program		\$469,658	\$456,014	(\$13,644)	-2.9%	\$527,512	\$57,854	12.3%	\$71,498	15.7%
0104	Policy Analysis & Research		\$505,387	\$503,562	(\$1,825)	-0.4%	\$520,549	\$15,162	3.0%	\$16,987	3.4%
0105	Communications & Public Affairs		\$483,139	\$423,117	(\$60,022)	-12.4%	\$465,331	(\$17,808)	-3.7%	\$42,214	10.0%
0106	Programs & Services		\$129,956	\$120,572	(\$9,384)	-7.2%	\$131,735	\$1,779	1.4%	\$11,163	9.3%
0110	President's Office		\$679,918	\$640,273	(\$39,644)	-5.8%	\$724,660	\$44,743	6.6%	\$84,387	13.2%
0111	Commission Expense		\$420,703	\$384,408	(\$36,295)	-8.6%	\$415,229	(\$5,474)	-1.3%	\$30,820	8.0%
0112	Administrative Services		\$960,176	\$951,934	(\$8,243)	-0.9%	\$987,391	\$27,215	2.8%	\$35,458	3.7%
0115	Miscellaneous Gen. Fund		\$344,321	\$409,076	\$64,755	18.8%	\$352,199	\$7,879	2.3%	(\$56,877)	-13.9%
0116	Program Development		\$25,000	\$30,000	\$5,000	20.0%	\$25,750	\$750	3.0%	(\$4,250)	-14.2%
0131	LAC Meeting		\$81,137	\$74,095	(\$7,042)	-8.7%	\$83,571	\$2,434	3.0%	\$9,476	12.8%
Total Expenditures			\$4,099,395	\$3,993,052	(\$106,343)	-2.6%	\$4,233,927	\$134,532	3.3%	\$240,876	6.0%
Surplus (Deficit) for the Fiscal Year			\$635	\$835,305	\$834,670		\$97	(\$538)			
Reserves at Beginning of Year											
1	Minimum Reserve	b	\$491,927	\$491,927	\$0	0.0%	\$508,071	\$16,144	3.3%	\$16,144	3.3%
2	Reserve for Unexpected Shortfall	c	\$409,939	\$409,939	\$0	0.0%	\$423,393	\$13,454	3.3%	\$13,454	3.3%
3	Reserve to Operate Accounts Receivable	d	\$850,000	\$850,000	\$0	0.0%	\$850,000	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
4	President's Strategic Objectives	e	\$150,000	\$0	(\$150,000)	-100.0%	\$150,000	\$0	0.0%	\$150,000	
5	Reserve Available for Dedication		\$3,581,855	\$3,731,855	\$150,000	4.2%	\$4,412,255	\$830,400	23.2%	\$680,400	18.2%
Reserves at Beginning of Year			\$5,483,721	\$5,483,721	\$0	-95.8%	\$6,343,719	\$859,998		\$859,998	
Reserves Dedicated during Year											
6	FY24 Unit Excess Reserves	f	\$0	(\$24,693)	\$24,693		\$0	\$0		(\$24,693)	100.0%
7	Deficit (Surplus) for the Fiscal Year above		(\$635)	(\$835,305)	\$834,670		(\$97)	(\$538)	84.8%	(\$835,208)	100.0%
Reserves Dedicated during the Fiscal Year			(\$635)	(\$859,998)	\$859,363		(\$97)	(\$538)		(\$859,901)	
Reserves at End of Year			\$5,484,356	\$6,343,719	\$859,363		\$6,343,815	\$859,459			

- (a) At the May 2024 meeting the Commission set the FY 2026 dues to \$174,500 and the FY 2027 dues to \$180,000. (FY 2025 Dues were \$169,000)
- (b) Minimum reserve set by the commission is 12% of Budgeted Expenses. Set May 2000.
- (c) Unexpected Shortfall reserve set by commission at 10% of Budgeted Expenses. To be used only if anticipated funding does not materialize. Set May 2007.
- (d) Reserve amount needed float accounts receivable until payments are received for contracted work. Approved by Executive Committee February 2016.
- (e) Authorization given to the President to dedicate up to \$150K each year for the President's Strategic Objectives.
- (f) Excess Behavioral Mental Health reserves from FY 2024 transferred to WICHE in FY 2025.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Two Year Budget for FY 2025 and FY 2026

PRS

Feb 2025

Programs and Services

Object / Description	FY 2025		FY 2025	FY 2026	Variance	%
	Total		Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25		01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25		
	Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25		30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26		
11-25 Contracts & Joint Procurement	\$833,958		\$625,000	\$909,800	\$284,800	45.6%
12-05 Fidelity - Technology Capacity	\$354,101		\$244,578	\$118,767	(\$125,811)	-51.4%
12-49 Anticipated Project 1	\$0			\$500,000	\$500,000	
15-01 Western Academic Leader Forum	\$126,726		\$128,322	\$129,040	\$718	0.6%
15-20 Western Alliance Comm Colleges	\$126,941		\$127,826	\$116,948	(\$10,878)	-8.5%
15-25 Mellon - WICHE Academy	\$1,030,652		\$902,232	\$346,553	(\$555,679)	-61.6%
15-27 Joint Compact-Mellon	\$50,000		\$50,000		(\$50,000)	-100.0%
15-30 Forum Academy	\$62,982		\$69,780	\$77,059	\$7,279	10.4%
52-36 No Holding Back	\$6,284				\$0	
Revenue	\$2,591,644		\$2,147,738	\$2,198,167	\$50,429	2.3%
Total Revenue	\$2,591,644		\$2,147,738	\$2,198,167	\$50,429	2.3%
11-25 Contracts & Joint Procurement	\$417,854		\$346,388	\$294,317	(\$52,071)	-15.0%
12-05 Fidelity - Technology Capacity	\$254,153		\$157,392	\$73,610	(\$83,782)	-53.2%
12-49 Anticipated Project 1	\$35,971			\$499,685	\$499,685	
15-01 Western Academic Leader Forum	\$120,523		\$127,351	\$113,703	(\$13,648)	-10.7%
15-20 Western Alliance Comm Colleges	\$114,817		\$126,235	\$113,188	(\$13,047)	-10.3%
15-25 Mellon - WICHE Academy	\$412,972		\$786,947	\$276,137	(\$510,810)	-64.9%
15-27 Joint Compact-Mellon	\$20,412		\$20,412	\$41,336	\$20,923	102.5%
15-30 Forum Academy	\$53,168		\$61,224	\$73,505	\$12,281	20.1%
52-36 No Holding Back	\$4,863				\$0	
Expense	\$1,434,733		\$1,625,949	\$1,485,480	(\$140,469)	-8.6%
Total Expense	\$1,434,733		\$1,625,949	\$1,485,480	(\$140,469)	-8.6%
Revenue over (under) Expense	\$1,156,912		\$521,789	\$712,686	\$190,898	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Two Year Budget for FY 2025 and FY 2026

PAR
Feb 2025

Policy Analysis & Research

<i>Object / Description</i>	FY 2025		FY 2025	FY 2026	<i>Variance</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Total</i>		<i>Budget</i>	<i>Budget</i>		
	Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25		01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25		
	Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25		30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26		
17-05 W-SARA	\$542,829		\$542,829	\$559,929	\$17,100	3.2%
50-01 Policy Core Account	\$1,000				\$0	
50-18 HSG Methods Review & Expansi	\$115,000				\$0	
50-36 South Dakota - NCHEMS Consult	\$6,815		\$16,000		(\$16,000)	-100.0%
52-16 BH Policy Roundtable	\$7,958				\$0	
52-25 Alternative Credentials	\$64,114		\$66,685		(\$66,685)	-100.0%
53-02 Colorado Workforce Planning G	\$56,250		\$56,250	\$18,750	(\$37,500)	-66.7%
53-14 Data for the American Dream	\$34,768		\$34,767		(\$34,767)	-100.0%
53-16 Wyoming Innovation Partnership	\$99,422		\$120,000	\$132,833	\$12,833	10.7%
53-35 OER - Hewlett (Policy Unit)	\$284				\$0	
53-36 OER Hewlett Phase II (Policy)	\$54,442		\$33,298		(\$33,298)	-100.0%
53-38 OER Hewlett Phase III (Policy)	\$158,368		\$291,921	\$312,632	\$20,711	7.1%
53-53 MDRC Rural Nursing	\$41,610		\$41,610	\$18,033	(\$23,577)	-56.7%
54-04 ECMC Completion Landscape	\$65,265		\$65,265	\$136,178	\$70,913	108.7%
55-01 Anticipated New Funding	\$0		\$50,000		(\$50,000)	-100.0%
Revenue	\$1,248,126		\$1,318,624	\$1,178,355	(\$140,270)	-10.6%
Total Revenue	\$1,248,126		\$1,318,624	\$1,178,355	(\$140,270)	-10.6%
17-05 W-SARA	\$511,160		\$542,829	\$559,929	\$17,100	3.2%
50-18 HSG Methods Review & Expansi	\$169,333		\$67,850		(\$67,850)	-100.0%
50-36 South Dakota - NCHEMS Consult	\$1,506		\$15,663		(\$15,663)	-100.0%
52-25 Alternative Credentials	\$62,088		\$66,685		(\$66,685)	-100.0%
53-02 Colorado Workforce Planning G	\$56,250		\$56,250	\$18,750	(\$37,500)	-66.7%
53-14 Data for the American Dream	\$0		\$34,700		(\$34,700)	-100.0%
53-16 Wyoming Innovation Partnership	\$118,087		\$119,999	\$132,833	\$12,834	10.7%
53-35 OER - Hewlett (Policy Unit)	\$3				\$0	
53-36 OER Hewlett Phase II (Policy)	\$59,111		\$28,011		(\$28,011)	-100.0%
53-37 OER Org Effectiveness	(\$12,452)				\$0	
53-38 OER Hewlett Phase III (Policy)	\$158,368		\$151,323	\$311,766	\$160,442	106.0%
53-53 MDRC Rural Nursing	\$21,367		\$41,611	\$18,032	(\$23,579)	-56.7%
54-04 ECMC Completion Landscape	\$64,909		\$92,482	\$136,176	\$43,695	47.2%
55-01 Anticipated New Funding	\$0		\$50,000		(\$50,000)	-100.0%
Expense	\$1,209,730		\$1,267,403	\$1,177,486	(\$89,917)	-7.1%
Total Expense	\$1,209,730		\$1,267,403	\$1,177,486	(\$89,917)	-7.1%
Revenue over (under) Expense	\$38,396		\$51,221	\$869	(\$50,353)	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Two Year Budget for FY 2025 and FY 2026

MHH

Feb 2025

Mental Health

Object / Description	FY 2025		FY 2025	FY 2026	Variance	%
	Total		Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25		01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25		
	Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25		30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26		
8 months elapsed						
4 months remaining						
					FY 2026 budget higher or (lower) than FY 25	
40-01 MH - State Affiliation Fees	\$656,256		\$589,000	\$603,037	\$14,037	2.4%
40-10 MH - Decision Support Group	\$100,500		\$54,000	\$60,000	\$6,000	11.1%
40-21 MH - Suicide Prevention Toolkits	\$150				\$0	
41-01 MH - Consulting Main Account	\$10,500		\$0		\$0	#Num!
41-39 AZ MMIC Training 2017	\$100,656		\$70,000		(\$70,000)	-100.0%
41-45 SD DBH Annual Fidelity Review	\$49,900		\$49,900	\$49,900	\$0	0.0%
41-49 Maricopa Cty Fidelity Reviews	\$473,684		\$475,567	\$473,684	(\$1,883)	-0.4%
41-54 University of Wisconsin TA	\$52,659		\$52,659	\$8,777	(\$43,882)	-83.3%
41-80 VA Rural Suici FY 15, 16 and 17	\$2,545,850		\$1,818,019	\$1,583,273	(\$234,746)	-12.9%
41-89 AZ Statewide Fidelity Reviews	\$650,471		\$668,778	\$650,471	(\$18,307)	-2.7%
42-42 WA HCA Digital Behavioral Hlth	\$320,600		\$320,600		(\$320,600)	-100.0%
42-51 AK - BHA Assessment	\$145,526		\$156,803	\$143,626	(\$13,177)	-8.4%
42-94 CO BHA - Rural BH Initiative	\$389,727		\$389,727	\$1,169,190	\$779,463	200.0%
43-54 Montana PACT Fidelity Reviews	\$384,575		\$221,400	\$209,850	(\$11,550)	-5.2%
43-63 AAAP - SOR/TOR TA	\$36,349		\$36,349	\$48,465	\$12,116	33.3%
43-70 SAMHSA MHTTC Grant	\$96,232		\$72,951		(\$72,951)	-100.0%
43-73 SAMHSA MHTTC Supplemental	\$43,363		\$41,250		(\$41,250)	-100.0%
43-74 HRSA Rural Opioid Response TA	\$891,157		\$891,157	\$153,711	(\$737,446)	-82.8%
43-76 ROTA-Regional Center	\$631,998		\$236,984	\$259,005	\$22,021	9.3%
43-77 NASMHPD Technical Assistance	\$28,000		\$20,000		(\$20,000)	-100.0%
43-78 CO BHA Crisis Professional T/A	\$200,622		\$250,000	\$195,966	(\$54,034)	-21.6%
44-48 AK API Regulatory Compliance	\$177,100		\$197,100	\$197,100	\$0	0.0%
45-01 MH - Anticipated New Funding	\$0		\$500,000	\$950,000	\$450,000	90.0%
45-40 AK Trust PIC FY17/18	\$22,500		\$22,500	\$22,500	\$0	0.0%
45-43 MH - AK PIC Interns FY11-FY19	\$130,000		\$130,000	\$130,000	\$0	0.0%
46-01 HI - DOH	\$42,550		\$29,325	\$50,600	\$21,275	72.5%
46-02 HI - DPS	\$0		\$25,300		(\$25,300)	-100.0%
46-03 HI - DOE	\$25,300		\$25,300	\$25,300	\$0	0.0%
46-06 HI - DOE Interns	\$843,148		\$841,308	\$754,919	(\$86,389)	-10.3%
46-07 HI - DPS Interns	\$4,520		\$186,560		(\$186,560)	-100.0%
46-08 HI - DOH Interns	\$1,253,459		\$506,706	\$795,643	\$288,937	57.0%
46-15 HI DOE Recruitment	\$99,000		\$83,000	\$117,000	\$34,000	41.0%
46-17 HI Recruitment of Clinical Psy	\$28,116		\$77,500	\$38,212	(\$39,288)	-50.7%
46-18 School Based BH Professionals	\$181,720		\$137,500	\$68,906	(\$68,594)	-49.9%
46-20 U of TX MH Dissemination Ctr	\$37,463		\$37,463	\$49,950	\$12,487	33.3%
46-24 NM Psychology Internship	\$285,328		\$173,720	\$352,287	\$178,567	102.8%
46-27 SD Psychology Internship	\$30,000		\$31,250	\$30,000	(\$1,250)	-4.0%
46-31 OR Psych Internship FY 15-18	\$3,000		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	0.0%
46-32 Idaho Psychology Internship	\$135,500		\$129,005	\$125,000	(\$4,005)	-3.1%
46-33 Sanford Psychology Internship	\$36,000		\$36,000	\$65,000	\$29,000	80.6%
46-36 UT Psychology Internship	\$82,400		\$10,400	\$31,001	\$20,601	198.1%
46-40 NV Intern Stipends FY 15-16-17	\$211,810		\$199,065	\$199,065	\$0	0.0%
46-41 Guam Psychology Internship	\$226,547		\$62,745	\$104,083	\$41,338	65.9%
46-51 NV Psych Internship FY 15	\$50,651		\$40,036	\$40,036	\$0	0.0%
Revenue	\$11,714,887		\$9,899,927	\$9,758,557	(\$141,370)	-1.4%
Total Revenue	\$11,714,887		\$9,899,927	\$9,758,557	(\$141,370)	-1.4%

8 months elapsed 4 months remaining		FY 2025	FY 2025	FY 2026		
		Total	Budget	Budget	Variance	%
		Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25	01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25	FY 2026 budget higher	
Object / Description		Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25	30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26	or (lower) than FY 25	
40-01	MH - State Affiliation Fees	\$1,223,016	\$980,000	\$1,100,000	\$120,000	12.2%
40-10	MH - Decision Support Group	\$60,488	\$46,000	\$46,000	\$0	0.0%
41-01	MH - Consulting Main Account	\$5,682			\$0	
41-39	AZ MMIC Training 2017	\$102,146	\$69,370		(\$69,370)	-100.0%
41-45	SD DBH Annual Fidelity Review	\$33,503	\$44,910	\$44,910	\$0	0.0%
41-49	Maricopa Cty Fidelity Reviews	\$460,108	\$425,632	\$425,632	\$0	0.0%
41-54	University of Wisconsin TA	\$48,358	\$47,250		(\$47,250)	-100.0%
41-80	VA Rural Suici FY 15, 16 and 17	\$2,267,498	\$1,636,217	\$1,345,782	(\$290,435)	-17.8%
41-89	AZ Statewide Fidelity Reviews	\$629,685	\$601,900	\$601,900	\$0	0.0%
42-41	WA Veterans Affairs Training	\$2,955			\$0	
42-42	WA HCA Digital Behavioral Hlth	\$273,675	\$276,836		(\$276,836)	-100.0%
42-51	AK - BHA Assessment	\$142,018	\$143,475	\$143,475	\$0	0.0%
42-94	CO BHA - Rural BH Initiative	\$127,470	\$129,752	\$1,052,271	\$922,519	711.0%
43-54	Montana PACT Fidelity Reviews	\$96,451	\$193,725	\$183,619	(\$10,106)	-5.2%
43-63	AAAP - SOR/TOR TA	\$36,349	\$36,349	\$43,619	\$7,270	20.0%
43-70	SAMHSA MHTTC Grant	\$47,987	\$69,303		(\$69,303)	-100.0%
43-73	SAMHSA MHTTC Supplemental	\$23,877	\$39,188		(\$39,188)	-100.0%
43-74	HRSA Rural Opioid Response TA	\$891,157	\$797,586	\$130,654	(\$666,932)	-83.6%
43-76	ROTA-Regional Center	\$631,647	\$233,429	\$255,120	\$21,691	9.3%
43-77	NASMHPD Technical Assistance	\$13,012	\$16,500		(\$16,500)	-100.0%
43-78	CO BHA Crisis Professional T/A	\$225,321	\$223,750	\$175,390	(\$48,360)	-21.6%
44-48	AK API Regulatory Compliance	\$126,680	\$179,361	\$161,161	(\$18,200)	-10.1%
45-01	MH - Anticipated New Funding	\$0	\$435,000	\$902,500	\$467,500	107.5%
45-40	AK Trust PIC FY17/18	\$18,507	\$20,700	\$20,700	\$0	0.0%
45-43	MH - AK PIC Interns FY11-FY19	\$111,603	\$115,050	\$115,050	\$0	0.0%
45-52	CO BHA Technical Assistance	\$4,625			\$0	
46-01	HI - DOH	\$24,525	\$21,994	\$37,950	\$15,956	72.5%
46-02	HI - DPS	\$1,464	\$18,975		(\$18,975)	-100.0%
46-03	HI - DOE	\$26,102	\$18,975	\$18,975	\$0	0.0%
46-06	HI - DOE Interns	\$841,270	\$778,210	\$698,300	(\$79,910)	-10.3%
46-07	HI - DPS Interns	\$1,113	\$166,971		(\$166,971)	-100.0%
46-08	HI - DOH Interns	\$1,174,049	\$453,502	\$712,100	\$258,598	57.0%
46-15	HI DOE Recruitment	\$95,310	\$80,925	\$114,075	\$33,150	41.0%
46-17	HI Recruitment of Clinical Psy	\$24,161	\$65,875	\$34,489	(\$31,386)	-47.6%
46-18	School Based BH Professionals	\$147,021	\$116,875	\$60,457	(\$56,418)	-48.3%
46-20	U of TX MH Dissemination Ctr	\$33,716	\$33,716	\$44,955	\$11,239	33.3%
46-24	NM Psychology Internship	\$283,666	\$165,000	\$345,241	\$180,241	109.2%
46-27	SD Psychology Internship	\$29,232	\$29,688	\$28,500	(\$1,188)	-4.0%
46-31	OR Psych Internship FY 15-18	\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$0	0.0%
46-32	Idaho Psychology Internship	\$135,321	\$119,975	\$119,975	\$0	0.0%
46-33	Sanford Psychology Internship	\$70,579	\$36,000	\$61,750	\$25,750	71.5%
46-36	UT Psychology Internship	\$33,919	\$10,400	\$29,451	\$19,051	183.2%
46-40	NV Intern Stipends FY 15-16-17	\$178,579	\$188,116	\$188,116	\$0	0.0%
46-41	Guam Psychology Internship	\$215,257	\$61,176	\$101,481	\$40,305	65.9%
46-51	NV Psych Internship FY 15	\$39,995	\$39,035	\$39,035	\$0	0.0%
Expense		\$10,959,098	\$9,168,191	\$9,384,133	\$215,942	2.4%
Total Expense		\$10,959,098	\$9,168,191	\$9,384,133	\$215,942	2.4%
Revenue over (under) Expense		\$755,789	\$731,736	\$374,424	(\$357,312)	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Two Year Budget for FY 2025 and FY 2026

WCT

Feb 2025

WCET

Object / Description	FY 2025		FY 2025	FY 2026	Variance	%
	Total		Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25		01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25		
	Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25		30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26		
20-01 WCET Core Revenue	\$5,000		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	0.0%
20-02 WCET Indirect Cost Share	\$162,931		\$165,000	\$110,000	(\$55,000)	-33.3%
20-03 WCET Membership Dues	\$0			\$1,021,250	\$1,021,250	
20-04 WCET Sponsorships	\$114,892		\$65,000	\$75,000	\$10,000	15.4%
20-05 WCET Dues Alt	\$1,030,906		\$980,000		(\$980,000)	-100.0%
20-10 WCET - Administration	\$928				\$0	
20-24 WCET Annual Meeting 2024	\$118,752		\$230,824		(\$230,824)	-100.0%
20-25 WCET Annual Meeting 2025	\$18,554		\$21,630	\$270,000	\$248,370	1148.2%
20-26 WCET Annual Meeting 2026	\$0			\$22,700	\$22,700	
20-44 WCET - ASWE Annual Summit	\$0			\$20,000	\$20,000	
20-45 WCET Summit Spring 2025	\$9,966		\$10,000		(\$10,000)	-100.0%
20-46 WCET Reg/Policy Summit Sum2	\$67,827		\$65,000		(\$65,000)	-100.0%
20-47 WCET Summit Spring 2026	\$0			\$10,000	\$10,000	
24-10 Gates Reinvestment	\$1,554,072		\$1,600,000	\$2,000,000	\$400,000	25.0%
24-12 WCET ELE GIA APLU AF24	\$25,000				\$0	
24-13 Gates Website Support	\$290,000			\$100,000	\$100,000	
24-24 WCET ELE CUSN ATD SP25	\$10,000				\$0	
24-27 WCET ELE Capability Building	\$140,163			\$159,837	\$159,837	
24-28 WCET ELE Network Improvemen	\$193,850			\$56,150	\$56,150	
24-29 WCET ELE CCA APLU SU24	\$41,000			\$5,000	\$5,000	
24-34 WCET ELE CCA ATD SU24	\$91,200			\$25,000	\$25,000	
24-37 WCET ELE Excelencia ATD FA2	\$60,925			\$30,000	\$30,000	
24-38 WCET ELE CCA APLU Service S	\$18,688				\$0	
24-39 WCET ELE AIHEC OLC SP24	\$102,300				\$0	
24-49 WCET ELE General	\$42,034		\$75,000	\$454,107	\$379,107	505.5%
25-15 State Authorization Net FY25	\$832,015		\$695,200		(\$695,200)	-100.0%
25-16 State Authorization Net FY26	\$0			\$778,000	\$778,000	
25-33 State Auth Network Cohort 3	\$2,565		\$5,000		(\$5,000)	-100.0%
25-34 State Auth Cohort January 2025	\$13,680				\$0	
26-34 State Auth Network Wksp Oct 24	\$16,643				\$0	
26-35 State Auth Workshop April 2025	\$21,896				\$0	
Revenue	\$4,985,785		\$3,917,654	\$5,142,044	\$1,224,390	31.3%
Total Revenue	\$4,985,785		\$3,917,654	\$5,142,044	\$1,224,390	31.3%

		FY 2025		FY 2025	FY 2026			
8 months elapsed				Total	Budget	Budget	Variance	%
4 months remaining								
Actual > 01-Jul-24 -- 28-Feb-25				01-Jul-24	01-Jul-25	FY 2026 budget higher		
Forecast > 01-Mar-25 -- 30-Jun-25				30-Jun-25	30-Jun-26	or (lower) than FY 25		
Object / Description								
20-10	WCET - Administration	\$1,115,307		\$1,208,154	\$1,208,482	\$328	0.0%	
20-24	WCET Annual Meeting 2024	\$199,517		\$230,824		(\$230,824)	-100.0%	
20-25	WCET Annual Meeting 2025	\$18,553		\$21,630	\$270,000	\$248,370	1148.2%	
20-26	WCET Annual Meeting 2026	\$0			\$22,700	\$22,700		
20-44	WCET - ASWE Annual Summit	\$0			\$20,000	\$20,000		
20-45	WCET Summit Spring 2025	\$8,539		\$8,000		(\$8,000)	-100.0%	
20-46	WCET Reg/Policy Summit Sum2	\$57,277		\$65,000		(\$65,000)	-100.0%	
20-47	WCET Summit Spring 2026	\$0			\$6,500	\$6,500		
24-10	Gates Reinvestment	\$1,554,072		\$1,600,000	\$2,000,000	\$400,000	25.0%	
24-12	WCET ELE GIA APLU AF24	\$27,500				\$0		
24-13	Gates Website Support	\$290,000			\$100,000	\$100,000		
24-24	WCET ELE CUSN ATD SP25	\$10,000				\$0		
24-27	WCET ELE Capability Building	\$140,163			\$159,837	\$159,837		
24-28	WCET ELE Network Improvemen	\$193,850			\$56,150	\$56,150		
24-29	WCET ELE CCA APLU SU24	\$41,000			\$5,000	\$5,000		
24-34	WCET ELE CCA ATD SU24	\$91,200			\$25,000	\$25,000		
24-37	WCET ELE Excelencia ATD FA2	\$60,925			\$30,000	\$30,000		
24-38	WCET ELE CCA APLU Service S	\$23,563				\$0		
24-39	WCET ELE AIHEC OLC SP24	\$118,668				\$0		
24-49	WCET ELE General	\$18,292		\$75,000	\$454,107	\$379,107	505.5%	
25-13	State Authorization Net FY24	\$0				\$0		
25-15	State Authorization Net FY25	\$717,355		\$693,151		(\$693,151)	-100.0%	
25-16	State Authorization Net FY26	\$0			\$769,780	\$769,780		
25-33	State Auth Network Cohort 3	\$167		\$805		(\$805)	-100.0%	
25-34	State Auth Cohort January 2025	\$1,034				\$0		
26-34	State Auth Network Wksp Oct 24	\$14,422				\$0		
26-35	State Auth Workshop April 2025	\$20,470				\$0		
Expense		\$4,721,873		\$3,902,564	\$5,127,556	\$1,224,992	31.4%	
Total Expense		\$4,721,873		\$3,902,564	\$5,127,556	\$1,224,992	31.4%	
Revenue over (under) Expense		\$263,913		\$15,091	\$14,488	(\$602)		

ACTION ITEM

Approval of Dedicated Reserve Levels for Non-General Fund Activities

Background

WICHE policy states that dedicated reserves for Non-General Fund activities — categorized into minimum reserve, reserve for unexpected shortfall, and program development — shall be approved by the Commission for the upcoming fiscal year as part of the annual budget at the May meeting. Just as the General Fund requires and accumulates reserves, Non-General Fund accounts also require and accumulate reserves. In the past, the Commission recognized this by establishing a policy that the self-funded units strive to achieve reserves of at least 25% of their annual operating funds.

As with the General Fund, these reserves serve to cover three categories of unbudgeted expenditures:

- ▶ Cost of closing the operation, if necessary, at minimum.
- ▶ Unanticipated shortfalls, such as contract or grant overruns, bridge funding between contracts or grants, unanticipated salary or service cost adjustments, etc.
- ▶ One-time program development activities, such as proposal writing, unique software requirements, unique meeting opportunities, etc.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the WICHE Behavioral Health Program

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$9,384,133
20% Minimum Reserves	\$1,876,827
20% Unanticipated Expenses	\$1,876,827
10% Program Development	\$938,413
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$4,692,067

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage required in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet the financial obligations of the Behavioral Health Program (BHP) unit, should it be terminated. The reserve for unanticipated expenses is slightly higher than the percentage included in the General Fund account because of the reliance on grants and contracts as revenue, which increases the risk of unanticipated expenses. The modest amount for program development would suffice for that purpose in the WICHE BHP unit. Should the WICHE BHP unit exceed its target reserve after closing out contracts and grants, WICHE would transfer those funds to the General Fund reserve.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for WCET – WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$4,357,776
20% Minimum Reserves	\$871,555
20% Unanticipated Expenses	\$871,555
10% Program Development	\$435,778
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$2,178,888

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage required in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet the financial obligations of WCET – WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies should it be terminated. The comparatively high required unanticipated expenses reflect the unique nature of WCET as a large membership organization, with substantially greater risk in the unanticipated event of an economic downturn or forced cancellation of a large meeting venue. Should WCET exceed its target reserve after closing out contracts, grants, other revenues, and expenses, WICHE would transfer those funds to the General Fund reserve.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for WCET’s State Authorization Network

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$769,780
20% Minimum Reserves	\$153,956
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$384,890
30% Program Development	\$230,934
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$769,780

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage required in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet the financial obligations of WCET’s State Authorization Network (SAN) should it be terminated. The more substantial amount for the reserve for unanticipated expenses is requested to provide enough coverage for the unexpected but possible liabilities incurred if one or more meetings or other planned events must be canceled. The more substantial amount for the program development reserve reflects the membership nature of SAN because most of the initiative’s revenues come directly from its members through dues and conference fees and not from contracts and grants. If the resources available from SAN exceed its reserve requirements, the excess funds would transfer to the WCET unit reserve.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the Policy Analysis and Research Unit

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$617,557
0% Minimum Reserves	\$0
N/A Unanticipated Expenses	\$125,000
25% Program Development	\$154,389
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$279,389

Justification: Because the Policy Analysis and Research unit has only one program that annually generates revenues, its only source of revenue in excess of expenses (reserves) are funds remaining in grants and contracts if WICHE is allowed by the funding source to retain those funds. As a result, there is no need for a minimum reserve fund, given that the General Fund covers this potential liability. The unit, however, does need funds to cover unanticipated expenditures, such as possible grant or contract overruns or bridge funding to sustain a project between funding cycles. The \$125,000 request does not represent a percentage of the unit’s annual appropriation but rather simply an amount deemed reasonable for FY 2026 to cover such unanticipated expenditures. The unit can also benefit from a modest amount of funding to pursue program development activities, such as grant writing, seed funding for prospective projects, etc. The annual General Fund financing of 25% would adequately cover this type of expenditure. Should the Policy Analysis and Research unit exceed its target reserve, WICHE will transfer those funds to the General Fund reserve after closing out contracts and grants.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$559,929
100% Minimum Reserves	\$559,929
0% Unanticipated Expenses	\$0
0% Program Development	\$0
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve (Required by NC-SARA)	\$559,929

Justification: NC-SARA has a reserve requirement of 100% of annual revenues. If the resources available from W-SARA exceed its reserve requirements, it is proposed that the excess funds be transferred to the Policy Analysis and Research unit reserve.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the Programs and Services Unit

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$890,768
0% Minimum Reserves	\$0
N/A Unanticipated Expenses	\$125,000
25% Program Development	\$222,692
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$347,692

Justification: In addition to its General Fund support and revenues garnered from Non-General Fund programs that generate annual revenues, the Programs and Services unit, like the Policy Analysis and Research unit, receives support from various grants and contracts. As a result, there is no need for a minimum reserve fund, given that the General Fund covers this potential liability. This unit also needs some reserves to support unanticipated expenses and to fund modest amounts of program development funds to cover unanticipated expenditures. The \$125,000 recommended for FY 2026, commensurate with the request for Policy Analysis and Research, is not reflected as a percentage of the unit's operating budget but rather as a reasonable reserve to cover unanticipated but possible expenditures, such as possible grant or contract overruns or bridge funding to sustain a project between funding cycles. The unit can also benefit from a modest amount of funding (25%) to pursue program development activities, such as grant writing, seed funding for prospective projects, etc. If the resources available in the Academic Leadership initiatives or the joint-purchasing collaboratives exceed their reserve requirements, it is once again proposed, as the Commission approved last year, that the excess funds transfer to the Programs and Services reserve. Should the Programs and Services unit exceed its target reserve, WICHE will transfer those funds to the General Fund reserve after closing out contracts and grants.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the Joint-Purchasing Collaboratives (within the Programs and Services Unit)

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$294,317
20% Minimum Reserves	\$58,863
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$147,159
30% Program Development	\$88,295
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$294,317

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet financial obligations of the two-program collaboration, should they be terminated. The quite substantial program development reserve is necessary at this time because these joint-purchasing

collaborations continue to be developed and thus have greater need for funds to pursue new ventures and secure existing ones. If the resources available from the joint-purchasing collaboratives exceed reserve requirements, it is proposed that the excess funds transfer to the Programs and Services unit reserve.

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the Academic Leadership Initiatives (within the Programs and Services Unit)

FY 2026 Budget to be Approved May 2025	\$300,396
20% Minimum Reserves	\$60,079
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$150,198
30% Program Development	\$90,119
FY 2026 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$300,396

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage required in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet financial obligations of the Academic Leadership initiatives, should one or more be terminated. A more substantial amount for the reserve for unanticipated expenses is requested to provide enough coverage for the unexpected but possible liabilities incurred if an annual meeting or other planned event must be canceled. The more substantial amount for the program development reserve reflects the membership nature of the Academic Leadership initiatives, particularly the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders and Western Academic Leadership Forum, because most of the revenue from these initiatives comes directly from their members through dues and conference fees, not from contracts and grants. The Alliance and Forum have intentionally set their dues at rates higher than annual expenditures to garner enough resources to explore unique academic issues that arise over time and are not being addressed by WICHE per se. If the resources available from the Academic Leadership initiatives exceed their reserve requirements, it is proposed that the excess funds transfer to the Programs and Services unit reserve.

Action Requested

Approval of the categories and amounts reflected above.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the Revised WICHE Vision Statement

Background

President Demarée Michelau proposed to the Executive Committee a refresh of the WICHE vision statement because the current version overlaps with the mission statement and is lengthy. The Executive Committee expressed support for this refresh and agreed that the vision statement should complement (but not overlap) with the mission statement; be succinct; and reflect a desired future state. The modest revisions below incorporate feedback from the Executive Committee and are presented to the Commission for approval.

In addition, the Executive Committee also indicated that the mission statement should explicitly mention the Pacific Island members. President Michelau reviewed the Commission approved language, and it is as follows:

The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.

Since the Commission approved language accomplishes this, WICHE staff will ensure that this is correctly reflected in appropriate materials. Finally, it should be noted that in May 2022, the Commission approved the language above (changing the word citizens to residents). To bring the bylaws into compliance with that Commission approved action, President Michelau will make this update in the WICHE bylaws and note the date of the change.

CURRENT VISION STATEMENT

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.

PROPOSED VISION STATEMENT

WICHE envisions a future where regional collaboration among the states and Pacific Islands strengthens the West through higher education and workforce development.

Action Requested

Approval of the revised vision statement.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2026 Workplan

Summary

Each May, WICHE's 48-member Commission develops and approves the compact's annual Workplan. The Workplan highlights WICHE's strategic priorities and outlines the activities, projects, and initiatives of the organization for the fiscal year (FY) 2026, beginning July 1, 2025, all of which are intended to advance WICHE's mission.

Action Requested

Approval of the FY 2026 Workplan.



FY 2026 WORKPLAN

PARK CITY, UTAH

9-43

FY 2026 WORKPLAN

Our Mission

The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.

Our Vision *(proposed revision)*

WICHE envisions a future where regional collaboration among the states and Pacific Islands strengthens the West through higher education and workforce development.

The Workplan

Each May, WICHE's 48-member Commission develops and approves the compact's annual Workplan. The Workplan highlights WICHE's strategic priorities and outlines the activities, projects, and initiatives of the organization for the fiscal year (FY) 2026 beginning July 1, 2025, all of which are intended to advance WICHE's mission.

Our Strategic Priorities

- ▶ **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 to those who seek it.
- ▶ **ACCESS & SUCCESS (A/S):** Improving access to and success in postsecondary education for all students, by developing and sharing evidence-based strategies.
- ▶ **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.

How WICHE Advances Our Mission

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 (PAS):** The Programs and Services unit is where students thrive and institutional leaders collaborate. The unit focuses on expanding student access and success while fostering higher education collaborations that support institutional strategic priorities. Through its Student Access Programs, the unit helps institutions and students — at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels — maximize academic resources, optimize enrollment capacity, and reduce costs. Additionally, the unit convenes higher education leaders to address shared challenges, advance common goals, and support the development of emerging and aspiring college and university leaders. This engagement often takes the form of grant-funded communities of practice that facilitate in-depth exploration of key issues and solutions. The unit, recognizing the importance of cost efficiency, also partners with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to provide joint purchasing programs that generate savings for postsecondary institutions, state and local governments, and educational nonprofits.
- ▶ **POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH (PAR):** The Policy Analysis and Research unit supports better-informed decision-making by providing policy analysis and data resources and leveraging its convening power to foster regional collaboration. The unit leads research projects and collaborative initiatives focusing 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, adult learners, state and federal financial aid, finance, articulation and transfer, federal policy, and college completion initiatives. WICHE is responsible for implementing the Western region's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA). 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 WICHE partners.
- ▶ **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM (BHP):** 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 pursues this mission through partnerships with state behavioral health agencies, federal agencies,

advocacy and consumer groups, and higher education institutions. The WICHE BHP's 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 promotes collaboration and information-sharing related to digital learning in higher education. Established in 1989, WCET's mission is to be the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of digital learning in higher education. It works in three divisions: WCET membership, State Authorization Network (SAN), and Every Learner Everywhere (ELE). Memberships through WCET and SAN support hundreds of higher education professionals across the U.S. and Canada. ELE's mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for every learner. WCET's strategic plan focuses on practice, policy, and community in fulfilling its vision of a future where high-quality digital learning fosters success for educators and learners.

Our Work, Activities, and Projects

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

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

- ▶ **CURRENT ACTIVITIES:** Current work that is either classified as Ongoing Services and Resources (continuing work supported by the General Fund or fees) or 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:** Projects that staff is considering pursuing and/or bringing to the Commission for approval; also listed are previously considered projects that staff are proposing to remove from the Workplan
- ▶ **COMPLETED PROJECTS:** Projects that staff finished in FY 2025

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

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (PAS)

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 & Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
MHEC Technology Contracts	A/F, V/A	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.12	21 vendors offering hardware, software, printers and peripherals, data and networking, security services, and other technology services
Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)	W/S, V/A	Western	.17 and consultants	Forum and Alliance members
Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) • Professional Development: 2025 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.50	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 51 institutions, 11 systems
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) • Professional Development: 2025 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.50	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 70 institutions, 8 systems
Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	1.2	All WICHE states, CNMI, and Guam fund and/or enroll students through PSEP's 130+ cooperating programs
Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.04	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 67 participating institutions
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.05	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 169 participating institutions
Academic Leaders Toolkit	A/S	Western	0.02	Forum and Alliance members

MHEC TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS enables institutions to purchase off competitively bid master purchasing agreements for various hardware, software, and technology services. Several contracts are available to K-12 districts, state, county, 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 **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (ACADEMY)** is an annual professional development initiative to enhance the pool of chief academic leaders for both two- and four-year institutions in the Western region. The Academy's sessions focus on the intricacies of academic leadership, establishing academic objectives and priorities, and cultivating the essential skills needed by chief academic officers. The eighth cohort, nominated by Forum and Alliance members, began in July 2024.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM (FORUM)** brings together WICHE-region chief academic leaders from four-year institutions, 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 **PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)** provides affordable access for students to 130+ healthcare professional programs at approximately 60 institutions and in 10 healthcare fields. In academic year (AY) 2024-25, 556 students from 10 WICHE states, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam received \$15 million (reflecting investment by their home state/territory legislatures) in tuition benefits through PSEP. Since 1953, PSEP has supported more than 16,100 students, many of whom return to their home states and territories to fill key healthcare positions.

The **WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)** allows WICHE-region residents to pay reduced out-of-state tuition rates for over 2,000 master's degrees, graduate certificates, and doctoral programs at 67 participating public universities. In AY 2024-25, 3,987 students saved an estimated \$48.4 million in tuition through WRGP. Structured similarly to the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), Western public universities may offer any graduate program at the WRGP tuition rate at their discretion. Participating institutions may charge WRGP students up to 150% of resident tuition, but most charge in-state tuition.

The **WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)** is WICHE’s signature undergraduate tuition savings program and the nation’s largest of its kind, saving 49,177 students an estimated \$615.5 million in tuition in AY 2024-25. Currently, 170 public two- and four-year WICHE-region institutions charge WUE students no more than 150% of out-of-state tuition instead of in-state tuition. Staff continue to expand the marketing of WUE and WRGP to benefit more students and institutions through targeted, state-specific outreach and activities, as well as increased communication with high school counselors and admissions advisers.

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

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

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

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Joint Compact for Faculty Development and Opportunity	A/S, W/S	U.S.	Mellon Foundation \$150,000 grant	.05 12/24 - 11/25	NEBHE, SREB
Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success	A/S, I	U.S.		0.1 2/24-10/26	13 institutions in 5 states are participating in the Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiative to pilot technological solutions to improve pathways for students transferring between postsecondary institutions
WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities	A/S, W/S	Western	Mellon Foundation \$1.5 million grant	1.18 1/23-9/26	Western postsecondary institutions

The **JOINT COMPACT FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY:** Staff are collaborating with the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three other higher education regional compacts, on a project that aims to educate and inform parties interested in faculty demographics. Funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, the deliverables include a landscape analysis of faculty demographics and will culminate in a national convening. The proposed work will also include the creation of a data dashboard to distribute the findings.



TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFER SUCCESS: Interstate Passport® was a national initiative that facilitated the block transfer of lower-division general education based on multistate, faculty-developed learning outcomes, and proficiency criteria. Network member recruitment ceased when the original program ended in 2023. The decision to sunset the program occurred after assessing the program's impact, financial viability, and results from a survey of network members. Subsequently, a request to pivot grant funding from an anonymous funder that would have supported the technology infrastructure of the Interstate Passport® program to a new initiative called Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success was approved by the funder. A call for proposals opened in spring 2024, from which six projects between 13 institutions in five states were chosen for funding and participation in a community of practice to support the implementation of technology solutions that help students move credit between the partner institutions. Grant activities will continue through fall 2026.

The **WICHE ACADEMY FOR LEADERS IN THE HUMANITIES** offers leadership development to tenured humanities faculty members. WICHE is collaborating with the Mellon Foundation and other key stakeholders to develop a two-year, campus-based immersive experience for faculty leaders. These leaders attend a three-day WICHE Institute for Leaders in the Humanities in Boulder, Colorado, focused on three key competencies: career planning and development, project management, and organizational design and agility. They will collaborate with upper-level academic administration to learn more about daily campus operations, how to execute successful change projects, receive internal and external mentoring, and gain a new professional network with the fellows appointed at other institutions. There are currently two cohorts of fellows.

New Directions

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

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice	A/S		U.S.	Seeking additional external funding to assist NASNTIs further and sustain an institutional network	TBD	NASNTI's Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, higher education organizations
No Holding Back – Assessing the Use of Administrative Holds	A/S, A/F		U.S.	TBD	TBD	National Association of Collegiate and University Business Officers (NACUBO), members of the Alliance and Forum, and Policy Analysis and Research

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 Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students 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 culturally relevant high-impact practices and fostering institutional and Tribal collaborations to share and expand sustainable student support systems on campuses. Another primary objective 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 AI/AN students.

NO HOLDING BACK – ASSESSING THE USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HOLDS: WICHE’s PAS unit and Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) unit collaborated 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 use their data in policy formation better. WICHE staff have been collaboratively socializing the toolkit through work with the National Association of College and University Business Officers through presentations at national conferences. We will continue distributing these resources and seek new partners interested in continued application of the tools and policy implications.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff are considering pursuing and bringing to the Commission for approval, along with ideas generated by 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.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH (PAR)

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 & Finance A/S Access & Success W/S Workforce & Society I Innovation V/A Value & Accountability

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
<i>Benchmarks: WICHE Region</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.025	N/A
Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.25	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.15	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
<i>Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.025	N/A
State Policy and Data Profiles	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	U.S.	0.2	N/A
<i>Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West</i>	A/F	Western	0.025	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions
<i>WICHE Insights</i>	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.1	N/A
WICHE Policy Webinar Series	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	0.1	Variable
WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)	A/S, I, V/A	Western	2.25	NC-SARA; Western SARA member states; MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB

The regularly updated **BENCHMARKS: WICHE REGION** data resource 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 (PAR), the *Benchmarks* data dashboard also includes state information and regional metrics.

The **LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)** informs the Commission and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education, and 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. Each WICHE Executive Committee member can appoint up to four legislators to serve on the LAC. Commissioners who are also legislators are ex officio members of their LAC delegation.

PAR unit staff provide support to the region through bimonthly **PEER- TO-PEER VIRTUAL CONVENINGS** on federal issues, student access and success, improving the value proposition for postsecondary education, and sharing promising approaches and strategies to common challenges in the West. This convening of state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues.

The **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 supplements the core data sources as much as possible to keep this resource contemporary and examines the overall utility of the full suite of data resources.

WICHE is continuing to identify what would be most useful for the **STATE POLICY AND DATA PROFILES** that could provide additional state and Pacific Island jurisdictions postsecondary contexts and data. The Policy Analysis and Research Database (PARD) enables the PAR unit to provide more detailed and relevant information specific to each WICHE state and Pacific Island jurisdiction. Staff will work with agency and institutional staff from across the region to determine how this resource could be structured to be most beneficial.

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, and Pacific Island jurisdiction, over the past one, five, and 10 years, as well as what proportion of total tuition and fees they represent. WICHE also annually provides a second analysis examining the implications and state finance and financial aid trends.

The **WICHE INSIGHTS** 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 the annual *Tuition and Fees* or the quadrennial *Knocking at the College Door* report).

The **WICHE POLICY WEBINAR SERIES** features staff, partners, and higher education stakeholders periodically hosting digital forums for registrants on selected higher education topics of interest. In FY 2026, WICHE will continue to identify webinar opportunities that will be of interest and use to the region.

The **WICHE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (W-SARA)** is a voluntary agreement among states designed to establish comparable standards for U.S. states, territories, and freely associated states regulating postsecondary distance education. SARA expands access to postsecondary educational opportunities while ensuring meaningful consumer protections. WICHE coordinates and oversees 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 agreement's implementation.

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

Continuing (or new) work supported by grants, contracts, or fees.

All work in this category is considered high priority.

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Increasing Access, Affordability, and Equity Using OER: A National Consortium	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	\$553,000	.95 10/24 - 10/26	Hewlett Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB
Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	\$132,833	0.75 07/25 - 07/26	Wyoming Community College Commission, Wyoming Governor's Office
<i>Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates</i>	A/S, W/S	U.S.	\$190,000	1.25 01/24 - 06/27	College Board, Lumina Foundation

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Rural Higher Education Center – Evaluating Train-in-Place Rural Nursing Programs	W/S, A/S, I, V/A	Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming; WICHE region	\$249,970	.22 01/25 - 06/30	Institute for Education Sciences; MDRC
A Landscape Analysis of Completion Strategies in the West	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	WICHE region	\$201,443	.6 01/25 - 12/25	ECMC Foundation
Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative Planning Grant	W/S, A/S, I	Colorado	\$75,000	.025 4/25-7/25	Anonymous funder

INCREASING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND EQUITY USING OER: A NATIONAL CONSORTIUM:

The PAR unit has received an additional round of funding to continue work with the three other regional higher education compacts — the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) — focused on scaling the successful adoption of high-quality open educational resources to improve student outcomes, increase equity, and improve affordability.

SUPPORT FOR THE WYOMING INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP: WICHE was contracted by the Wyoming Community College Commission to provide project management for a broad initiative that seeks 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. Additionally, WICHE works closely with the Wyoming governor’s office on this initiative.

KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR: PROJECTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES: In December 2024, the PAR unit successfully released the 11th edition of state forecasts of high school graduates. During FY 2026, staff will continue the distribution, presenting to a range of audiences and conferences while continuing to pursue additional enhancements and follow-up analyses on this important topic. The staffing level for this project is primarily concentrated during FY 2025, though staff will be engaged through FY 2027 and beyond.

RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER – EVALUATING TRAIN-IN-PLACE RURAL NURSING PROGRAMS: WICHE has received federal funding as part of a larger consortium focused on rural higher education to evaluate rural train-in-place programs at three sites in the West. Although this work is focused on three states, WICHE expects to broadly share and distribute the findings from this work (as well as that of our consortium partners). This is

one component of WICHE’s broader efforts to support the region in meeting workforce challenges. This project is expected to run for five years.

A LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF COMPLETION STRATEGIES IN THE WEST: As a first step in broader work on the value in postsecondary education, WICHE has been funded to carry out a landscape analysis of completion initiatives currently underway in the West. This work will help address one major area of concern when it comes to ensuring value in higher education as non-completers are likely a population that receives little or no value for their time, effort, and expense. WICHE staff will complete this work while also identifying potential partners for further work on the value of postsecondary education.







COLORADO POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS PLANNING GRANT: WICHE will serve as the fiscal agent for Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative, which seeks to create a dynamic two-sided marketplace that connects Colorado’s opportunity seekers with high-quality education, training, and career opportunities. This four-month planning grant will establish the foundation for a statewide coalition that will ultimately bridge the gap in messaging and advocacy between K-12 education and employers by leveraging strategic partnerships with postsecondary providers. Staff believe that, if successful, this project will lead to important lessons for the entire region.

New Directions

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

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Building Evidence for Scale – Policy and Practice Solutions for Adult Learners	A/S, W/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	U.S.	\$1.5M - \$2M	1.75 4 years	TBD
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	TBD	TBD	Western states
Policy Paper Series on Affordability	A/F, A/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	\$500,000	1.5 2 years	TBD

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Western Postsecondary Data Users Network	A/S, W/S, V/A		Western	\$50,000	0.5 6 months	Western states
Articulating the Value of Postsecondary Education in the West	TBD		Western	TBD	TBD	Western states
Policy and Practice Solutions for Workforce Shortages	A/S, W/S, I		Western	\$400,000	1.0 2 years	TBD
A Hole in State Policy – Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A		WICHE region	\$300,000	1.5 2 years	TBD
National Task Force for College Closures	A/F, A/S, V/A		U.S.	\$750,000	1.5 18 months	SHEEO, SREB, MHEC, NEBHE
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I, W/S		Western	In-kind	.05 07/24 - 06/25	WCET, DHS, FEMA

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR SCALE – POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR ADULT

LEARNERS: Building on its Adult College Completion Network and other work related to adult learners, WICHE proposes pursuing new approaches to achieve four objectives: a) build the evidence base for effectively serving adult learners; b) facilitate collaboration among network members; c) share scalable solutions across the field; and d) link adult college completion work with the broader agenda to ensure the equity of opportunity. The project will also seek to partner with WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions 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.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS:

The PAR unit will continue exploring ways to improve behavioral health in postsecondary education, building on a recently completed successful project. This work will likely focus on several potential approaches, including meeting future behavioral health workforce needs, building supportive state- and system-level networks to improve the distribution of

promising approaches, and catalyzing the adoption of broad-based approaches to student health and wellness.

POLICY PAPER SERIES ON AFFORDABILITY: The PAR unit will commission a series of papers focused on policy and practice actions to improve postsecondary affordability. The papers (including WICHE as a lead author) will aim to provide rigorous, actionable research accessible to policymakers.

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 to 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 states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, to address common questions, provide technical assistance, and assist in professional development. This network would ensure that Western policymakers have access to high-quality evidence to develop, assess, and improve education and training policies and programs.

ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE WEST: The PAR 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.

POLICY AND PRACTICE SOLUTIONS FOR WORKFORCE SHORTAGES: The PAR unit regularly convenes key staff from the WICHE region 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.

A HOLE IN STATE POLICY – ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

Having recently completed a portion of the broad project envisioned here (and approved by the Commission), staff are returning this project to the New Directions section of the Workplan. The PAR unit intends to work with WCET and key partners on work to operationalize evidence-based approaches to support high-quality short-term credential pathways and examine appropriate policies and practices to fulfill consumer protection responsibilities.

NATIONAL TASK FORCE FOR COLLEGE CLOSURES: WICHE will pursue resources to support an in-depth expert task force focused on identifying policy and practice gaps related to precipitous college closures and recommending concrete, evidence-based approaches for addressing them. This conversation necessitates the broad engagement of state regulators, federal agency staff, accreditors, and other key education leaders. WICHE believes the regional compacts are well-placed to foster the necessary engagement and participation in this important work.

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 states and Pacific jurisdictions to provide training for institutional nontechnical leaders for cyber protection.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff are considering pursuing and bringing to the Commission for approval, along with ideas generated by commissioners.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: The PAR unit will continue to identify areas where WICHE can help build policy- and practice-relevant research focused on organizational priorities, including student access and success, postsecondary value, and reaching underserved populations, including rural students, military and veteran students, adult learners, incarcerated individuals, and students of color. Additionally, this work could include topic-specific research and analysis.

LEVERAGING WORK-BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND MEET WORKFORCE DEMANDS IN RURAL AREAS: 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. Staff believe this approach may have particular benefits for rural areas.

STATE POLICIES TO SUPPORT MEETING STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS: 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 student outcomes, 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 2025:

STATE APPROACHES TO SHORT-TERM POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POLICY GAPS: The PAR unit, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, completed an initial project producing a white paper on gaps and needs in state policies focused on short-term credentials. Although this work was completed, staff have returned the project to the New Directions section because the completed work only represents one component of the effort initially approved by the Commission.

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE PARTNERSHIPS: WICHE has completed multiple partnerships with the organizations that were selected to be one of the intermediaries for scale grantees of the Gates Foundation. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium previously brought in WICHE to facilitate its efforts to develop an effective data infrastructure and staff capacity.

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

*Continuing work supported by membership dues or by fees.
All work in this category is considered high priority.*

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
WCET Member Services and Support	A/S, I	U.S. and Canada	WCET staff	448 member institutions, agencies, organizations
Digital Learning Practices	A/F, A/S, I	U.S. and Canada	5.0	WCET members, Every Learner Everywhere, other organizations
Digital Learning Policies	A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	2.25	WCET members, SAN, NASASPS, NC-SARA, other organizations
WCET Annual Meeting	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	2.25	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Leadership Summit	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	.5	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Webcast Series	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	1.5	Various
wcetMIX (Member Information Exchange) and Member-only Resources	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	2.0	WCET, SAN, and member leadership
State System and Multi-Institutional Consortia Digital Learning Leaders	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	.25	Higher education systems and multi-institution consortia
State Authorization Network (SAN)	A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	4.0	181 memberships representing ~ 950 institutions, regional compacts, state agencies, organizations, NC-SARA
WCET Steering Committee Annual Priorities	A/F, A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	.25	WCET-elected Steering Committee and other members

WCET MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND SUPPORT helps colleges, universities, higher education organizations, state agencies, and companies understand both the practice and policy of digital learning by providing timely information and a collaborative community. The popular *WCET Frontiers* blog features promising practices, innovations, emerging policies, compliance advice, and member profiles.

WCET and Every Learner Everywhere (ELE) continue to collaborate to provide in-depth analysis of **DIGITAL LEARNING PRACTICES** that have an impact on faculty and students. These groups are noted for their experience in providing members and the field with information on digital learning practices that enhance student success. Past areas of focus include artificial intelligence, digital student support services, digital accessibility, assessment and academic integrity, microcredentials, and learning analytics.

WCET and the State Authorization Network (SAN) continue to collaborate to provide in-depth analysis of **DIGITAL LEARNING POLICIES** (federal, state, and accreditation) 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 LEADERSHIP VIRTUAL SUMMIT, AND MONTHLY WEBCAST SERIES**. WCET's annual meeting is an in-person event, bringing together up to 400 leaders and practitioners interested in good practices in digital learning in postsecondary education. Members and nonmembers attend. The 2024 Annual Meeting had 265 attendees and had multiple sessions on various topics. The member-only Virtual Summit takes place in the spring and is a half-day, single topic-focused event. The 2024 Virtual Summit had over 600 attendees and focused on artificial intelligence. The monthly webcast series showcases innovative practices and effective policies in digital learning, with an average attendance of 150 members and nonmembers. Semimonthly Closer Conversations are member-only facilitated discussions around key digital learning issues.

WCETMIX is a digital platform to support communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing among WCET members with over 5,000 participants (members and nonmembers). Members are invited to communicate through WCET's popular NEWS and DISCUSS digital forums.

WCET is launching two new leadership groups, using MIX for asynchronous discussion. The leadership groups are for WCET members interested in networking and collaborating with other members around leadership topics. The groups are:

- ▶ **LEADup:** Leaders in (Higher) Education and Digital Learning: A group for new and emerging leaders in digital learning in higher education.
- ▶ **VISION:** Visionaries in Online Learning and Innovation: A group of senior leaders interested in fostering an environment for networking, collaboration, and idea exchange.

SAN also uses wcetMIX to support collaboration and communication of timely announcements among its members.

The **STATE SYSTEM AND 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 is a regularly requested presenter to in-person and virtual events by state agencies and organizations desiring additional insight and directions for institution compliance management. Additionally, SAN continues to grow its library of resources and tools, provide members with an online eight-week training, webinars, and in-person workshops, as well as facilitate communication so that members can cooperate to identify common needs, track emerging policies and regulations, evaluate their efficacy, and share lessons learned. SAN recently released a second edition of its *Professional Licensure Handbook* that assists the public in navigating federal professional licensure regulations.

Each year, the **WCET STEERING COMMITTEE** selects **ANNUAL PRIORITIES** to provide 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. The selected topics for 2024 were:

- ▶ Artificial Intelligence (AI) – As these tools become ubiquitous, how do we tackle the instructional, academic integrity, and equity issues related to generative artificial intelligence?
- ▶ Digital Learning Economics – As higher education faces affordability challenges, what are the costs of digital learning and how can digital learning assist in making higher education more affordable and accessible?

In 2025, the Steering Committee will be focusing on:

- ▶ Artificial Intelligence (AI) – As institutions begin to move beyond conversations around academic integrity, how can they create institutional level policies for the ethical and responsible use of AI by all segments of the institutional community?
- ▶ Digital Learning Operations – What strategic role should digital learning play as institutions respond to shifting workforce development needs and declining traditional

age student populations? What are the ways in which digital learning leaders can help campus leadership better understand the role and importance of digital learning in the strategic planning process?

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

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

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Artificial Intelligence: Policy and Practice in Higher Education	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	U.S.	Internal	0.25 07/25 - 06/26	WCET, external consultants, and other digital learning nonprofits as needed
Emerging Federal Policies	A/F, I, V/A	U.S.	Internal	2 07/25 - 06/26	WCET, SAN, WICHE Policy unit
Every Learner Everywhere	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	Gates Foundation (Oct 2022 – Dec 2025) \$7,688,884	1.5 - 5.8 2017 - 2025	13 partner organizations

The impact of **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)** has undergone an extensive buildup and is now upon us. AI will remain one of WCET’s focus areas in 2025 and will include an update of WCET’s 2023 institutional AI policy survey and report, the production of several blogs, webinars, and both public and member-only resources. One area of focus will be on assisting institutions in developing ethical and responsible use guidelines as well as implementing WCET’s AI Policy and Practice Framework that was developed in late 2023. Complementary research may include a survey of state AI policies. This work is being funded through internal investment but may lead to additional funding opportunities.

This year will include important **EMERGING FEDERAL POLICIES** discussions regarding digital learning in higher education as we encounter an administration transition. Priorities of the new administration, including direction on implementation of policy developed by the previous administration, will be followed closely. In 2024, the Department undertook rulemaking on accreditation, distance education Title IV tracking, state authorization for distance education, and digital books and resources. That rulemaking resulted in a withdrawal of rulemaking on digital books and resources, state authorization, and


accreditation. However, rules for distance education enrollment reporting and the definition for a distance education course were released in January 2025. In addition to these rules, the previous administration also released guidance on third-party servicers and online program managers. Legislation is likely in the U.S. Congress on short-term Pell grants that focus on workforce development. WCET and SAN staff will continue to follow these policy proposals and inform members as well as participate in NC-SARA's policy modification process for changes to reciprocity policies.

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE is a network of 13 partner organizations working collaboratively to harness digital learning technology, driving innovation in higher education to improve outcomes for every learner. WCET is an intermediary for the network and also one of the participating partners. The most involved partner organizations include Achieving the Dream, American Public and Land-Grant Universities, and the Online Learning Consortium. The network builds capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct institutional support, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. Service topics include information on adaptive learning, digital learning pedagogical practices, evidence-based teaching practices for digital learning, and techniques for putting students first in the classroom. The network regularly provides free webinars, blogs and publications on these topics, as well as multiple services, including professional learning and consultative services for interested institutions.

New Directions

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

Focus: **A/F** Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
In-depth Member Exploration Groups	A/S, I, V/A		U.S.	Internal	.25 1 year	External consultant and WCET members

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
<i>State Authorization of Colleges and Universities, 3rd edition</i>	A/S, V/A		U.S.	Internal	.25 1 year	External consultant and SAN staff
Federal Judicial and Policy Tracker	A/S, I, V/A		U.S.	Internal	.25 1 year	External consultants, SAN and WCET staff

In 2025, WCET will launch at least one **IN-DEPTH MEMBER EXPLORATION GROUP**. The purpose of this group will be to provide a small group of institutions or system/consortia members with an opportunity to participate in a process to jointly share, research, and develop options for addressing a significant emerging issues that are difficult to address. Synchronous virtual meetings will be used to explore the issue and discuss potential institutional responses. This project is being developed after a lengthy discussion with WCET's Steering Committee which identified the need to provide members with more opportunities to explore emerging issues and collaboratively develop institutional responses. It is directly aligned with WCET's core value of collaboration.

SAN will direct a third edition update of the book, **STATE AUTHORIZATION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES** targeted to be released in summer 2025. The book serves as a guide to the legal basis for college degrees, diploma mill problems, state approvals, state authorization reciprocity, federal regulations for state authorization of distance education, and professional licensure state and federal requirements. The first and second editions have been used as support material for SAN training since 2017.

In 2025, SAN and WCET will create a web-based **FEDERAL JUDICIAL AND POLICY TRACKER** to help the public track the development of federal statutes, regulations, guidance, and court opinions that affect digital technology in higher education. Since the development of judicial opinions and legal requirements often undergo a lengthy process that is challenging to follow, the tracker will provide the public with an easy way to follow these developments and participate in the federal regulatory process.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2024:

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE received three grants to support piloting current services, develop two new AI literacy services, create a strategic plan with a focus on sustainability, create new services as well as update current services to better align with institutional needs, and create new learning experiences that can be provided directly to individuals, in addition to institutions. Every Learner has successfully onboarded four new partners, provided multiple services to cohorts of institutions, and free webinars to the field. The network continued to be a recognized leader in transformational digital learning through multiple conference presentations, resources, and blog posts. Additionally, Every Learner onboarded a new director in November 2024, after the previous one resigned in October 2024.

The **WCET ANNUAL MEETING** took place in Long Beach, California, in October 2024. The 36th Annual Meeting had 256 attendees. Sessions covered an array of digital learning and higher education topics including information about recently released regulations, artificial intelligence, the array of digital learning definitions and need for clarity, microcredential strategies, accreditation challenges and changes, and digital learning growth and sustainability.

The **WCET ANNUAL MEETING REFRESH** occurred in spring 2024 to help WCET evaluate the strengths and opportunities for the annual conference. WCET worked with a small leadership group and a consulting agency, Velvet Chainsaw, to identify ways to build on the success of the conference but also increase the number of new and returning attendees by incorporating innovative networking and program design. Several recommendations were incorporated in 2024 and will continue through 2026.

The **MEMBER-ONLY VIRTUAL SUMMIT** topic for 2024 focused on artificial intelligence and higher education, attracting over 600 attendees to the half-day virtual event. The 2025 topic focuses on how higher education can use technology to humanize teaching and learning.

The **WCET WEBCAST SERIES** is popular with the WCET community because it is free and open to all, featuring experts and practitioners who share pragmatic advice and lessons learned on digital learning topics. Topics for 2024 included accessibility in edtech, distance education regulations, AI ethics and governance, microcredentials, and leadership frameworks for digital learning. Webcasts average 150 registrants each.

The **SAN ADVANCED TOPICS WORKSHOP** returned to in-person format in March 2024 in Anaheim, California. The workshop focused on new and emerging federal regulations with a specific focus on professional licensure. Attendees participated in interactive exercises on a number of topics including how to best communicate with senior leadership, collaboration on compliance techniques, and how to develop a compliance and communication action plan.

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 often at odds. WCET conducted an updated survey during fall 2024 and an updated report in January 2025.

SETTING DEFINITIONS FOR LEARNING MODALITIES: WCET built on an existing body of work to create more standard definitions for digital learning modalities by gathering insights on institutional definitions, policies, and their impact on students. An April 2024 survey and subsequent report by WCET revealed significant variability in how institutions define and communicate key terms like distance education and hybrid learning. Only 52% of institutions stated they had an institution-wide definition of distance learning, 41% for online learning, and 20% for hyflex learning. The variability illustrates the many challenges institutions face in implementing policies including unclear and conflicting definitions from oversight agencies and inconsistent adherence within the institution. Clearer, shared definitions benefit federal, regional, and state policy and, most importantly, help students understand what to expect.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff are considering pursuing:

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
State AI Policy Survey	A/S, I		WICHE region	Internal	.25 1 year	WCET, Policy unit, and external consultants

STATE AI POLICY SURVEY: As institutions struggle to develop meaningful and appropriate institutional level policies around the adoption and use of AI, many are looking to their state for guidance. As of this time, there is no survey or database of state-level policies and statements on AI adoption and use in higher education. The first stage of this project would start with a survey of the WICHE states and territories to determine which entities have created such policy statements and what those statements are. The second stage of the project would focus on the publication of sample policy statements for states that are still early in addressing AI adoption and implementation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Current Activities – Ongoing Services and Resources

*Continuing work supported by membership dues or by fees.
All work in this category is considered high priority.*

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
BHP Member Service and Support	A/S, I	Western	.2	WICHE-region behavioral health authorities
Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG): Annual Membership Program	A/S, I, V/A	Western	.2	WICHE-region behavioral health data specialists

BHP MEMBER SERVICE AND SUPPORT: The WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions are asked to contribute a nominal support fee of \$15,000 to the WICHE BHP to be a member of the Behavioral Health Oversight Council, to provide guidance to and collaboration with fellow members. As part of the regional collaborative, states have a platform to perform regional collaborative projects; have access to regional training to support workforce development and systems improvement; have available to them consultation and technical assistance on a variety of policy issues; and be part of an interstate networking and resource sharing collaborative.

WESTERN STATES DECISION SUPPORT GROUP (WSDSG) SUPPORT PROGRAM: Since 1985, the WICHE BHP has been managing the WSDSG, an information-sharing membership-based network for behavioral health data and evaluation staff and managers from WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions. The WICHE BHP manages quarterly conference calls to discuss emerging behavioral health data and system evaluation issues and provides ongoing support to WSDSG members. The WICHE BHP 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 support fee of \$6,000.

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

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

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium (AK-PIC) – Interns and Technical Assistance*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$150,000	6/24-5/25	State of Alaska; Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Alaska Psychiatric Institute – Regulatory Compliance Technical Assistance	A/S, V/A	Western	\$197,100	4 years	State of Alaska
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) State Opioid/ Tribal Opioid Response (SOR/ TOR) Technical Assistance	A/S, W/S	Western	\$149,801	3 years	American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
Arizona Evidence-Based Practices (EBPS) Fidelity Monitoring*	W/S, V/A	Western	\$1,124,155	7.3 7/24-6/25	State of Arizona
Arizona – Mercy Care C.A.R.E.S. Training	W/S, V/A	Western	\$70,000	2/24-3/25	Mercy Care
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration Crisis Professional Curriculum Project	W/S, A/S	Western	\$682,853	0.75 11/23-12/25	State of Colorado
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration Rural Behavioral Health Initiative	W/S, A/S	Western	\$1,558,920	1.5 10/24-6/26	State of Colorado
Guam Psychology Internship Consortium (GU-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$208,445	0.75 10/24-9/25	U.S. Territory of Guam
Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium (HI-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$1,788,433	0.5 7/24-6/25	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Recruitment of School-Based Clinical Psychologists*	W/S	Western	\$100,000	Ongoing	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Recruitment of School-based Behavioral Health and Social Workers*	W/S	Western	\$125,000	Ongoing	State of Hawai'i

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Idaho Psychology Internship Consortium (ID-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$125,000	7/24-6/25	State of Idaho
Montana PACT Fidelity Reviews*	W/S, V/A	Western	\$349,575	1.5 7/24-6/25	State of Montana
Mountain Plains Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center (MP ROTAC)	A/F, A/S, I	Western	\$649,500	3.0 9/22-9/25	U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
National Institutes of Health Behavioral Health Aide Assessment	W/S	Western	\$143,626	0.75 10/21-7/26	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; Northwest Indian College; University of Alaska – Anchorage
Nevada Psychology Internship Consortium (NV-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$358,094	0.25 8/23-8/25	State of Nevada
New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortium (NM-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$352,287	0.5 8/24-8/25	State of New Mexico; Indian Health Service
Oregon State Hospital Psychology Internship Program* (OSH-PIP)	A/S, W/S	Western	\$3,000	7/24-6/25	State of Oregon
Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)*	W/S	Western	\$895,487	2.25 9/24-8/25	JBS International
Together With Veterans* – Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention	W/S	U.S.	\$2,273,375	4.5 4/24-3/25	U.S. Veterans Administration's Office of Rural Health and Office of Suicide Prevention
Sanford Health Psychology Internship Consortium (SH-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$200,000	0.5 3 Years	Sanford Health
South Dakota IMP(ACT) Fidelity Reviews*	W/S, V/A	Western	\$49,900	0.25 6/24-5/25	State of South Dakota
South Dakota Psychology Internship Consortium (SD-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$79,688	0.25 8/22-6/25	State of South Dakota

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
University of Wisconsin Technical Assistance*	A/S, W/S	U.S.	\$52,659	0.4 9/24-8/25	University of Wisconsin
Utah Psychology Internship Consortium (UT-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$33,920	7/24-6/25	State of Utah
Washington Health Care Authority Digital Behavioral Health Project	A/F, A/S, I	Western	\$570,601	7/24-6/25	State of Washington

*WICHE expects these projects will be renewed or they have already been renewed for FY 2026.

ALASKA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (AK-PIC) INTERNS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

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. The AK-PIC consists of a multisite consortium of Alaska agencies that maintain at least one supervising psychologist onsite to provide supervision and didactic training to interns.

ALASKA PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE – REGULATORY COMPLIANCE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

The WICHE BHP was selected through a competitive bidding process to assist the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) in maintaining compliance with regulating agencies through a review of policies, health information management, infection control, milieu management, risk management, medical staff credentialing, pharmacy practices, and life safety code and environment of care. The WICHE BHP performs on-site reviews and provides guidance on how to address shortcomings in policies and execution.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ADDICTION PSYCHIATRY (AAP) STATE OPIOID/TRIBAL OPIOID RESPONSE (SOR/TOR) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

The WICHE BHP is partnering with the AAP to assist with implementing provisions of its SOR/TOR grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The WICHE BHP will be providing training and technical assistance to rural behavioral health workers for the purpose of supporting families impacted by substance misuse in rural and tribal communities. These trainings and workshops will support mental and behavioral health system enhancements through networking among state and tribal programs.

ARIZONA EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (EBPS) FIDELITY MONITORING: The WICHE BHP partners with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System to support the implementation and fidelity reviews of four EBPs in the Maricopa County and statewide

public behavioral health systems. The WICHE BHP supports a team of fidelity reviewers who review approximately 20 different providers in Maricopa County, and 24 different providers across the state each year.

ARIZONA MERCY CARE C.A.R.E.S. TRAINING: The WICHE BHP collaborates with Arizona-based Mercy Care through its C.A.R.E.S (Community Action Resources Education and Service) community-giving initiative to plan and provide training to increase workforce expertise by implementing training strategies for evidence-based practices: Trauma-informed Care for Children, Youth and Adults; Transition to Independence Model; Infant-Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona 0-5 Training; and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders including Opioids.

COLORADO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION CRISIS PROFESSIONAL

CURRICULUM: The State of Colorado, Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) contracted with the WICHE BHP to provide technical assistance in the development of a Crisis Professional Training Curriculum consisting of 24 distinct modules. The WICHE BHP is augmenting the BHA staff with Crisis Professional Expertise by supporting the work of a Crisis Professional Advisory Board, reviewing curriculum modules, and developing training for crisis professionals, first responders, and youth and young adults.

COLORADO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION RURAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

INITIATIVE: The State of Colorado, BHA contracted with the WICHE BHP to help the state increase access to behavioral health services and support for older adults living in rural Colorado. The intent of this project is to build rural healthcare capacity for the identification and referral of those with behavioral health needs to appropriate services. The WICHE BHP will build training modules for rural health providers to build awareness and skill in utilizing behavioral health assessments as well as confidence in referring patients to appropriate channels to receive services and care, including telehealth opportunities for supporting the behavioral health needs of the community.

GUAM PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (GU-PIC): The WICHE BHP has partnered with the U.S. Territory of Guam to develop an accreditable psychology internship consortium to serve Guam and build the behavioral health workforce there. The WICHE BHP assists by guiding all phases of developing a psychology internship consortium to attract and retain qualified and highly trained behavioral health professionals.

HAWAI'I PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (HI-PIC): The WICHE BHP supports the state of Hawai'i in the ongoing operations 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. Two Hawai'i state agencies (the Department of Education and the Department of Health) provide funding to support HI-PIC.

HAWAI'I 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.

HAWAI'I RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND SOCIAL WORKERS: The WICHE BHP is assisting the Hawai'i Department of Education with marketing, recruitment, screening, and referral services for school-based behavioral health (SBBH) and social work professionals to fill public school vacancies across the Hawaiian Islands. This effort is designed to increase the employment of SBBH and social work professionals.

IDAHO PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (ID-PIC): The WICHE BHP is assisting the State of Idaho in the ongoing operations of an accredited psychology internship consortium. The primary goal of the internship consortium 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 expanding and strengthening the internship program.

MONTANA PACT 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 seven 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 RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (MP ROTAC): In October of 2022, the WICHE BHP 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 distributes resources, training, and technical assistance to rural communities across the continuum of care. In September of 2024, SAMHSA added funding for a third year of MP ROTAC operations.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE ASSESSMENT: The WICHE BHP, 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 evaluates 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.

NEVADA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (NV-PIC): The WICHE BHP assists the State of Nevada in the continued operation of an accredited psychology internship consortium. The 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 provide support and funding for WICHE BHP's ongoing technical assistance and support to the operation of the NV-PIC.

NEW MEXICO PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (NM-PIC): The WICHE BHP is working with partner agencies to support a doctoral psychology internship consortium for the State of New Mexico. The 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 is facilitating program development and helping to ensure the program meets American Psychological Association accreditation standards.

OREGON STATE HOSPITAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (OSH-PIP): The WICHE BHP continues to assist the Oregon State Hospital Psychology Internship Training Program by supporting and maintaining the internship's website.

RURAL COMMUNITIES OPIOID RESPONSE PROGRAM (RCORP): The WICHE BHP 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, the WICHE BHP provides technical assistance to 57 rural planning and implementation opioid grantees and psychostimulant grantees funded for three years by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS – RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION: The WICHE BHP is collaborating with the Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) to support the operations of Together With Veterans (TWV), 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 TWV program has been implemented in 38 rural communities, with 25 of those communities having completed their three-year commitment to the program. 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 U.S. Territory of Guam.

SANFORD HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (SH-PIC): The WICHE BHP worked with the leadership of Sanford Health to help develop 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 an extensive national footprint and is a leading agency in advancing 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: The WICHE BHP 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. The WICHE BHP will also be working with the state to develop a fidelity review scale for forensics teams.

SOUTH DAKOTA PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (SD-PIC): The University of South Dakota contracted with the WICHE BHP to develop a psychology internship consortium. The WICHE 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: The WICHE BHP 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. The WICHE BHP will provide expert trainers for a series of six training sessions over 12 weeks, twice a year, for the next two years. Many expert trainers will be provided in conjunction with the ongoing work of WICHE's RCORP and MP ROTAC initiatives.

UTAH PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (UT-PIC): The WICHE BHP is working with partner agencies to develop the internship consortium's self-study to help ensure the program meets the American Psychological Association accreditation standards. The WICHE BHP will also provide technical assistance to the internship as needed by the training committee.

WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY DIGITAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROJECT: The Washington Health Care Authority (HCA) contracted with the WICHE BHP to assist the HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Rehabilitation's Prenatal Through 25 Program with implementing two legislative budget provisos. The provisos seek to identify digital

behavioral health technologies appropriate for children, youth, and young adults. One proviso calls for procuring a vendor to implement a pilot project for school-aged children. Under the second proviso, the HCA must issue a Request for Information and establish an expert panel to identify appropriate “digital behavioral health prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services” for youth and young adults. WICHE provides project management, administrative support, and subject matter expertise to support this project.

New Directions

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

Focus: A/F Affordability & 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 Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration Crisis Telehealth Initiative	W/S, A/S, I	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	TBD	1 year	State of Colorado Behavioral Health Administration
Expansion of Behavioral Health Aide (BHA) Model in Pacific Jurisdictions	W/S, A/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	TBD	1 year	Pacific Jurisdictions Native Alaskan Tribal Health Consortium
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Western	TBD	TBD	WICHE states

COLORADO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION CRISIS TELEHEALTH INITIATIVE:

The State of Colorado, Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), and the WICHE BHP have discussed the possibility of the BHP assisting the BHA with its Crisis Telehealth Initiative. The WICHE BHP would provide project management, administrative support, and technical expertise to the State to implement a one-year pilot program that would deploy electronic devices (e.g., iPads) to first responders (law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical

technicians), schools, libraries, etc., as well as to individuals who have been identified with serious mental health disorders for the purpose of having immediate access to mental health professionals to help deescalate a potential crisis situation. The BHA is interested in modeling its program after a similar program that was implemented by the State of Oklahoma.

EXPANSION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE (BHA) MODEL IN PACIFIC JURISDICTIONS:

The WICHE BHP is providing technical assistance to the Community Guidance Center in the CNMI to launch a pilot project implementing the BHA model of a local community behavioral health paraprofessional worker, modeled after the Alaska BHA program. Concurrently, the WICHE BHP is providing technical assistance to the Pacific Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (PBHCC) to establish a certification system for BHAs. Current funding has been provided to WICHE from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), and there is interest from the other Pacific Jurisdictions to expand this effort. The WICHE BHP is exploring funding sources to support such expansion.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS:

The Policy unit will continue exploring ways to improve behavioral health in postsecondary education, building on a recently completed successful project. This work will likely focus on several potential approaches, including meeting future behavioral health workforce needs, building supportive state- and system-level networks to improve the distribution of promising approaches, and catalyzing the adoption of broad-based approaches to student health and wellness.

Potential Future Projects

Work that staff is considering pursuing:

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM: The WICHE BHP is working with the newly formed Hawai'i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to explore the possibility of assisting the department in developing a classification system to accurately assess the mental health needs of the department's patient population. This project would be designed to improve the types and quantity of services the department provides to its incarcerated population.

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

Previously considered projects that were proposed to be removed from the Workplan: None at this time.

Completed Projects

Work that staff completed in FY 2024:

AVONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT REACCREDITATION TECHNICAL

ASSISTANCE: The WICHE BHP supported Arizona's Avondale Elementary School District's reaccreditation of its Doctoral School Psychology Internship Program by providing technical assistance in its submission of a reaccreditation application to the American Psychological Association.

MOUNTAIN PLAINS MENTAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTER (MP-MHTTC):

The MP-MHTTC was a six-year partnership between the WICHE BHP and the University of North Dakota to provide comprehensive training, resources, and technical assistance to mental health providers and other practitioners across six states. Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the center specialized in rural and frontier mental health in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM DIRECTORS

(NASMHPD) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The WICHE BHP was a subcontractor to NASMHPD on its Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Technical Assistance Coalition and Transformation Transfer Initiative. The BHP focused on implementing and expanding 988 crisis services in rural and frontier regions through a series of training and technical assistance sessions for providers across the country. Additionally, the BHP assisted the CNMI in developing a behavioral health aide certification program.

COLLABORATIONS ACROSS UNITS

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

Project	Focus	Units	Activity Category	Partners
A Hole in State Policy: Alternative Providers in Postsecondary Education	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	Projects and Initiatives	The Policy unit will work with WCET to consider appropriate frameworks to address the rise of alternative credentials in postsecondary education. This work will help ensure that WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions can take advantage of legitimately innovative and disruptive ideas while also protecting students from the predatory practices of substandard providers.
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	Projects and Initiatives (DHS-funded and seeking funding)	The work entails interplay between WICHE's cyber fellow (under WCET) and Policy Analysis and Research staff. The WICHE President is working with the units to develop a sustainability plan.
Evolving Higher Education Policy Issues	A/S, I	WCET, Policy Analysis and Research	Projects and Initiatives (variously funded)	Through WCET's <i>Frontiers</i> 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 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 the Policy unit and Behavioral Health Program expertise alike to identify policy and practice gaps related to campus behavioral health services and systems.

ACTION ITEM

Affirmation of Codes of Ethics for the WICHE Commission, President, and Staff

Summary

Codes of Ethics have been developed and approved by the Commission for staff, the Commission, and the president. While these are all distinct, given the different roles and responsibilities of each, they have been developed in concert so that they are consistent in the intent to assure that WICHE operates in an exceptionally ethical manner. The Code of Ethics for the Commission was most recently approved in 2024 and is reviewed annually. The Codes of Ethics for staff and president proposed below are aligned with the most recent version.

Code of Ethics – Commission

The Western Regional Education Compact calls upon commissioners appointed by each participating state and Pacific Island jurisdiction to oversee the development of WICHE's programs in order to strengthen higher education's contribution to the social and economic life of the region. Ethical practices are essential to the creation, implementation, and continued operation of effective, equitable programs that benefit the residents of the West.

It is essential that WICHE espouse its own standards of ethical conduct since codes differ by state and Pacific Island jurisdictions and do not apply to an interstate agency such as WICHE. In this regard, each WICHE commissioner agrees individually to:

- ▶ Fulfill their responsibilities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
- ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the WICHE Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.
- ▶ Avoid possible conflicts of interest between their responsibilities as a state-appointed official and the policies, procedures, and operations of the multistate organization. Should a potential conflict arise, a commissioner has the responsibility to disclose this to the Commission and to recuse themselves from any discussion or actions with regard to the potential conflict of interest.
- ▶ Foster high standards of professional and ethical conduct within WICHE and the Commission.
- ▶ Support the principles of due process and civil and human rights of all individuals while being vigilant to resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Assure that allegations of ethics violations concerning a member of staff or the Commission are thoroughly investigated and reviewed. The president or their designee shall review allegations concerning a WICHE staff member. Allegations against

the president or a commissioner shall be reviewed by the Commission officers in consultation with the Executive Committee.

- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would appear to be, a conflict between the commissioner's personal interests and the interests of WICHE or its member states or Pacific Island jurisdictions.
- ▶ Avoid exploiting their position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

Code of Ethics – President

A Code of Ethics has been adopted by the Commission for the president. It is as follows:

The president is the chief executive officer of the Commission, as stated in the Bylaws for WICHE. The president's ethical practices are essential to the creation, implementation, and continued operation of effective, equitable programs that benefit the residents of the West.

It is essential that WICHE espouse its own standards of ethical conduct, since codes differ by state and Pacific Island jurisdiction and may not apply to an interstate agency such as WICHE. In this regard, the president agrees to:

- ▶ Fulfill her responsibilities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
- ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and adhere with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the WICHE Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.
- ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest between her responsibilities and the policies, procedures, and operations of WICHE; and through policies, procedures, and actions, ensure the appropriate ethical conduct of the WICHE staff.
- ▶ Disclose any potential conflicts of interest, should one ever arise, to the officers of the Commission.
- ▶ Support principles of due process and civil and human rights for all individuals, while being vigilant and resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would

appear to be, a conflict between the president's personal interests and the interests of WICHE or its member states or Pacific Island jurisdictions.

- ▶ Avoid exploiting her position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

Staff members believing that the president may have breached this code of ethics have a responsibility to seek appropriate remedy including referring the potential breach to the officers of the Commission.

Code of Ethics – Staff

WICHE staff ethical practices are essential to the creation, implementation, and continued operation of effective, equitable programs that benefit the residents of the West.

It is essential that WICHE espouse its own standards of ethical conduct since codes differ by state and Pacific Island jurisdiction and may not apply to an interstate agency such as WICHE. In this regard, it is crucial for the WICHE staff to:

- ▶ Fulfill their responsibilities in a professional manner with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
- ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the WICHE Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.
- ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest between their responsibilities and the policies, procedures, and operations of WICHE. Through policies, procedures, and actions, ensure appropriate ethical conduct. If staff members have any question whether a situation is a conflict of interest, they should discuss the matter with their supervisor. If it remains unresolved, refer the matter to the president for final determination.
- ▶ Should a potential conflict arise for any staff member, they have the responsibility to disclose this to their immediate supervisor.
- ▶ Foster high standards of professional and ethical conduct within WICHE and with external interactions.
- ▶ Support the principles of due process and civil and human rights of all individuals, while being vigilant to resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would appear to be, a conflict between the staff member's personal interests and the interests

of WICHE or its member states or Pacific Island jurisdictions. Activities directly related to WICHE business, such as business dinners with colleagues or vendors, are not considered to be a conflict of interest.

- ▶ Avoid exploiting their position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

Action Requested

Affirmation of Codes of Ethics for the WICHE Commission, President, and Staff.

References

REFERENCES

WICHE Regional Factsheet	10-2
WICHE Commission	10-6
Future Commission Meeting Dates and Locations	10-9
2025 Commission Committees	10-10
Legislative Advisory Committee	10-11
Behavioral Health Oversight Council	10-14
WICHE Staff	10-16
WICHE Organization Chart	10-18
WICHE Region	10-19
Higher Education Acronyms	10-20

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25

\$671M

TOTAL SAVED

by students through WICHE Student Access Programs.

\$616M

SAVED
through WUE

\$40M

SAVED
through WRGP

\$15M

SAVED
through PSEP

WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE



Saves **UNDERGRADUATE** students on out-of-state tuition. They pay no more than 150% of in-state tuition at partner institutions across the West.

49,177

STUDENTS
chose WUE schools
in the West

\$12,517

AVERAGE SAVINGS
for undergraduate
students

WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM



Saves **GRADUATE** students on out-of-state certificate, master's, and doctoral programs. They pay no more than 150% of in-state tuition at partner institutions across the West.

2,867

STUDENTS
chose WRGP schools
in the West

\$13,961

AVERAGE SAVINGS
for graduate
students

PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM



Helps students pursuing careers in **10 HEALTH FIELDS**. They can enroll in programs in the WICHE region and receive substantial tuition support from their home state/territory.

10 WICHE states and two Pacific Island territories **invested \$15 million to grow their healthcare workforce and reduced the educational costs of 566 students.**

135 accredited programs are offered through PSEP at 65 institutions.

A student can save between \$36,500 and \$142,800 on tuition over the lifespan of a professional health degree program, depending on the field of study.

Regional collaboration

WICHE brings together senior academic leaders to foster dialogue about issues facing individual institutions through its leadership and professional development networks.

WESTERN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC LEADERS The Alliance is a consortium of leaders at community colleges, technical schools, and systems and state governing and coordinating boards associated with two-year institutions.

WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM The Forum is a consortium of academic officers at four-year institutions, including those awarding bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as chief executives and chief academic officers for systems and state governing boards.

WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY is a yearlong professional development program for academic leaders aspiring to become chief academic officers in the WICHE region's postsecondary sector.

Created by the WICHE Commission in 1995, the **LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)** works to strengthen state-level postsecondary policymaking across the West. Members are legislators appointed by each state, territory, or freely associated state in the WICHE region; they meet annually to explore emerging policy issues and develop strategies for interstate collaboration.

WICHE offers student health and technology contracts through a **COST-SAVINGS PROGRAM** with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to colleges and universities, K-12 school districts, local and state municipalities, and nonprofit organizations with an education emphasis. Last year, entities that used these contracts saved 9% over what they otherwise would have outside this joint purchasing arrangement.

NO HOLDING BACK In 2022-23, 12 WICHE institutions analyzed data, policies, and practices to make improvements to how it used holds on registration or transcripts, and contributed to the development of tools for other institutions to undertake this work.

Optimal behavioral health care

CONSORTIA, which helps build the behavioral health workforce pipeline, particularly in rural or remote areas. WICHE contributes an administrative framework, American Psychological Association accreditation, and other support for consortia across the WICHE region, which include:

- ▶ Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium (AK-PIC)
- ▶ Guam Psychology Internship Consortium (GU-PIC)
- ▶ Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium (HI-PIC)
- ▶ Idaho Psychology Internship Consortium (Idaho-PIC)
- ▶ Nevada Psychology Internship Consortium (NV-PIC)
- ▶ New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortium (NM-PIC)
- ▶ Oregon State Hospital Psychology Internship Program (OSH-PIP)
- ▶ Sanford Health Psychology Internship Consortium (SH-PIC)
- ▶ South Dakota Psychology Internship Consortium (SD-PIC)
- ▶ Utah Psychology Internship Consortium (UT-PIC)

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS (TWV) – RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM enlists rural Veterans and local partners to reduce Veteran suicide in their own community. Funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and administered by the WICHE BHP, TWV provides individualized coaching, tools, training, technical assistance, and resources, supporting 38 rural communities with 16 communities in the WICHE region, representing 11 Western states.

WESTERN STATES DECISION SUPPORT GROUP (WSDSG) Since 1985, the WICHE BHP has hosted the WSDSG, which serves as an information-sharing network and collaboration group for state behavioral health data and evaluation staff from WICHE states and territories. WSDSG members discuss emerging issues in behavioral health data collection, reporting, and system evaluation. The BHP 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. WSDSG is available to WICHE region members and is funded by annual membership fees.

Under contract with the **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ADDICTION PSYCHIATRY**, WICHE BHP provides training and technical assistance to reduce the impacts of opioid and stimulant misuse and other use disorders. This contract services Region 8 states

MOUNTAIN PLAINS RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (MP ROTAC) develops and shares resources, training, and technical assistance focused on opioid and stimulant misuse in rural areas in Region 8. This is funded through a multiyear grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

RURAL COMMUNITIES OPIOID RESPONSE PROGRAM (RCORP) is a multiyear initiative supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to identify treatment barriers and best practices for preventing and treating substance use disorder. BHP provides technical assistance to 57 grantees across the U.S., supporting 24 grantees in the WICHE region.

Sound public policy

STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (SARA) is a voluntary agreement that provides reciprocity for the state authorization of distance education. WICHE Commissioners have been strong advocates for protecting the state voice in important governance decisions affecting this agreement and staff continue to support participating states and improving student protections while bolstering access.

Created by the WICHE Commission in 1995, the **LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)** works to strengthen state-level postsecondary policymaking across the West. Members are legislators appointed by each state, territory, or freely associated state in the WICHE region; they meet annually to explore emerging policy issues and develop strategies for interstate collaboration.

KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR is the leading U.S. resource for projections of high school graduates. Released in December 2024, the newest edition is essential for postsecondary policymakers, planning and workforce efforts, and economic development. Visit wiche.edu/knocking to access reports, interactive dashboards, webinars, presentations as well as state-level data

and policy resources to support better-informed decision-making. WICHE's research projects and collaborations cover postsecondary completion, health workforce development, behavioral health in postsecondary education, open educational resources (OER), state finance, prior learning assessment, and more.

- ▶ **Tuition and Fees in the West** includes tuition, fees, and enrollment data about 350+ public institutions in the West.
- ▶ **Benchmarks: WICHE Region** presents information on the West's progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education.
- ▶ Data on over 35 indicators in WICHE's **Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West**.

CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS NETWORK WICHE has convened staff from across the region in a collaborative network to identify challenges and promising practices to help address workforce shortages in the health sector. Through this effort, WICHE members are able to share innovative approaches and collaborate to solve the complex challenges in this sector.

WICHE is identifying approaches for states to positively engage in high-quality **SHORT-TERM CREDENTIALS** through research and case-studies, with further work coming soon.

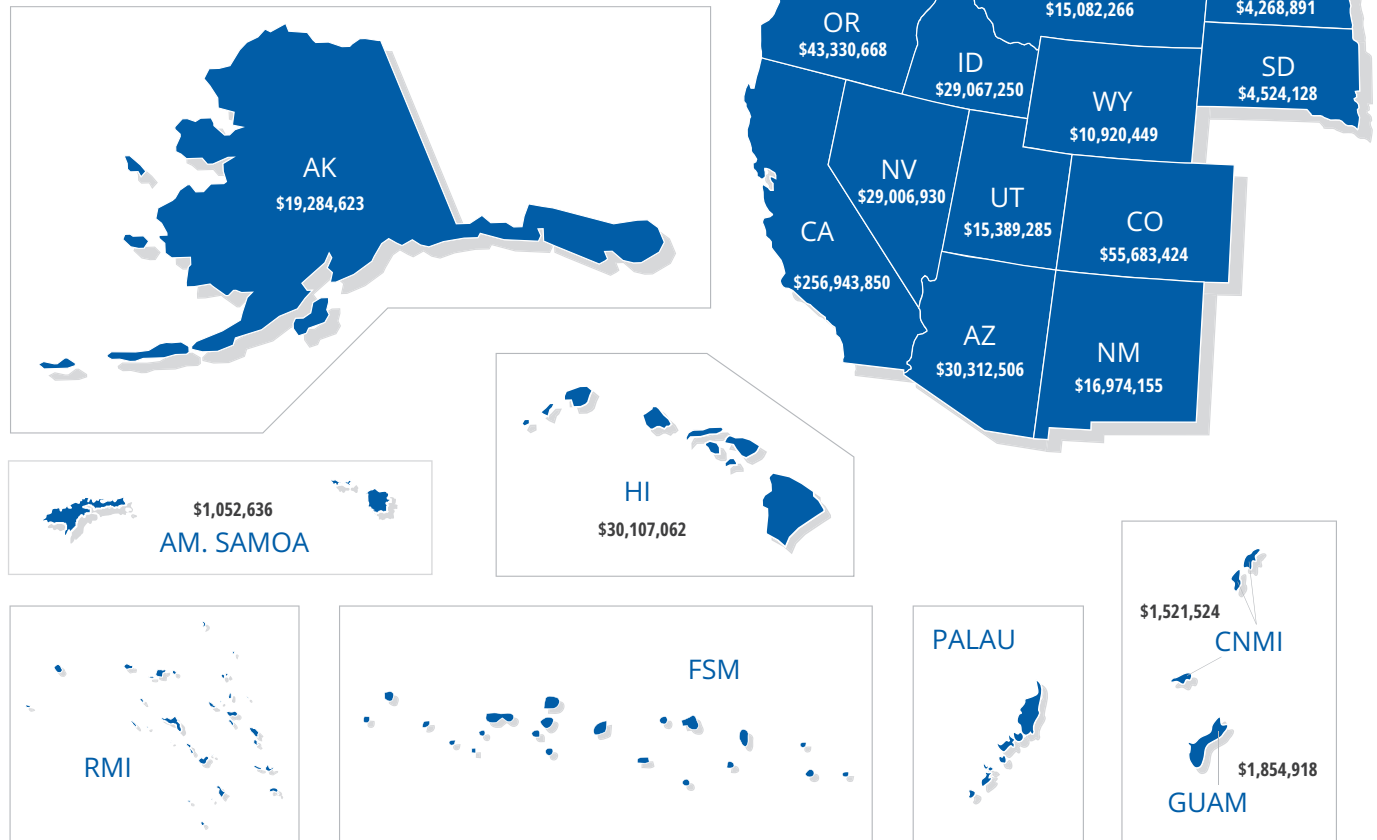
Innovative solutions

WCET – WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES is the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of digital learning in higher education. Its growing membership includes institutions, higher education agencies and systems, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in all U.S. states and several Canadian provinces. See wcet.wiche.edu/current-members for a complete list.

STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN) helps guide institutions through state regulations around online courses and programs. See wcetsan.wiche.edu/member-institutions-organizations for a

WICHE Region

\$670,616,334 = Total student savings through WICHE's Student Access Programs AY 2024-25



WICHE Commission April 2025

ALASKA

Tom Begich
Pearl Brower
Sean Parnell

ARIZONA

Kathleen Goeppinger
Todd Haynie
Chad Sampson

CALIFORNIA

Ellen Junn
Robert Shireman
VACANT

COLORADO

Jim Chavez
Antwan Jefferson
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Angie Paccione

HAWAII

Terrence George
David Lassner
Colleen Sathre

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Rick Aman
Matt Freeman
Joshua Whitworth

MONTANA

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Clayton Christian
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NEVADA

Patricia Charlton
Catherine (Cathy) Dinauer
Fred Lokken

NEW MEXICO

Barbara Damron (Chair)
Bill Soules
Patricia Sullivan

NORTH DAKOTA

Danita Bye
Kyle Davison
Mark Hagerott

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The WICHE Commission oversees the development of WICHE programs and ensures that the Western Regional Education Compact is carried out for the benefit of the residents of the West. WICHE's 48 commissioners, who are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and U.S. Pacific territories and the presidents of the freely associated states, are leaders in higher education; they include state higher education executive officers, college and university presidents, legislators, business and community leaders, and other key partners. *Executive Committee member

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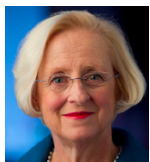
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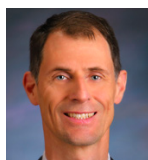
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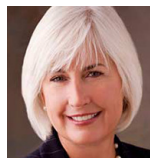
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APPROVED FUTURE COMMISSION MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Date	Location
November 13-14, 2025	Colorado Springs, Colorado
May 18-19, 2026	Washington
November 5-6, 2026	Colorado
May 3-4, 2027	New Mexico
November 4-5, 2027	Colorado
May 8-9, 2028	Alaska

Date	Location
November 9-10, 2028	Colorado
May 7-8, 2029	Wyoming
November 8-9, 2029	Colorado
May 6-7, 2030	Idaho
November 7-8, 2030	Colorado

2025 COMMISSION COMMITTEES

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Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Antwan Jefferson (CO),
Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
David Lassner (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific
Territories and Freely
Associated States/CNMI)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

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Jim Chavez (CO)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Bill Soules (NM)
Danita Bye (ND)
Lisa Skari (OR)

Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific
Territories and Freely
Associated States/RMI)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Mike Smith (WY)

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Territories and Freely
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Joseph Schaffer (WY)

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Danita Bye (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific
Territories and Freely
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Ann Millner (UT)

Special Committees

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

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Antwan Jefferson (CO)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

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David Lassner (HI)
Rick Aman (ID)
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Michael Meotti (WA)

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Kristy Crawford, Fidelity Specialist
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Karly Dickinson, Psychologist – Technical Assistance Associate
Madison Dupre, Administrative Assistant III
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Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead – Psychologist
Vanessa Roup, Technical Assistance Associate, RCORP/ROTAC
Caitylyn Grubb, Program Evaluation and Research Coordinator
Andie Hancock, Budget Coordinator
Todd Helvig, Director of Education and Training
Tonya Horn, Director of Program Evaluation and Research
Miah Jacobs-Brichford, Fidelity Specialist
Andrew Martinez, Director of Operations
Bobbi Perkins, Director, Mountain Plains ROTAC/Technical Assistance Lead
Annette Robertson, Fidelity Review Program Manager
Flora Shirzadian, Data Specialist
Allison Treu, Fidelity Specialist
Ivory Tubbs, Technical Expert Lead, RCORP

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Sherri Artz Gilbert, Senior Director,
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Administration

**Emilie Cook, Senior Manager, Content,
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**Laura DaVinci, Director, Every Learner
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Cheryl Dowd, Senior Director, State
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Leigha Fletcher, Administrative Assistant III

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Georgia Frazer, Human Resources
Assistant

IT SERVICES

Linc Neshiem, Chief Technology Officer

Chris Cartwright, IT Systems Engineer

As of April 2025

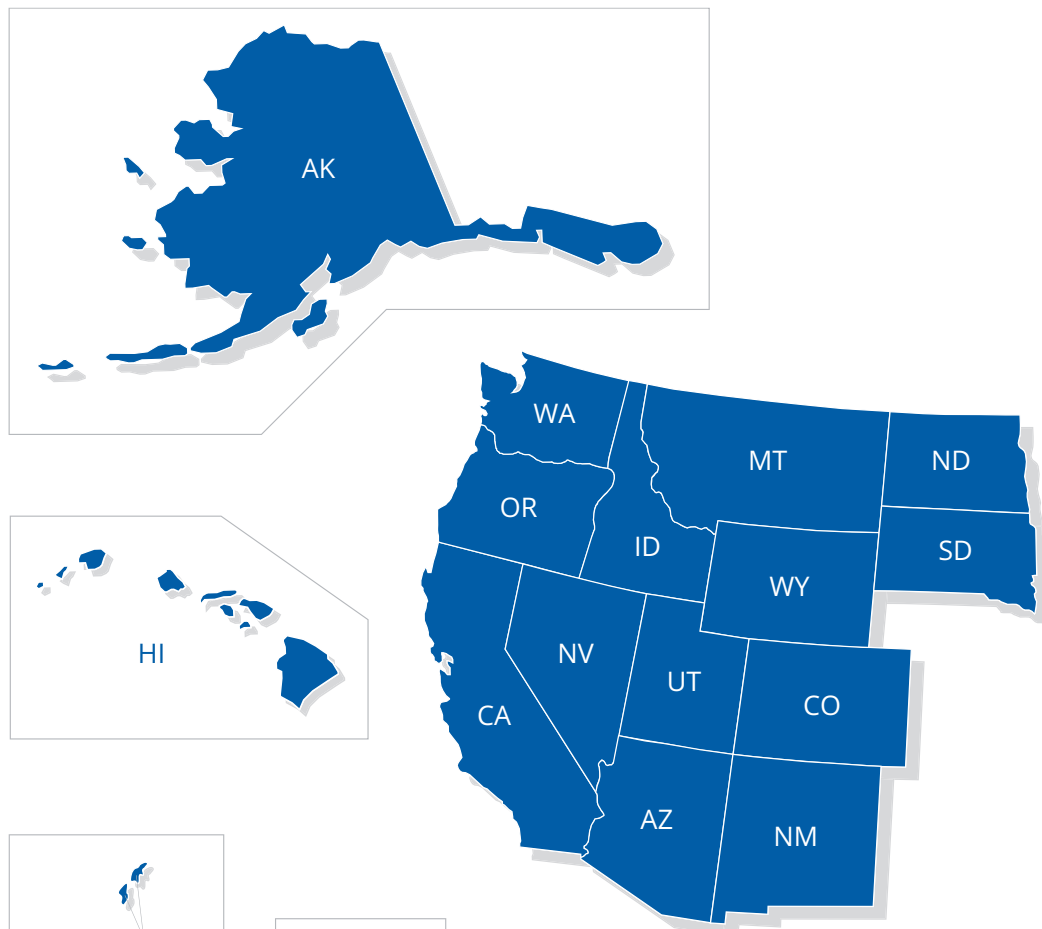
WICHE ORGANIZATION



WICHE REGION

WICHE STATES

Alaska (AK)
Arizona (AZ)
California (CA)
Colorado (CO)
Hawai'i (HI)
Idaho (ID)
Montana (MT)
Nevada (NV)
New Mexico (NM)
North Dakota (ND)
Oregon (OR)
South Dakota (SD)
Utah (UT)
Washington (WA)
Wyoming (WY)



U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES & FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

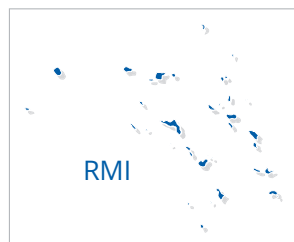
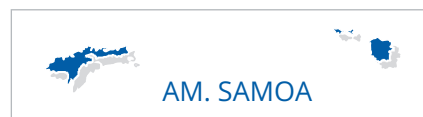
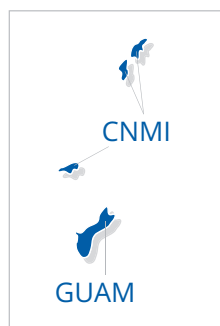
American Samoa
Commonwealth
of the Northern
Marianas Islands
(CNMI)

Guam

Republic of the
Marshall Islands
(RMI)

Federated States
of Micronesia
(FSM)

Republic of Palau



HIGHER EDUCATION ACRONYMS

Higher education uses many acronyms. Below, a list of acronyms and the organizations they refer to (plus a few others).

AACC	American Association of Community Colleges	aacc.nche.edu
AACRAO	American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers	aacrao.org
AACTE	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education	aacte.org
AAC&U	Association of American Colleges and Universities	aacu.org
AANAPISI	Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions	apiascholars.org
AASCU	American Association of State Colleges and Universities	aascu.org
AASHE	Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education	aashe.org
AAU	Association of American Universities	aau.edu
ACA	American Counseling Association	counseling.org
ACCT	Association of Community College Trustees	acct.org
ACE	American Council on Education	acenet.edu
ACT	College admission testing program	act.org
ACTA	American Council of Trustees and Alumni	goacta.org
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	ada.gov
AEI	American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research	aei.org
AERA	American Educational Research Association	aera.net
AGB	Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges	agb.org
AHRQ	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality	ahrq.gov
AIHEC	American Indian Higher Education Consortium	aihec.org
AIR	American Institutes of Research	air.org
AIR	Association for Institutional Research	airweb.org
ALLIANCE	Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders	wiche.edu/collaboration-leadership/western-alliance-of-community-college-academic-leaders
APA	American Psychological Association	apa.org
APLU	Association of Public and Land-grant Universities	aplu.org
ASHE	Association for the Study of Higher Education	ashe.ws
ATD	Achieving the Dream	achievingthedream.org
BHOC	WICHE 's Behavioral Health Oversight Council	
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	gatesfoundation.org
CAE	Council for Aid to Education	cae.org
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning	cael.org
CASE	Council for Advancement and Support of Education	case.org
CBEN	Competency Based Education Network	cbenetwork.org
CBO	Congressional Budget Office	cbo.gov

CCA	Complete College America	completercollege.org
CCME	Council of College and Military Educators	ccmeonline.org
CCTC	Council of Chairs of Training Councils (APA, Internships)	cctcpsychology.org
CGS	Council of Graduate Schools	cgsnet.org
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation	chea.org
CIC	Council of Independent Colleges	cic.edu
CLASP	Center for Law and Social Policy	clasphome.org
CMHC	Community Mental Health Centers	cms.gov
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services	cms.gov
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	doi.gov/oia/islands/cnmi
COA	APA Accreditation	accreditation.apa.coa
COE	Council for Opportunity in Education	coenet.org
CONAHEC	Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration	conahec.org
CONASEP	CONAHEC's Student Exchange Program	conahecstudentexchange.org
CSG-WEST	Council of State Governments - West	csgwest.org
CSPN	College Savings Plan Network	collegesavings.org
CUE	Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California	cue.usc.edu
DEAC	Distance Education Accrediting Commission	deac.org
DQC	Data Quality Campaign	dataqualitycampaign.org
ECS	Education Commission of the States	ecs.org
ED - U.S. Dept. of Education links:		
ED-ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	ed.gov/essa
ED-FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	studentprivacy.ed.gov
ED-FSA	Federal Student Aid	ed.gov/about/offices/list/fsa
ED-IES	Institute of Education Sciences	ies.ed.gov
ED-NCES	National Center for Education Statistics	nces.ed.gov
ED-OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education	ed.gov/octae
ED-OESE	Office of Elementary & Secondary Education	oese.ed.gov
ED-OPE	Office of Postsecondary Education	ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope
ED-OSERS	Office of Special Education & Rehabilitative Services	ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers
ED-FIPSE	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education	ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/fipse
EDUCAUSE	An association for higher ed change via technology and info resources	educause.edu
ELE	Every Learner Everywhere	everylearnereverywhere.org
EPI	Educational Policy Institute	educationalpolicy.org
ETS	Educational Testing Service	ets.org
Excelencia	Excelencia in Education	edexcelencia.org

NAFSA	An association of international educators	nafsa.org
NAICU	National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities	naicu.edu
NALEO	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials	naleo.org
NARMH	National Association for Rural Mental Health	narmh.org
NASASPS	National Association of State Administrators and Supervisors of Private Schools	nasasps.org
NASDTEC	National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification	nasdtec.net
NASFAA	National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators	nasfaa.org
NASH	National Association of System Heads	nashonline.org
NASMHPD	National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors	nasmhpd.org
NASNTI	Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions Program	www2.ed.gov/programs/nasnti
NASPA	National Association of Student Personnel Administrators	naspa.org
NASSGAP	National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs	nassgap.org
NASW	National Association of Social Workers	socialworkers.org
NC-SARA	National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements	nc-sara.org
NCA	North Central Association of Colleges and Schools	northcentralassociation.org
NCAN	National College Access Network	collegeaccess.org
NCAT	The National Center for Academic Transformation	thencat.org
NCCC	National Consortium for College Completion	
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics	nces.ed.gov
NCHEMS	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems	nchems.org
NCPR	National Center for Postsecondary Research	postsecondaryresearch.org
NCSL	National Conference of State Legislatures	ncsl.org
NEASC-CIHE	New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education	neasc.org
NEBHE	New England Board of Higher Education	nebhe.org
NGA	National Governors Association	nga.org
NIH	National Institutes of Health (HHS)	nih.gov
NILOA	National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment	learningoutcomeassessment.org
NIMH	National Institute of Mental Health (HHS-NIH)	nimh.nih.gov
NLA/SLA	New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability	newleadershipalliance.org
NPEC	National Postsecondary Education Cooperative	nces.ed.gov/npec
NPRM	Notice of Proposed Rule Making	fcc.gov/general/rulemaking-fcc
NPSAS	National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey	nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas
NRHA	National Rural Health Association	ruralhealthweb.org

NSC	National Student Clearinghouse	studentclearinghouse.org
NSSE	National Survey on Student Engagement	nsse.indiana.edu
NWCCU	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	www.nwccu.org
OCE	Online Course Exchange (WICHE)	wiche.edu/oce
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	www.oecd.org
OER	Open Educational Resources	wiche.edu/ open-educational-resources-in-the-west-to-advance-college-affordability
OLC	Online Learning Consortium	onlinelearningconsortium.org
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment	oecd.org/pisa
PESC	Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council	pesc.org
PPIC	Public Policy Institute of California	ppic.org
PSEP	Professional Student Exchange Program	wiche.edu/psep
RMAIR	Rocky Mountain Association for Institutional Research	rmair.org
S-SARA	Southern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	sreb.org/ state-authorization-sara
SACSCOC	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	sacscoc.org
SAN	State Authorization Network	wcetsan.wiche.edu
SBAC	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium	www.smarterbalanced.org
SCUP	Society for College and University Planning	scup.org
SFARN	Student Financial Aid Research Network	pellinstitute.org/sfarn.shtml
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association	sheeo.org
<i>SHEEO Offices in the West:</i>		
ABOR	Arizona Board of Regents	abor.asu.edu
ACPE	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education	acpe.alaska.gov/
CHE	Colorado Commission on Higher Education	higher.colorado.gov/cche.html
CDHE	Colorado Department of Higher Education	higher.colorado.gov
ISBE	Idaho State Board of Education	www.boardofed.idaho.gov
MUS	Montana University System	mus.edu
NDUS	North Dakota University System	ndus.edu
NMC	Northern Marianas College	marianas.edu
NMHED	New Mexico Higher Education Department	hed.state.nm.us
NSHE	Nevada System of Higher Education	nshe.nevada.edu/
HECC	Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission	education.oregon.gov
SDBOR	South Dakota Board of Regents	ris.sdbor.edu
UAS	University of Alaska System	alaska.edu
UH	University of Hawai'i System	hawaii.edu
USBR	Utah State Board of Regents	utahsbr.edu
USHE	Utah System of Higher Education	ushe.edu
UW	University of Wyoming	uwyo.edu

WSAC	Washington Student Achievement Council	wsac.wa.gov
WCCC	Wyoming Community College Commission	commission.wcc.edu
SHEPC	State Higher Education Policy Center	
SLDS	State Longitudinal Data System	nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/
SMHA	State Mental Health Authority	amhsa.gov
SONA	Student Organization of North America	conahec.org/conahec/sona
SPRC	Suicide Prevention Resource Center	sprc.org
SREB	Southern Regional Education Board	sreb.org
SREC	Southern Regional Electronic Campus	electroniccampus.org
SSA	Single State Agency for Substance Abuse	samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ssadirectory.pdf
SURA	Southeastern Universities Research Association	sura.org
SVA	Student Veterans of America	studentveterans.org
TCUs	Tribal Colleges and Universities	sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities
UCEA	University Council for Educational Administration	ucea.org
UNCF	United Negro College Fund	uncf.org
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization	unesco.org
UPCEA	University Professional Continuing Education Association	upcea.edu
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	va.gov
W-SARA	Western State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	wiche.edu/collaboration-leadership/w-sara
WAGS	Western Association of Graduate Schools	wagsonline.org
WASC-ACCJC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges	accjc.org
WCET	WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies	wcet.wiche.edu
WDQC	Workforce Data Quality Campaign	dataqualitycampaign.org
WDQI	Workforce Data Quality Initiative	dol.gov/agencies/eta/performance/wdqi
WGA	Western Governors' Association	westgov.org
WICHE	Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education	wiche.edu
WIN	Western Institute of Nursing	winursing.org
WIOA	Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act	dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa
WPSHA	Western Psychiatric State Hospital Association	wpsa.org
WRGP	Western Regional Graduate Program	wiche.edu/tuition-savings/wrgp
WSDSG	Western States Decision Support Group (WICHE BH Data Analysis Group)	wiche.edu/western-states-decision-support-group
WUE	Western Undergraduate Exchange	wiche.edu/tuition-savings/wue
YI	Young Invincibles	younginvincibles.org

FORHP	Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (HRSA)	hrsa.gov/rural-health
FORUM	Western Academic Leadership Forum	wiche.edu/collaboration-leadership/western-academic-leadership-forum/
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Center	ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/federally-qualified-health-centers
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations	gdpr.eu
GME	Graduate Medical Education	aamc.org/professional-development/affinity-groups/gea/gme
HACU	Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities	hacu.net
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	hbculifestyle.com
HBLI	Hispanic Border Leadership Institute	asu.edu/educ/hbli
HEA	Higher Education Act	acenet.edu/policy-advocacy/pages/HEA-ED/Higher-Education-Act.aspx
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	hhs.gov
HLC	Higher Learning Commission	hlcommission.org
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration	hrsa.gov
IES	Institute for Education Sciences	ies.ed.gov/
IHEP	Institute for Higher Education Policy	ihep.org
IIE	Institute of International Education	iie.org
iNACOL	Aurora Institute	aurora-institute.org
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System	nces.ed.gov/ipeds
JFF	Jobs for the Future	jff.org
M-SARA	Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	mhec.org/programs/midwestern-state-authorization-reciprocity-agreement
McREL	Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning	mcrel.org
MHA	Mental Health America	mhanational.org
MHEC	Midwestern Higher Education Compact	mhec.org
MHTTC	Mental Health Technology Transfer Centers	mhttcnetwork.org
MIRECC	Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center	mirecc.va.gov
MSA/CHE	Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education	middlestates.org
N-SARA	New England State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	nebhe.org/sara
NAAL	National Assessment of Adult Literacy	nces.ed.gov/naal
NACAC	National Association of College Admissions Counselors	nacacnet.org
NACIQI	National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity	sites.ed.gov/naciqi
NACUBO	National Association of College and University Business Officers	nacubo.org
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress	nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard
NAFEO	National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education	nafeonation.org

Thank you for attending the May 2025 Commission Meeting in majestic Park City, Utah! Increasing access to postsecondary education and improving positive student outcomes require collaboration and partnership. I continue to be inspired by the shared commitment of the Commission in the constant pursuit of our mission to serve all students in the West. By learning from each other and aligning our efforts, we can more effectively address challenges and recognize opportunities at the intersection of higher education and workforce development. While there is much to be done, we achieve more when we work together. I look forward to seeing each other again and bringing the Commission back to Colorado for the first time since 2019!

See you in Colorado Springs on November 13-14, 2025.

Thank you for all that you do, and keep doing great things!

– **Demi Michelau**, WICHE President

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