

WICHE has received three Technical Assistance Program grants from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs since fiscal year 2022. These funds cover the annual dues for the shared U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States membership, providing opportunities for capacity development and educational access in the Pacific region.

## Student Access Programs

WICHE's mission is to support student access and success, and **TUITION SAVINGS** is fundamental to that. Through WICHE's three Student Access Programs, students gain from increased educational choices and tuition savings, schools gain by optimizing their enrollment, and states and eligible Pacific jurisdictions gain by growing their residents' skills and strengthening their workforce.

Out-of-state tuition may cost students up to two or three times the in-state tuition rate. However, effective July 1, 2024, citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau may not be charged more than in-state tuition at public higher education institutions, per the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 and U.S. Department of Education guidance, expanding opportunities for students who are residents of these Pacific jurisdictions.

WICHE's **PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)** has supported healthcare education since 1953. By making professional healthcare degrees more affordable and accessible, PSEP has helped educate more than 16,100 Western healthcare professionals, creating a lasting impact on community health across the region. The state legislatures of 10 states and two territories (Guam and the CNMI) subsidize tuition for PSEP students to grow their healthcare workforce and reduce the educational costs of students. Currently, 135 accredited programs are offered through PSEP at 65 institutions across the West, and 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. Most participating states and territories ensure a return on investment through service requirements, typically asking graduates to practice in their home region for three to five years.

## Regional collaboration

**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.

The **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.

Through a **COST-SAVINGS PARTNERSHIP** with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), WICHE provides select opportunities for joint purchasing of hardware and software technology. Last year, entities that used these contracts saved 9% over what they otherwise would have outside this joint purchasing agreement.

## Optimal behavioral health care

For the past several years, WICHE's Behavioral Health program has provided substantial benefits and **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** across the region. This includes the development of undergraduate and graduate opportunities and articulation agreements with other institutions and other innovative efforts that can help to meet critical workforce needs of the region.

WICHE is supporting the development of a partnership between the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and the Pacific Behavioral Health Collaborating Council (PBHCC). Through this partnership, PBHCC will become the certifying body for **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDES**, a training program that will prepare Indigenous, community-based behavioral health workers. WICHE will continue to support the development of this program which is expected to provide strong benefits to Pacific communities through increased availability of behavioral health care.

## Sound public policy

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. Each U.S. Pacific territory and freely associated state appoints one member to the LAC.

**KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR** is the leading U.S. resource for projections of college-ready students. *Knocking* is essential for postsecondary policymakers, planning and workforce efforts, and

economic development. Although the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States do not have comprehensive coverage in the data resources that feed WICHE's modeling, the *Knocking* team is working with staff and experts in the region to collect the necessary data to produce reliable and useful models.

**DATA RESOURCES AND POLICY EXPERTS** WICHE offers curated 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.

A key challenge for the Pacific is that federal data and national reports rarely incorporate information from the territories and freely associated states. WICHE continues to advocate for more complete data collections that will help inform and guide policy in the Pacific and work with local institutions and agencies to incorporate Pacific data into WICHE's reports. WICHE's trusted publications and data analyses include:

- ▶ **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 convenes state, system, and institutional staff from across the West and Pacific in targeted virtual meetings to stay abreast of policy and research developments, share innovative solutions to common challenges, and collaborate to improve student

success. Though staff from the Pacific are invited to these meetings, recognizing the unique structures, challenges, and needs, WICHE may develop an additional network focused specifically on the region.

## Innovative solutions

**WCET – THE 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](http://wcet.wiche.edu/current-members) for a complete list. *Note: Membership in WCET requires a separate fee that is not covered by the WICHE annual dues.*

**STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN)** helps guide institutions through state and federal statutory and regulatory compliance for out-of-state activities of the institutions. See [wcetsan.wiche.edu/member-institutions-organizations](http://wcetsan.wiche.edu/member-institutions-organizations) for a complete list of members. *Note: Membership in SAN requires a separate fee that is not covered by the WICHE annual dues or the WCET membership fee.*

WICHE convenes the **OERWEST NETWORK**, which is part of a nationwide collaborative to scale the development and adoption of free course materials. Open educational resources (OER) have shown promise in improving student outcomes, particularly for students whom the high cost of textbooks can be a barrier to postsecondary success. As a component of a broad grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, WICHE works with Pacific partners to convene institutional staff in the region to identify ways the OER can support student success, affordability, and other positive outcomes in the region.

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