



# MEETING AGENDA

## Redefining Relationships: The Role of State Policy in a Changing Postsecondary Landscape

Seattle, Washington | September 8-9, 2025

### Monday, September 8

**7:30 - 8:30 a.m.**

**Breakfast**

*Fremont*

**8:30 - 9:15 a.m.**

**Welcome and Introductions**

*Admiral Ballroom*

A brief overview of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC), followed by group introductions.

**Speakers**

Barbara Damron, WICHE Chair, Professor Emerita and Visiting Professor of Nursing,  
University of New Mexico Health Sciences College of Nursing  
Demi Michelau, President, WICHE

**9:15 - 10:15 a.m.**

**Reflections on Postsecondary Legislative Priorities**

*Admiral Ballroom*

A dedicated opportunity for LAC members to share the postsecondary issues they addressed in 2025 and which areas are top of mind going into 2026.

**Facilitator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

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

**Break**

**10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

**The State Policy Impact of Federal Policy Shifts**

*Admiral Ballroom*

This multipart session will explore the evolving relationship between federal and state policymakers, highlighting key areas of focus for postsecondary education.

**Moderator**

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

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**10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**  
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*Admiral Ballroom*

**Framing – An Update from the NCSL Task Force on Higher Education**

Representatives from the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Task Force on Higher Education will share lessons learned from their ongoing work to explore how state and federal policy makers might reconsider their relationship as it relates to postsecondary education, focusing on how recent shifts at the federal level have impacted this work.

**Speakers**

Senator Ann Millner, Utah  
Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, NCSL

**Part One – Changes to Federal Financial Aid: What State Legislators Need to Know**

This session will provide an overview of impending changes to the federal student financial aid program, including student loans and Pell grants, which states have long relied upon to develop their own affordability strategies.

**Speakers**

Sarah Austin, Policy Analyst, National Association of Student Financial Aid  
Administrators (NASFAA)  
Regan Fitzgerald, Senior Manager, Student Loans, Pew Charitable Trusts

**Part Two – Policy Shifts and Postsecondary Institutional Finances: How Federal Policy Changes Impact State Institutions**

A suite of changes to policies at the federal level, such as cuts to indirect rates associated with sizeable federal grants, create deep budgetary uncertainty for state institutions. This session will highlight how these new budgetary pressures may impact state institutions.

**Speaker**

Jessica Wood, Sector Leader and Managing Director, USPF Education, S&P Global Ratings

**Panel Discussion**

Speakers from the preceding sessions will come together with LAC members to reflect on the interaction effects of these changes, and what they mean for postsecondary education.

**Speakers**

Sarah Austin, Policy Analyst, NASFAA  
Senator Ann Millner, Utah  
Phillip Oliff, Senior Officer, Student Loans, Pew Charitable Trusts  
Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, NCSL  
Jessica Wood, Sector Leader and Managing Director, USPF Education, S&P Global Ratings

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**12:30 - 1:30 p.m.**

*Fremont*

**Lunch**

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<b>1:30 - 2:30 p.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>State-Level Approaches to Postsecondary Behavioral Health</b> <p>Legislators are critical partners in the development of sustainable, state-level solutions to better meet the behavioral health needs of students, faculty, and staff. This session will explore promising strategies from inter-agency coordination to workforce development, as well as the impacts of federal policy changes.</p> <p><b>Moderator</b>  Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p> <p><b>Speakers</b>  Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health, WICHE  Zainab Okolo, Senior Vice President of Policy, Advocacy, and Government Relations, The Jed Foundation</p>
<b>2:30 - 2:45 p.m.</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>2:45 - 4:00 p.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>A Reimagined Regulatory Triad? How Oversight May Evolve</b> <p>The federal Higher Education Act identifies three key entities in postsecondary education oversight: accreditors, the federal government, and the states. Yet their respective roles have evolved considerably over time, with more changes ahead. This session will provide an overview of the triad and explore how federal policy changes related to postsecondary oversight may impact state activities.</p> <p><b>Moderator</b>  Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE</p> <p><b>Speakers</b>  Jan Friis, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)  Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p>
<b>4:00 - 4:30 p.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>Day One Reflections</b> <p>LAC members will share their thoughts on highlights of the day's discussion that resonated with them, reflect on what topics they would like to explore in more depth, and any areas of interest not addressed.</p> <p><b>Facilitator</b>  Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p>
<b>6:30 - 8:30 p.m.</b> <i>Marin</i>	<b>Optional Dinner</b> <p>Join LAC colleagues, speakers, and guests for an informal dinner at the hotel restaurant, Marin.</p>

## Tuesday, September 9

<b>7:30 - 8:30 a.m.</b> <i>Fremont</i>	<b>Breakfast</b>
<b>8:30 - 8:45 a.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>Day Two Opening</b> <p>LAC members will share what they hope to get out of the day's sessions and highlight any conversations from the preceding day they would like to continue.</p> <b>Facilitator</b> Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE
<b>8:45 - 9:45 a.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>The Completion Imperative: How States Are Investing in Completion Strategies</b> <p>With public confidence in higher education eroding and new regulatory approaches that emphasize a return on student investment, it is crucially important to ensure that postsecondary students complete their credentials at high rates. The session will include an example of how one state is investing in completion, followed by a group discussion of legislative approaches to completion strategies.</p> <b>Moderator</b> Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE <b>Speaker</b> Joseph Thiel, Deputy Commissioner, Academic, Research and Student Affairs, Montana University System
<b>9:45 - 10:15 a.m.</b>	<b>Extended Break</b> <p>An opportunity for attendees to check out of hotel rooms if needed.</p>
<b>10:15 - 11:30 a.m.</b> <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	<b>Artificial Intelligence in Postsecondary Education</b> <p>Higher education's relationship with artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved rapidly from skepticism to significant investment during just a handful of years. AI has cemented itself as an in-demand skill set for employers, while also playing a growing role in how students learn and how institutions operate. State policymakers will share how and why they are embracing this change.</p> <b>Moderator</b> Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE <b>Speakers</b> Senator Kevin Cook, Idaho Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Hawai'i Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Chief Labor Economist, Washington State Employment Security Department

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**11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

*Admiral Ballroom*

**Final Reflections and Looking Ahead to 2026**

LAC members will reflect on the meeting and revisit their priorities for 2026.

**Facilitator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

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