

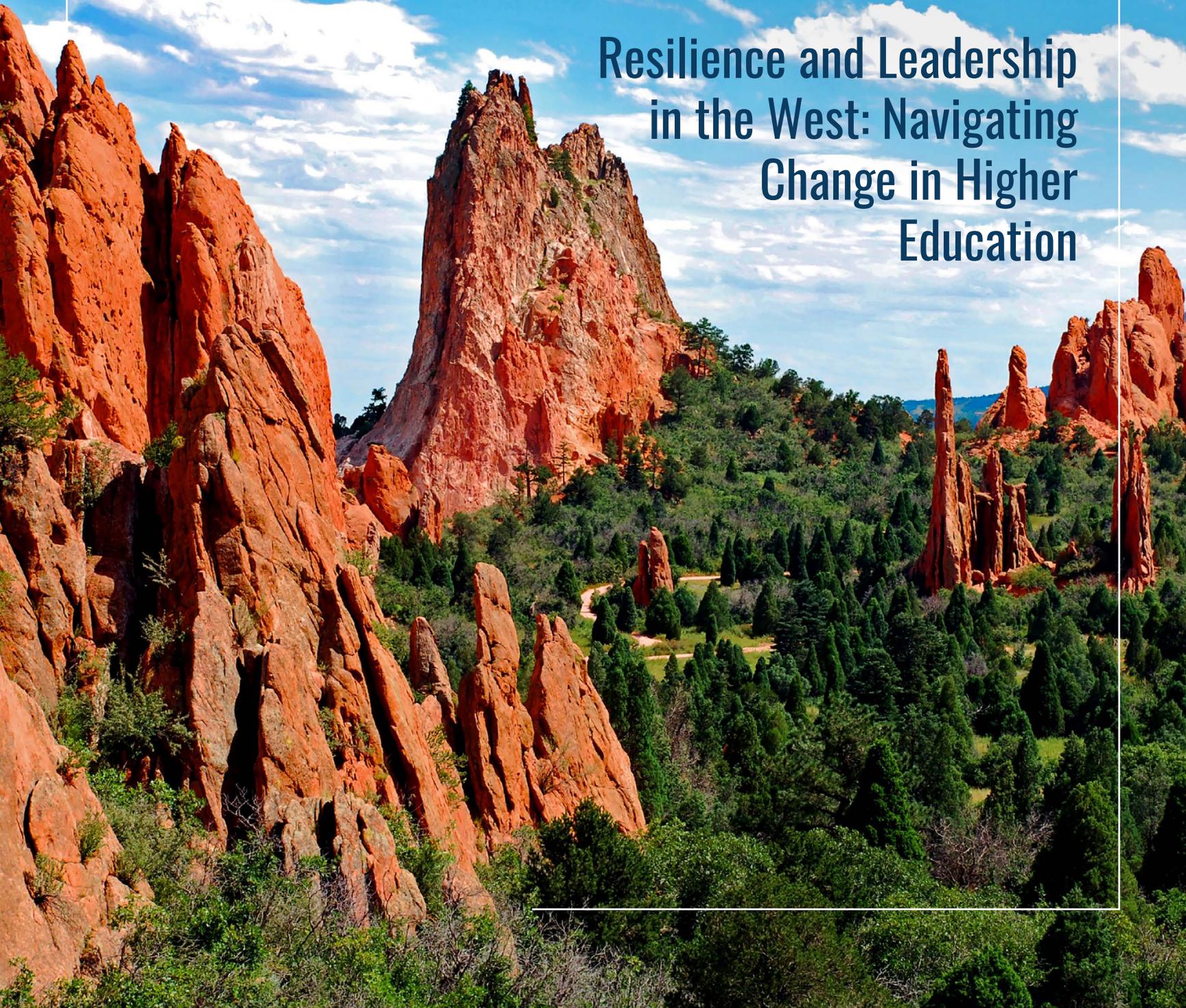


COMMISSION MEETING

November 13-14, 2025 | Colorado Springs, Colorado

AGENDA AND MEETING RESOURCES

**Resilience and Leadership
in the West: Navigating
Change in Higher
Education**



WICHE COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

Resilience and Leadership in the West: Navigating Change in Higher Education

November 13-14, 2025 (November 12 – New Commissioner Orientation)
Cheyenne Mountain Resort | 3225 Broadmoor Valley Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Noon <i>Remingtons I and II</i> Main Level / Lobby Level	Optional Lunch for New Commissioners and WICHE Staff	
1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Boardroom Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)	New Commissioner Orientation	
5:45 p.m. Meet in Main Level Lobby at 5:30 p.m. to travel together to the restaurant.	Dinner for New Commissioners New WICHE Commissioners and WICHE Officers are invited to dinner at <i>Ristorante Del Lago</i> , located in The Broadmoor hotel, 1 Lake Avenue, Colorado Springs, Colorado.	

Thursday, November 13, 2025

7:00 - 9:00 a.m. <i>Remingtons I and II</i> Main Level / Lobby Level	Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests	
7:30 - 8:45 a.m. Shoshoni Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)	Executive Committee Meeting (Open and Closed Sessions)	1-1
9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Centennial Ballroom Main Level / Lobby Level	Welcome and Opening Remarks Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair	2-1

9:30 – 10:45 a.m. Centennial Ballroom <i>Main Level / Lobby Level</i>	Plenary Session I – Beyond the Degree: The Broader Value of Higher Education in the West Facilitator Courtney Brown, Vice President of Impact and Planning, Lumina Foundation Panelists Commissioner Lisa Skari (OR), President, Mt. Hood Community College Brock Tessman, President, Montana State University	3-1
10:45 – 11:00 a.m. Centennial Ballroom Foyer <i>Main Level / Lobby Level</i>	Break	
<p><i>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.</i></p>		
11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Manitou <i>Conference Level</i> <i>(one level down from Lobby Level)</i>	Roundtable 1 – Unlocking Opportunities in a Changing Financial Aid Landscape Facilitator Crystal L. Collins, Vice President, State Affordability Initiatives, Strada Education Foundation	4-1
11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Shoshoni <i>Conference Level</i> <i>(one level down from Lobby Level)</i>	Roundtable 2 – Supporting Rural and Remote Institutions: Challenges, Opportunities, and Regional Collaboration Facilitator Brad Baca, President, Western Colorado University	4-2
12:15 - 1:15 p.m. Remingtons I and II <i>Main Level / Lobby Level</i>	Networking Lunch	
1:15 - 2:30 p.m. Shoshoni <i>Conference Level</i> <i>(one level down from Lobby Level)</i>	Programs and Services Committee Meeting	5-1

<p>1:15 - 2:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting</p>	<p>6-1</p>
<p><i>Manitou Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)</i></p>		
<p>2:30 - 2:45 p.m.</p>	<p>Break</p>	
<p><i>Centennial Ballroom Foyer Main Level / Lobby Level</i></p>		
<p>2:45 - 4:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Plenary Session II – Navigating Financial Uncertainty: Strategies for Institutional Resilience</p>	<p>7-1</p>
<p><i>Centennial Ballroom Main Level / Lobby Level</i></p>		
<p>Facilitator Tim Storey, Chief Executive Officer, National Conference of State Legislatures</p>		
<p>Panelists Bennett Boggs, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development Todd Saliman, President, University of Colorado Nick Swayne, President, North Idaho College</p>		
<p>5:30 - 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Reception at Penrose House supported by El Pomar Foundation</p>	<p>8-1</p>
<p><i>Meet in the hotel lobby at 5:15 p.m. for group transportation to the Penrose House.</i></p>		
<p>1661 Mesa Avenue, Colorado Springs, Colorado</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the reception, dinner on your own. • Group transportation will be provided back to Cheyenne Mountain Resort at the conclusion of the reception. 		
		

Friday, November 14, 2025

7:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Remingtons I and II
Main Level / Lobby Level

Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

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

The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions designed to provide commissioners with the opportunity to leverage various perspectives and 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.

Manitou
Conference Level
(one level down from
Lobby Level)

Roundtable 3 – Dual Credit Programs: Are They Meeting Expectations?

9-1

Facilitator

Jason Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy,
University of Utah

8:30 - 9:45 a.m.

Shoshoni
Conference Level
(one level down from
Lobby Level)

Roundtable 4 – Global Students, Local Solutions

9-2

Facilitator

Clay Harmon, Executive Director, AIRC: The Association of International Enrollment
Management

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

**Centennial Ballroom
Foyer**
Main Level / Lobby Level

Break

10:00 - 11:15 a.m.

Centennial Ballroom
Main Level / Lobby Level

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

10-1

11:15 - 11:30 a.m.

Centennial Ballroom
Main Level / Lobby Level

Closing Remarks

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 13, 2025

7:30 – 8:45 a.m.

Shoshoni Meeting Room

Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 7:30 – 8:45 a.m. | *Shoshoni*

Committee Members

Barbara Damron (NM), Committee Chair

Ann Millner (UT), Committee Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)

Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)

Robert Shireman (CA)

Jim Chavez (CO)

David Lassner (HI)

Jennifer White (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 Session)

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
|  ACTION ITEM | Approval of the September 18, 2025, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes | 1-2 |
|  ACTION ITEM | Approval of the October 9, 2025, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes | 1-10 |

Other Business

Agenda (Closed Session)

- | | |
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|  ACTION ITEM | Approval of Executive Compensation Study Findings and Further Action |
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Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the September 18, 2025, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Draft Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO) *proxy for Colorado*
David Lassner (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID) *proxy for Idaho*
Fred Lokken (NV)
Danita Bye (ND) *proxy for Kyle Davison*
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Mike Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice
President, Programs and Services
Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and
Administration
Margo Colalancia, Director of Student
Access Programs
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and
Vice President, Digital Learning
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the
President and the Commission
Molly Hall Martin, Director, W-SARA
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis
and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral
Health Program
Shelley Plutto, Interim Director, W-SARA
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
Communications

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. MDT. Roll was called by Laura Ewing, and quorum was confirmed. President Demarée Michelau introduced Ashley Clark, the new Vice President, Finance and Administration, attending her first Executive Committee meeting.

Information Item

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

Chair Damron announced the following new commissioners since the May 2025

Commission Meeting:

- ▶ Kate Siegel Shimko (CO), Vice Chancellor for Administration and Governmental Relations, Colorado State University System
- ▶ L. Dean Fisher (ID), President of the College of Southern Idaho
- ▶ Dave Lent (ID), Senator, Idaho Legislature
- ▶ Jennifer White (ID), Executive Director, Office of the State Board of Education of Idaho

Chair Damron explained that Shimko's appointment replaced Antwan Jefferson, who served as the Immediate Past Chair since January 2025. The Immediate Past Chair serves as committee chair to the Audit Committee and the Nominating Committee. She appointed Commissioner David Lassner as the replacement for Jefferson in the role of Committee Chair on the Audit and Nominating Committees.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 14, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Damron asked for any corrections to the August 14, 2025, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF COLORADO'S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (SARA)

Shelley Plutto presented the details of Colorado's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. The state of Colorado was approved for a two-year renewal in 2024. The state volunteered to shift its renewals to one year earlier (2025), so that the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and the WICHE Commission can consider states up for a renewal on a more regular and consistent basis, rather than reviewing a large number of renewals at a single meeting, as it had been happening previously.

At the time of W-SARA's review of Colorado's state compliance with SARA policy, it was recorded that Colorado had 44 participating institutions: 28 public, nine private/not-for-profit, and seven for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2023), Colorado's SARA institutions enrolled 64,050 distance education students through SARA, and 34,038 students located in Colorado were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. Colorado reported four student complaints to the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-

SARA), but none were SARA-qualifying complaints. Plutto reported that one institution on provisional status was due to heightened cash monitoring through the U.S. Department of Education. The State Portal Entity (SPE) determined that additional monitoring of that institution was not needed, as it was cleared once the state submitted the missing paperwork required by the U.S. Department of Education. One institution remains on provisional status due to a change in ownership that triggered the status. It was not noted when the status would be lifted. No institutions were denied renewal. W-SARA staff and the RSC deemed Colorado to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Jim Chavez MOVED TO APPROVE Colorado’s SARA renewal application. Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF WASHINGTON’S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (SARA)

Shelley Plutto presented the details of Washington’s State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. The state of Washington was approved for a two-year renewal in 2024. The state volunteered to shift its renewals to one year earlier (2025), so that the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and the WICHE Commission can consider states up for a renewal on a more regular and consistent basis, rather than reviewing a large number of renewals at a single meeting, as had been happening previously.

Plutto presented the details of Washington’s SARA renewal application. At the time of W-SARA’s review of Washington’s state compliance with SARA policy, it was recorded that Washington had 46 participating institutions: 29 public, 15 private/not-for-profit, and two for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2023), Washington’s SARA institutions enrolled 4,059 distance education students through SARA, and 54,687 students located in Washington were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. Washington reported one institution, Bastyr University, on provisional status due to being placed on “show cause” notice by its accreditor for lack of compliance with financial stability standards. As a condition of its provisional status, the state of Washington required the institution to procure a surety bond. During the renewal period, Washington received no SARA-qualifying complaints and did not have any institutions on heightened cash monitoring. No institutions were denied renewal, and no institutions had a change in ownership. W-SARA staff and the RSC deemed Washington to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger MOVED TO APPROVE Washington’s SARA renewal application. Commissioner Robert Shireman SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention.

Action Item

RESOLUTION OF WICHE SUPPORT OF NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE (NMC) BUILDING DEDICATION AND RECOVERY

Chair Damron gave a report about a formal resolution of WICHE’s support of the Northern Marianas College (NMC) building dedication and recovery from the October 24, 2018, Super Typhoon Yutu. The typhoon caused extensive damage to the NMC facilities and disrupted the educational mission of the college. Chair Damron emphasized the significance of the accomplishments during the rebuild in light of the challenges faced by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and highlighted NMC’s pivotal role in the region’s ongoing recovery.

Commissioner Frankie Eliptico shared that the college has been in recovery mode for five years and will celebrate the major milestone for the NMC campus recovery with a ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for October 2025. The new facility is the largest public structure built in the Commonwealth in the past two decades and represents a significant achievement for both the college and the broader CNMI community. The event will welcome college presidents, national representatives, and grantors involved in the recovery efforts. Commissioner Eliptico expressed deep appreciation for WICHE’s contributions and thanked President Michelau, Patrick Lane, and Dennis Mohatt for their continued support throughout the recovery and rebuilding process.

Commissioner Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE the adoption of the resolution that supports Northern Marianas College building dedication and recovery efforts. Commissioner Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously and with enthusiasm.

Discussion Item

UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION STUDY

Chair Damron provided an update regarding the ongoing Executive Compensation Study being conducted by Quatt, the third-party consultant for the study. The Executive Committee is to determine the final list of comparator organizations to be formally used by Quatt during its study and assessment. The decision is essential to ensure the comparison study maintains its integrity, relevance, and the value of the investment made in its development. Quatt identified comparator groups based on organizational size, revenue, and expenses. In addition to peer organizations, a list of higher education institutions will

be compiled and added to the list for comparative analysis.

Committee members were asked to review the preliminary list of comparator organizations and institutions and provide feedback to Chair Damron. Emails were encouraged for additional feedback within several days after the committee meeting adjourned. It was noted that feedback would be essential for refining the list and ensuring the study remains on track for completion by the November 2025 Commission Meeting.

It was emphasized that the comparator group is not to be a perfect match in terms of staffing levels, budgets, or revenues of WICHE. The goal of the study is to include entities that share higher education work and represent the skill set, the broad work experience, and background required in higher education, to successfully perform in the role of WICHE President.

Quatt will assess the organizational comparator list for compensation and include a variety of benefits that are extended to the entity in the role of the WICHE President. A presentation of the study's findings will be delivered by Quatt in a hybrid meeting, when they will join the Executive Committee meeting via Zoom at the November 2025 Executive Committee meeting. Holding a hybrid meeting for Quatt's participation is to avoid additional travel expenses for Quatt personnel to attend in person.

Committee members were encouraged to submit names of specific higher education institutions within their states — particularly those where presidential or chancellor compensation data is known — for potential inclusion in the institution comparator group.

During the discussion of the list provided, the following points were conveyed to take into consideration when refining the comparator groups to be used for the study:

- ▶ Organizations/institutions in the comparator group should align with WICHE in terms of size and scope.
- ▶ There should be an emphasis on the importance of selecting peer institutions/ organizations that would be viewed by legislators as appropriate comparables, especially when evaluating salary.
- ▶ There was a concern about the compensation data being heavily weighted toward East Coast and large metropolitan institutions, and the institutional comparator group lacked representation from the Colorado regional area.
- ▶ Institutions from California are less than ideal to be used as a comparison to WICHE; a more varied list of institutions from throughout the WICHE region would be more informative.
- ▶ Importance of taking into account the regional pay difference due to compensation levels that vary significantly across the United States.
- ▶ Limit the number of for-profit or private institutions in the comparison group, as these

entities are not subject to the same level of public scrutiny as state-funded organizations like WICHE.

- ▶ Remain mindful of political and funding dynamics when selecting comparable entities.
- ▶ The comparator list should include regional higher education entities such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).
- ▶ It was recommended that College Success Foundation be removed from the comparator group due to a recent staff reduction and reorganization resulting from a significant decrease in state funding. The organization's financial stability is not comparable to WICHE's high level of sustainability.

Chair Damron stated that if another Zoom meeting of the Executive Committee is required to finalize the comparator list to be used by Quatt for the study, a special meeting will take place to vote on the comparator list to be used prior to the November 13, 2025, Executive Committee meeting in Colorado Springs.

Discussion Item

REIMAGINING THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

Dennis Mohatt presented information about possible changes to the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC). He said BHOC envisions its role to develop into an advisory body to the behavioral health program and its connection to state behavioral health needs.

Key considerations included:

- ▶ Renaming the council to remove "oversight" and replace it with "advisory" to better reflect its function.
- ▶ Aligning the structure more closely with Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC), including eliminating the roles of chair and vice chair.
- ▶ Maintaining representation from state mental health directors, with potential inclusion of substance abuse directors.
- ▶ Reviewing the longstanding annual support fee of \$15,000, which has remained unchanged since 1976. The review aims to determine whether an increase in the support fee is justifiable.
- ▶ Evaluating the process for appointing committee members, currently based on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and federal registrations, with outreach to offer seats or allow designees. A formal appointment process by the WICHE President or Commission was suggested.
- ▶ Considering the introduction of defined terms for committee members, as the current structure allows members to serve indefinitely until they leave their state positions.

Discussion Item

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY FOR STUDENT ACCESS PROGRAMS

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos provided an update and preview of the proposed guidelines for Institutional Eligibility for the Student Access Programs (SAP). The set of policies establishes the institutional and program eligibility requirements for participation in SAP. The finalized proposal will be presented to the Programs and Services Committee meeting during the November 2025 Commission Meeting. The goal of the guidelines is to support staff in managing eligibility inquiries, proposals for participation, and ongoing compliance with SAP requirements.

Burgman Gallegos highlighted a newly added clause included in the proposal that was recommended by the Programs and Services Committee in May 2025, which grants the Commission sole discretion to deny or revoke institutional eligibility if participation is found to conflict with WICHE's mission. This clause reinforces the Commission's authority over program inclusion and supports the development of staff guidelines for compliance and enforcement.

After the presentation of the proposal, Burgman Gallegos took a moment to thank staff member Margo Colancia for her time and service to WICHE for 31 years. She is to retire at the end of September 2025. The Executive Committee members wholeheartedly thanked Colancia for her dedication to WICHE and extended their well-wishes for her to enjoy a well-deserved, fulfilling retirement.

Discussion Item

INFORMATION REQUESTS PERTAINING TO STATE LEGISLATION

President Michelau gave a brief report on the action item pertaining to state legislation that will be presented to the Policy Analysis and Research Committee during its November 2025 meeting. In short, WICHE is developing a formal policy to guide staff responses to information requests, especially those related to pending state legislation. The goal is to ensure consistency, transparency, and to reinforce WICHE's non-advocacy stance while supporting objective, expert analysis. The policy will clarify practices for requestors, protect staff when handling sensitive inquiries, and promote openness by making shared information broadly accessible. This effort strengthens WICHE's role as a trusted, neutral resource for state higher education and policy stakeholders. Staff will continue to provide analysis upon request, even when topics intersect with legislation.

A question was raised regarding protocol in item five of the proposed policy, specifically about which staff — WICHE (W-SARA) or NC-SARA — should respond to inquiries related to pending legislation and its alignment with SARA policy. President Michelau clarified that

WICHE staff are responsible for implementing and enforcing SARA within the WICHE region. For example, determining whether a WICHE state is compliant with SARA policy falls under W-SARA's authority, not NC-SARA's.

Commissioner Shireman, President Michelau, and Chair Damron will follow up with a joint phone call before the November 2025 Commission Meeting to discuss potential scenarios and types of questions that may be received, and review the protocol for staff to respond.

Discussion Item

NOVEMBER 2025 COMMISSION MEETING UPDATE AND AGENDA

President Michelau gave an update on the November 2025 Commission Meeting that will take place on November 13–14 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with the theme, "Resilience and Leadership in the West: Navigating Change in Higher Education."

She reviewed the two plenary sessions, four roundtable discussions, and information about the evening reception at the Penrose House that is supported by El Pomar Foundation. She also reviewed travel to Colorado Springs and the options of flying into Denver or Colorado Springs.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the October 9, 2025, Executive Committee, Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Draft Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO) *proxy for Colorado*
David Lassner (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID) *proxy for Idaho*
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)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Mike Meotti (WA)

Staff Present

Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and the Commission
Demarée Michelau, President

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the special meeting of the Executive Committee to order at 3:00 p.m. MDT with a quorum present.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF COMPARATOR GROUP FOR 2025 EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION REVIEW

Chair Damron presided over the presentation of the action item, stating that the main objective of the special meeting called of the Executive Committee was to reach consensus on the organization comparator group to be used for Quatt's executive compensation study and identify areas for refinement within the selected list. A draft overview from Quatt was shared in a handout that was emailed to committee members prior to the special meeting. It was reiterated that the study's process is to involve assessing the scope of WICHE and comparing it to similar entities. The Quatt revised draft of comparator groups under review reflected the feedback received during the September 18, 2025, Executive Committee

meeting. The request to expand the comparables and increase the options to align with the discussion during that meeting was honored. Chair Damron emphasized that there would be no expectation to adjust the President's salary based on the completed overall assessment; the findings of the study are meant to be informative and not necessarily to prompt action. Once the comparator group has been finalized and approved by the Executive Committee, the selected organizations and institutions will be assessed to determine the market value of WICHE's President position.

Feedback from committee members during the review of the two group comparator lists and the objectives of the study process include:

- ▶ Gather comparable data on an organization-by-organization basis to support informed decision-making — both individually and collectively — regarding what is appropriate for the WICHE President's compensation package.
- ▶ Identify the full compensation range — minimum, average, and maximum — for the positions under review. It was suggested that these figures be correlated with the size of each organization to provide a broader set of data points. The goal is to ensure that Quatt has a comprehensive dataset to support a thorough and informed review.
- ▶ Request that Quatt also obtain detailed information not only on salaries, but also on benefits and the overall compensation package under review.
- ▶ A concern was raised regarding the accuracy of the financial data listed for the University of South Dakota. Upon reviewing the institution's reported revenue and expenses, it appeared the figures could be overstated by at least \$1 million dollars, prompting questions about the source of the data. Chair Damron noted that interpreting financial data from higher education institutions can be challenging due to varying definitions of revenue and expenses, which may affect the accuracy and comparability of reported figures. She agreed that communicating the concern to Quatt was valid and important.
- ▶ An additional concern was raised about comparing WICHE leadership to university presidencies, stating that the roles are fundamentally different and not directly comparable. In response to the concern, Chair Damron clarified that the inclusion of universities was not intended to be a direct comparison. Rather, they serve as a reference point to provide a broader context. The differences between compact organizations and universities are well understood. The universities inclusion in the comparables reflects standard practice in similar studies and responds to requests from several commissioners to consider regional institutions. The examples are meant to inform the analysis, and not determine final compensation figures.
- ▶ Several committee members commented on Quatt statements in their overview of their analytical methodologies when creating the comparator groups. Concern was expressed that the meeting materials provided by Quatt may have oversimplified the

Internal Revenue Service rules, potentially implying that comparability is required. It was recommended that this distinction be clearly communicated to the Executive Committee at the November 2025 Commission Meeting. A request was made to provide full salary figures from the comparator listed organizations' IRS 990 filings, including summary statistics, along with potential comparisons to government officials. This would help ensure a broader and more transparent dataset, especially given WICHE's ties to the government, but operating independently.

- ▶ Providing summaries of means, medians, and related statistics of the universities on the list used would enhance the usefulness of the data provided by the Quatt analysis and the Executive Committee's decision-making.

Commissioner Ann Millner MOVED TO APPROVE Alternative Comparator Group 2- composed of 22 organizations; includes all the organizations in the original comparator group presented at the September 18, 2025, meeting EXCEPT does not include the National Conference for State Legislatures (NCSL), National League of Cities, National Student Clearinghouse, College Success Foundation, Jobs for the Future, and The Council of State Governments, and adds Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission and WASC Accrediting Commission for Community or Junior Colleges. Commissioner Tidemann SECONDED the motion. The motion passed; one member voted nay.

Chair Damron will follow up with Quatt to communicate the Executive Committee's alternative comparator group choice and outline the requirements for the study and analysis. Judy Stein with Quatt will join the Executive Committee via Zoom in a hybrid meeting format on November 13, 2025, while it convenes in person at Cheyenne Mountain Resort. After the study results are presented, the Executive Committee will determine the next steps and how to proceed based on the findings.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m. MDT.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Thursday, November 13, 2025

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Centennial Ballroom

Main Level / Lobby Level

Agenda

1 Executive

2 Welcome

3 Plenary I

4 Roundtable I

5 Programs

6 Policy

7 Plenary II

8 Reception

9 Roundtable II

10 Business

11 References

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. | *Centennial Ballroom*

Opening Remarks

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

Land Acknowledgment

Commissioner Jim Chavez (CO)

Introduction of New Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

2-2

NEW COMMISSIONERS



Michael Dembrow (OR), Retired, Oregon State Senator

Michael Dembrow served in the Oregon Legislature as a State Representative and State Senator for 16 years, five in the House, and 11 in the Senate. There, he chaired committees on education, higher education, workforce, environment, and natural resources. He has served on the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) for the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), and he co-chaired the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) 2023-25 Task Force on Higher Education. Prior to the legislature, Dembrow taught at Portland Community College, serving as faculty union president for 16 of those years. Recently retired, he is co-chairing Oregon's new Environmental Restoration Council, is a member of the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission, is an advisor to Jobs for the Future's Fair Chance to Advance Initiative for prison education/reentry, and is on the board for the Oregon Center for Public Policy. In his retirement, Dembrow is spending more time with family and taking long hikes each week with his grand-dog, Aldo.



Dean Fisher (ID), President, College of Southern Idaho

Dean Fisher is an educational administrator with almost 40 years of experience in postsecondary education. He retired from the Oklahoma System of Higher Education as a senior vice president at Rose State College in Oklahoma City and then served several years as a chief of staff for a member of Congress. He subsequently served as a provost within the State University of New York (SUNY) system before accepting the position of president at the College of Southern Idaho. The College of Southern Idaho is Idaho's only Hispanic Serving Institution and is experiencing significant enrollment growth. His research interests focus on student development theory, strategic enrollment management, public policy, and tribal history, with a particular emphasis on the history of the Choctaw Nation.



Wendy Hensel (HI), President, University of Hawai'i University System

Wendy F. Hensel is a champion of equity and innovation in higher education, assuming the role of president of the University of Hawai'i (UH) on January 1, 2025. Hensel joins UH after serving as executive vice chancellor and university provost at The City University of New York (CUNY), where she led strategic initiatives to improve student success, expand high-quality virtual degree programs, and enhance workforce development by aligning academic programs with

emerging job market needs. Under her leadership, CUNY implemented a systemwide transfer plan to improve time-to-graduation rates and reduce student debt. She also spearheaded the adoption of data analytics and artificial intelligence to modernize curricula, enhance efficiency, and improve student outcomes.

Before joining CUNY, Hensel spent more than two decades at Georgia State University (GSU), where she guided the institution through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring uninterrupted instruction for its 53,000 students. Her leadership contributed to GSU's national recognition for innovation and excellence in undergraduate teaching, as well as its commitment to broadening diversity, inclusive excellence, and fostering a sense of belonging on campus.

As a legal scholar specializing in disability law, policy, and ethics, Hensel has published widely and presented extensively. A passionate advocate for people with disabilities, she serves on the board of directors for Integrate, an organization promoting inclusive employment for professionals with autism. Before her academic career, Hensel practiced law at Alston & Bird LLP in Atlanta, Georgia, and served as a judicial clerk for Judge Orinda Evans of the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia. Inducted as a Fellow of the American Bar Association in 2019, Hensel maintains her professional licensure.

Hensel holds a bachelor's degree with highest honors in American public affairs from Michigan State University, where she was a Harry S. Truman Scholar and interned at the U.S. Supreme Court. She earned her law degree cum laude from Harvard Law School.



Brent Sanford (ND), Commissioner, North Dakota University System

Brent Sanford was born and raised in Watford City, North Dakota. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of North Dakota with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1994. He is a certified public accountant.

He worked as an auditor and consultant for Eide Bailly LLP from 1994 through 2002 and then became the chief financial officer of Transwest Trucks in Denver, Colorado. He moved back home to Watford City in 2004, where he purchased and operated his third-generation family-run car dealership. He increased sales in each of the first 10 years of business with unique approaches tailored to the rural economic conditions. He was elected to the Watford City Council in 2006 and became mayor in 2010. Watford City became the fastest-growing community in America from 2010 to 2020. Most of the growth occurred during the incredible early days of the Bakken oil boom from 2010 to 2014. With his leadership, the community focused on infrastructure investment and community development to address the rapid growth, including investing in the historic Main Street

area, new retail, new housing, affordable housing, new schools, new community center, new healthcare, new daycare, and new airport investments.

Doug Burgum chose Sanford as his running mate in the 2016 North Dakota gubernatorial election. The ticket won the general election. They won a second term in the 2020 election. The pair entered office amid a state budget crisis and the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) pipeline protests, weathered the COVID-19 storm, and throughout focused on infrastructure and economic opportunities for the state. In addition to presiding over the state Senate, he chaired the State Investment Board, State Water Commission, North Dakota Trade Office, Clean Sustainable Energy Authority, the Northern Plains UAS Test Site board, the Higher Ed Challenge Grant board, and numerous other statutory state boards. His accounting and entrepreneurial background, as well as his years spent in business and local community leadership, served him well as lieutenant governor.

On December 20, 2022, Sanford announced his resignation as lieutenant governor, effective January 2, 2023, to return to the private sector and spend more time with his family. He has continued his passion for progress in North Dakota through his newest venture, Sanford Consulting LLC, which assists various organizations with innovative workforce and energy solutions.

In January 2025, Sanford was named interim president of Bismarck State College, and on September 2025, Sanford was appointed commissioner of the North Dakota University System.

He and his wife, Sandi, have three children and reside in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Kate Siegel Shimko (CO), Vice Chancellor for Administration and Governmental Relations, Colorado State University System

Kate Siegel Shimko serves as the vice chancellor for administration and governmental relations for the Colorado State University (CSU) system, a role she was appointed to in 2024. She initially joined the system on November 1, 2022, as the inaugural assistant vice chancellor for community engagement. In that role, she focused on building relationships with the state's executive branch, as well as with the City and County of Denver and the broader business community.

With over a decade of experience in state and national politics, Siegel Shimko has worked across consulting, fundraising, and strategic development. Prior to joining CSU, she served as director of boards and commissions in the Colorado Governor's Office, where she managed the appointment of more than 2,200 individuals to over 300 state boards and commissions during her nearly four-year tenure.



Jennifer White (ID), Executive Director, Office of the State Board of Education of Idaho

Jennifer White serves as the executive director of the Office of the State Board of Education of Idaho, where she leads and coordinates efforts across K-12 and higher education statewide. Her oversight includes several key agencies, such as Idaho Career and Technical Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Idaho Public Television. With a deep commitment to public service and education, White works to advance policy and improve educational opportunities for all Idahoans.

Before assuming her current role, White served as the assistant vice president for finance and operations and senior counsel for government relations at Boise State University. Her career includes experience as in-house counsel for a major corporation and as a litigator at law firms in the Washington, D.C., area. She also served in the offices of Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne and then-Lt. Gov. Jim Risch. White is a graduate of Vallivue High School in Caldwell, Idaho. She earned her bachelor's degree from Willamette University and her juris doctor from the University of Washington School of Law.

Plenary Session I

Beyond the Degree: The Broader Value of Higher Education in the West

Thursday, November 13, 2025

9:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Centennial Ballroom

Main Level / Lobby Level

PLENARY SESSION I

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 9:30 – 10:45 a.m. | Centennial Ballroom

Beyond the Degree: The Broader Value of Higher Education in the West

In the WICHE region, higher education plays a distinct and powerful role, not just in preparing students for careers but in shaping vibrant communities, resilient economies, and engaged citizens. This session will explore the multifaceted value of postsecondary education through a uniquely Western lens, where geographic breadth, rural innovation, and regional collaboration offer compelling stories of impact. To open the session, Courtney Brown of Lumina Foundation will share recent data on public perceptions of higher education, helping frame the conversation around the challenges and opportunities institutions face in demonstrating their value. Her insights will provide a foundation for exploring how Western institutions are responding to evolving expectations and skepticism, and how they are redefining relevance in ways that resonate locally, regionally, and nationally. The conversation will move beyond the traditional framing of higher education as either career preparation or personal enrichment, emphasizing how it contributes to both individual success and the broader public good. From employer partnerships to community development, and from civic engagement to cultural preservation, the session will showcase how Western institutions are leveraging their unique strengths to not only tell a broader story of impact but demonstrate it.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- ▶ How do Western institutions uniquely contribute to both workforce development and community vitality?
- ▶ How can higher education institutions adapt to changing perceptions and demonstrate their relevance in a rapidly evolving world?
- ▶ How can we elevate and share the compelling stories emerging from the West to influence policy and public perception?
- ▶ In what ways can employer partnerships be leveraged to reflect regional needs and enhance student outcomes?
- ▶ How can higher education leaders navigate the growing political polarization around the value of postsecondary education, particularly among more skeptical audiences, and build trust across ideological lines?

FACILITATOR

Courtney Brown, Vice President of Impact and Planning, Lumina Foundation

PANELISTS

Commissioner Lisa Skari (OR), President, Mt. Hood Community College
Brock Tessman, President, Montana State University

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Courtney Brown, Vice President of Impact and Planning, Lumina Foundation

Courtney Brown is the vice president of impact and planning at the Lumina Foundation, where she leads strategic planning, research, evaluation, data analysis, and learning initiatives. As Lumina's chief data and research officer, she ensures the foundation's work is evidence-based and focused on measurable impact. She also oversees international engagement, collaborating with global partners to advance higher education.

With over 25 years of experience in leadership, strategic planning, and research, Brown integrates data-driven approaches into Lumina's strategies to improve education and workforce outcomes. A recognized thought leader, she frequently speaks and writes on higher education, evaluation, and performance measurement. She serves on multiple boards, including the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, the University of Virginia's School of Education and Human Development, and the Institute for the Future of Education. Brown holds a bachelor's degree from James Madison University and a master's degree and doctorate from the University of Virginia. She resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Panelists



Commissioner Lisa Skari (OR), President, Mt. Hood Community College

Lisa Skari serves as the president of Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) in Oregon, a role she has held since 2018. Prior to MHCC, she spent 26 years at Highline College in Washington in roles including adjunct faculty, mid-management positions in cooperative education/internships and budgeting, and as vice president for advancement.

She earned her master's degree in business administration from Pacific Lutheran University in Washington and her doctorate in education from Washington State University. Her research led to the development of a predictive model of community college alumni giving, for which she received the H.S. Warwick Award for Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation.

Prior to her work in community colleges, Skari spent seven years in the private sector in management, buying, and corporate training.



Brock Tessman, President, Montana State University

Brock Tessman is the 13th president of Montana State University. He's an energetic and dedicated supporter of students and their success, and he is known for his ability to communicate the value of public higher education to America and the world, as well as his commitment to delivering better outcomes for the university and, importantly, its students.

Tessman came to Montana State University most recently from the presidency of Northern Michigan University, but before Michigan, he gained extensive experience as a leader within the Montana University System. He served for four years as the Montana deputy commissioner of higher education, and before that as a professor of political science and honors college dean within the state university system. He began his academic career at the University of Georgia and earned tenure there as a faculty member at the School of Public and International Affairs.

Tessman has an undergraduate honors degree in international relations from Brown University (Brown). He earned his master's in international affairs and his doctorate in political science, both from the University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder).

Originally from Michigan, Tessman was a multisport high school athlete and competed as a college athlete in track and field at both Brown and CU Boulder. He continues to be an avid trail runner, a self-described board game geek, and a lifelong Detroit Lions fan. His family of outdoor enthusiasts includes his wife, Kristin, and daughters, Frances and Leona.

Roundtable Discussions Session I

Thursday, November 13, 2025

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Manitou Meeting Room
Conference Level (one level down
from Lobby Level)
Roundtable 1

*Unlocking Opportunities in a Changing
Financial Aid Landscape*

Shoshoni Meeting Room
Conference Level (one level down
from Lobby Level)
Roundtable 2

*Supporting Rural and Remote
Institutions: Challenges, Opportunities,
and Regional Collaboration*

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION I

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Roundtable 1

Manitou

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES IN A CHANGING FINANCIAL AID LANDSCAPE

(Affordability & Finance; Value & Accountability)

Join a dynamic roundtable exploring how recent federal financial aid policy changes are reshaping state and institutional strategies, student affordability, and access to postsecondary education. This session will highlight innovative financial aid models and examine their impact on student success and institutional sustainability. Higher education leaders and policymakers on the Commission will have an opportunity to share insights on navigating the evolving landscape, with a particular focus on how federal shifts may influence state-level aid programs and institutional decision-making.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ▶ How are recent federal financial aid changes influencing state-level programs and institutional strategies?
- ▶ What are the most significant challenges institutions face in adapting to these changes?
- ▶ What innovative financial aid models are showing promise in improving affordability and access?
- ▶ How can institutions ensure that affordability efforts also support positive outcomes for underserved student populations?
- ▶ In what ways can financial aid strategies contribute to long-term institutional sustainability?
- ▶ How can institutions balance affordability with financial viability?
- ▶ What role should collaboration between federal, state, and institutional stakeholders play in shaping effective financial aid policies?
- ▶ What future trends in financial aid should institutions and policymakers prepare for?
- ▶ How can data and evidence be used to evaluate and refine financial aid strategies?

FACILITATOR

Crystal L. Collins, Vice President, State Affordability Initiatives, Strada Education Foundation

Roundtable 2

Shoshoni

SUPPORTING RURAL AND REMOTE INSTITUTIONS: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

(Affordability & Finance; Access & Success; Value & Accountability)

Rural colleges and universities play a vital role in serving geographically isolated communities, fostering regional economic development, and expanding access to higher education. Yet, these institutions face mounting challenges in today's climate, from declining enrollment and limited funding to workforce shortages and infrastructure constraints. This interactive breakout session, facilitated by the president of Western Colorado University, will explore the unique pressures confronting rural institutions and identify opportunities for regional collaboration and policy innovation.

Participants will engage in a data-informed dialogue that surfaces both systemic barriers and promising practices. The session will also examine how WICHE and its states, territories, and freely associated states can support rural and remote institutions through shared resources, advocacy, and strategic partnerships.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ▶ What are the most pressing challenges currently facing rural colleges and universities in your state or region?
- ▶ How do demographic shifts and enrollment trends impact the sustainability of rural institutions?
- ▶ What role can technology and digital infrastructure play in expanding access and improving outcomes for rural students?
- ▶ Are there examples of successful regional collaborations or shared services that could be scaled across the WICHE region?
- ▶ How can state and regional policy better support rural institutions in areas such as funding, workforce development, and student support?
- ▶ What data or metrics are most useful in understanding and addressing the needs of rural colleges and universities?
- ▶ How can WICHE facilitate ongoing dialogue and resource-sharing among rural institutions across the West?

FACILITATOR

Brad Baca, President, Western Colorado University

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 1

FACILITATOR



Crystal L. Collins, Vice President, State Affordability Initiatives, Strada Education Foundation

Crystal L. Collins serves as Strada’s vice president for state affordability initiatives, supporting investment in state initiatives that ensure the cost of education is not an insurmountable obstacle for learners and their families. Before joining Strada, she served as a state fiscal policy leader in both

Colorado and Tennessee, where she specialized in performance funding models and financial aid programs. Collins is a two-time graduate of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Roundtable 2

FACILITATOR



Brad Baca, President, Western Colorado University

Brad Baca is the 15th president of Western Colorado University. He joined Western in 2002 as vice president for finance and administration. In 2013-14, he served as interim president.

During his time at Western, Baca has developed a reputation as a creative and trustworthy individual, someone who can convene stakeholders, facilitate problem-solving, and accomplish complex goals. Whether it is leading campuswide strategic initiatives, serving on a statewide task force, or representing Western at the state capitol, Baca has demonstrated passionate stewardship of Western’s mission and values and a strong dedication to student success.

Prior to joining Western, Baca served for over three years as director of budgets for the Colorado Community College System. He also served as a budget and policy analyst on the staff of former Colorado Gov. Roy Romer.

As a rural Colorado native and a first-generation Hispanic college graduate, Baca earned a bachelor’s degree in government from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. He also earned a master’s degree in public policy from the University of Colorado Boulder, focusing on education policy.

Baca lives in the Gunnison Valley with his wife, Julie, a Western alumna, and their four children. He is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys spending time with his family, including mountain biking, skiing, camping, fishing, and bow hunting.

Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 13, 2025

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Shoshoni Meeting Room

Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)

Agenda

1 Executive

2 Welcome

3 Plenary I

4 Roundtable I

5 Programs

6 Policy

7 Plenary II

8 Reception

9 Roundtable II

10 Business

11 References

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | *Shoshoni*

Committee Members

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)

Ellen Junn (CA)

Angie Paccione (CO)

Terrence George (HI)

Dean Fisher (ID)

Maryrose Beasley (MT)

Cathy Dinauer (NV)

Brent Sanford (ND)

Lisa Skari (OR)

Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD)

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

Patricia Jones Horton (UT)

John Carmichael (WA)

Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Agenda

PRESIDING

Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

STAFF

Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access Programs

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services

Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning, and Development

Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation

Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director, Student Access Programs

Action Items

 ACTION ITEM	Approval of May 5, 2025, Program and Services Committee Meeting Minutes	5-3
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Guidelines for Institutional Eligibility for Student Access Programs	5-11

Information Items

Student Access Programs Highlights	5-15
Academic Partnerships Update	5-19
Cost-savings Partnerships Update	5-22

Discussion Items

Commission Priorities for the Programs and Services Workplan for Fical Year 2027

Questions:

- ▶ Generally, what are the Commission's top priorities for the Programs and Services unit in FY 2027?
- ▶ How do you envision our Workplan aligning with the Commission's strategic priorities?
- ▶ Are there any emerging challenges or opportunities in the region we should address?
- ▶ What level of resources should be devoted to each WICHE strategic priority?
- ▶ Are there external partnerships, funding streams, or collaborations we should pursue to advance priorities?
- ▶ How do we ensure the sustainability of programs while responding to new needs?

Envisioning the Future of Tuition Savings

Questions:

- ▶ How can we communicate the value of tuition discounting more effectively to stakeholders?
- ▶ How do we maintain the programs we have while adapting for the future?

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of May 5, 2025, Program and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair
Pearl Brower (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Antwan Jefferson (CO), *proxy for Angie Paccione*
Terrence George (HI)
Rick Aman (ID)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV), *proxy for Cathy Dinauer*
Danita Bye (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)

Committee Members Absent

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
Angie Paccione (CO)

Other Commissioners Present

Ben Cannon (OR)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Margo Colancia, Director of Student Access Programs
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation
Demarée Michelau, President
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President, Communications
Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director, Student Access Programs

Guests

Cassidy Dragunat (UT), WICHE Certifying Officer
Louise Lynch (AZ), WICHE Certifying Officer
Therese Santos (Guam), WICHE Certifying Officer

Call to Order

Committee Vice Chair Todd Haynie called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. Kay Hulstrom called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Action Items

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 2024, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

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

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO APPROVE THE FY 2026 WORKPLAN SECTION PERTAINING TO THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES UNIT

Committee Vice Chair Haynie invited Raymonda Burgman Gallegos to present the unit's Workplan for the next fiscal year. She explained the work of the Programs and Services (PAS) unit falls into three distinct areas: Student Access Programs (SAP), which are the three tuition savings programs; Academic Partnerships, which is the leadership development opportunities for chief academic officers; and Cost-savings Partnerships, which are contracts and joint procurement.

Burgman Gallegos asked the committee to approve the following updates to the PAS Workplan in the *Ongoing Services and Resources* section:

- ▶ Add MHECare Student Health Solutions, which provides health insurance through UnitedHealthcare StudentResources.
- ▶ Add WICHE Group Property Insurance program, which provides five private institutions on the West Coast with coverage.
- ▶ In the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) section, change the number of participating students from 3,987 to 2,867, and the savings amount from \$48.4 million to \$40 million.
- ▶ Change the year of the Western Alliance of Academic Leaders (Alliance) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) meetings from 2025 to 2026.

Burgman Gallegos also updated the end dates for three grant-funded projects listed in the Workplan. The Joint Compact for Faculty Development and Opportunity (previously known as the Compact for Faculty Diversity) is set to expire in November 2025. The project will examine how faculty work and how institutions develop in order to provide faculty with the skills needed to be successful; the project is funded by the Mellon Foundation. Mellon also supports the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities, which was granted a no-cost extension until September 2026 to offer programming for the second cohort for a second year. The Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success project, comprised of 13 institutions, will end in October 2026 and is funded by an anonymous source.

The *New Directions* section of the Workplan includes Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indian/Alaska Native Students, a continuation of the analysis WICHE did with the NASNTIs (Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions). In addition, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) had a grant for work like the 2023 No Holding Back project, which developed assessment tools for an institution's use of administrative holds. NACUBO included WICHE in its bridge grant from Ascendium Education Group; thus, it should be on the current Workplan. NACUBO showcased its new toolkits on administrative processes, including administrative holds, in a preconference workshop at the 2025 Alliance and Forum joint meeting in Reno, Nevada.

Potential Future Projects included the Alliance Academic Leadership Academy. This project was proposed several years ago. Currently, two-year institutions participate in the Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy). The Alliance Academy remains on the Workplan, as staff planned to discuss with the Alliance leadership their future needs and expectations.

During the Workplan discussion, Burgman Gallegos said Programs and Services was exploring ways to sustain the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities, and that it was rewarding to watch the humanities fellows advance from their faculty position to academic leadership roles. She added that the recently graduated inaugural cohort was thankful for their new network of colleagues, and several have remained in the administrative role they took on as fellows. Commissioner Rosselli asked if Mellon would continue funding the WICHE Academy; Burgman Gallegos shared that WICHE leadership was meeting with Mellon staff in New York in May 2025 to determine their interest in continuing their funding for the project. Commissioner Terrence George inquired about the 2025 Alliance and Forum meeting in Reno, Nevada. He asked whether there was increased interest in participating in WICHE's programs given the shifts in federal policy. Burgman Gallegos said the meeting was a success: attendees from both the Alliance and the Forum expressed a desire to meet more frequently to learn from one another, and that the Forum's Executive Committee expressed interest in learning more about developments at the federal level. Programs and Services will host calls featuring Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, who will provide updates and lead discussions on federal changes in higher education.

Commissioner Patricia Jones MOVED TO APPROVE the Workplan with amendments, and Commissioner Joseph Schaffer SECONDED the motion. The motion was approved.

Information Updates

Due to limited time, Burgman Gallegos noted that information updates for Student Access Programs, Academic Partnerships, and Cost-savings Partnerships were in the agenda book and asked that the remaining time be dedicated to discussing the institutional eligibility for Student Access Programs.

Discussion Items

INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY FOR STUDENT ACCESS PROGRAMS

Burgman Gallegos noted that the goal of the discussion was to align staff practice with WICHE policy. She added that WICHE was seeking feedback on these changes because of the program's importance for student access to education. The discussion focused primarily on the Professional Student Exchange (PSEP), due to its complexity and the desire to align policy and practice among institutions and programs with the work of the WICHE staff. She said the WUE and WRGP memorandum of agreements (MOAs) provide direction and explain the program, but the MOAs don't address policy.

Eight categories were presented, along with the proposed approach for each category. The categories included: sectors, institutional accreditation status, program/professional accreditation, institution location, MOA renewal frequency, authorization status, field/major, and the “WICHE discretion” clause.

SECTORS

Burgman Gallegos explained that public, private nonprofit, and limited private proprietary institutions participate in PSEP. However, it is not stated in the WICHE agreement which sectors are authorized to participate. WICHE leadership proposes to clearly outline in policy (not just in the MOA) which sectors are eligible to participate in PSEP.

Commissioner Jefferson commented that these changes should provide boundaries, guardrails, and clarity. WICHE made decisions about program participation without a clear policy to support them. Committee members agreed that the language was helpful. Commissioner George noted that the clarification would be important if and when new PSEP fields are added.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION STATUS

Burgman Gallegos reported that there was no policy language that addressed institutional accreditation status. Staff proposed that the postsecondary institution must be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If the institution experienced a change in accreditation status, it must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.

Burgman Gallegos reported that staff operated on the assumption that if there was program accreditation, there was also institutional accreditation. Since both may not exist, the clarification would help staff in the future. Commissioner Jefferson expressed concern that, in the current political climate, accreditation might be revoked for a reason not related to the educational enterprise. He inquired about the potential consequences if this were to happen, aside from the program no longer receiving funding for new students due to accreditation difficulties. President Demarée Michelau noted that it takes a considerable amount of time to lose accreditation. Commissioner Ellen Junn, who serves on the board of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), noted that the process involves a series of steps and entails numerous consequences. She also stated that, despite the process, it was less clear when an institution is threatened with the removal of its accreditation. She recommended that WICHE document a step-by-step process for programs at risk, including the steps and their consequences.

PROGRAM/PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

Burgman Gallegos invited committee members to reference the policy in the May 2009 agenda book, which outlined circumstances when WICHE would accept provisionally accredited, but not fully accredited, programs.

The current PSEP MOA states that the university's program must be fully accredited and that the accrediting body has not cited any requirements or concerns about the program as of the date of the agreement's signing. It also states that only fully accredited programs are eligible to participate in PSEP. For example, if the cooperating program undergoes a change in accreditation, it must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.

Staff proposed to clearly lay out in policy that the postsecondary institution's program must meet the following criteria:

- ▶ It must be accredited by a professional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- ▶ It must have graduated its first class.
- ▶ It must be free of any requirements or concerns by the accrediting body as of the signing of the agreement. If a cooperating program experiences a change in its accreditation status, it must report the change to WICHE within 10 business days.

Margo Colalancia noted, for example, a shortage of in-region optometry programs prior to 2009. Because optometry was a high-need field at the time, the Commission made an exception to allow provisionally accredited programs, like Midwestern University and Western University of Health Sciences, both which had new optometry programs, to enroll PSEP students.

Commissioner Rosselli asked that, if the accreditation process (on the national level) changes in the future, WICHE would have to make corresponding changes to the MOAs. Burgman Gallegos committed to turning to the PAS Committee for guidance. Committee Vice Chair Haynie commented that the proposed new policy assumes the current accreditation framework will remain the standard. Burgman Gallegos agreed and said that PAS consulted with the Policy Analysis and Research unit and commissioners for guidance on the accreditation language to be more precise. Commissioner Rodney Jacob commented that while WICHE was clarifying policy to monitor a program's accreditation status, WICHE should also add information on what steps it would take when a program is experiencing accreditation difficulty. President Michelau affirmed that actions to be taken will be added to the new policy in its next iteration.

INSTITUTION LOCATION

WICHE requires PSEP programs to be physically located in the WICHE region, except for a few programs located in non-WICHE states that were invited to participate through historical arrangements made years ago.

Staff proposed explicitly laying out in policy that the institution must be physically located, as determined solely by WICHE, within the WICHE region. Programs offered by institutions located outside the region must be approved by the Commission, per WICHE-approved guidelines.

Committee members and staff discussed the circumstances under which programs at institutions outside of the WICHE region would be allowed to participate in PSEP. Staff proposed that if the out-of-region programs continue to enroll PSEP students, they would be grandfathered in. Commissioner Schaffer asked if there was value in adding guidance or criteria for allowing institutions outside the region in the future. President Michelau said that the current criteria were sufficient. Commissioner Schaffer suggested that it might be beneficial to add that to the policy.

MOA RENEWAL FREQUENCY

Currently, new programs must sign an MOA when they sign on as a cooperating PSEP program.

Staff proposed that established programs must sign renewal agreements every three years after their initial onboarding.

Commissioner Fred Lokken inquired about the frequency of MOA renewal. Burgman Gallegos stated that two years seemed too short, but that three years seemed “about right” for students progressing through the program. Commissioner Lokken also inquired about the impact on WICHE staff with performing the tracking. Burgman Gallegos stated that an annual renewal was too burdensome on WICHE staff and that every three years could be built into the SAP team’s workflow. President Michelau said she suggested the three-year MOA renewal frequency, but that after hearing the committee’s discussion, she thought every five years would suffice.

AUTHORIZATION STATUS

Currently, no language in the PSEP MOA discusses state authorization status.

Staff proposed to clearly lay out in policy that the postsecondary institution must be authorized by the state or territory in which the institution is located. The institution would agree to notify WICHE immediately of any known state authorization issues as soon as they become known to the institution.

There was no discussion by committee members about this requirement.

FIELD/MAJOR

The Commission determine which fields are available through PSEP. When two or more states/territories requested the addition of a new field, staff identify accredited programs within the region and determined the interest of other WICHE states to support students in the proposed field. Currently, only healthcare fields are offered. Staff proposed to establish a formal process that is clear to the Commission and follows a regular timeline for proposing new PSEP fields for consideration. The process is noted in the PSEP Administrative Manual but needs to be developed in greater detail to guide staff and PSEP-sponsoring WICHE states and territories.

There was no discussion by committee members about this requirement.

“WICHE DISCRETION” CLAUSE

Currently, no policy defines “WICHE discretion.” Staff proposed to add a discretionary clause to the manual that notes: “The Commission, at its sole discretion, may determine that the postsecondary institution is ineligible to participate if such participation is 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 the determination.”

Commissioner Rosselli asked if staff see situations that could raise any question of ineligibility. Burgman Gallegos reported that proprietary institutions have been discussed. For example, in some cases, concerns have been raised about accreditation status or its location, which have caused the staff to question eligibility. Commissioner Junn asked if an attorney had looked at the draft discretionary clause, as it needed to be defensible in a court of law. Commissioner Rosselli suggested changing the wording to “contrary to WICHE’s mission.”

Burgman Gallegos asked the committee if there were any aspects that the staff had not considered that they should have considered. Updates will be made based on the committee’s comments and will be presented at the November 2025 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Junn suggested re-examining the three-, four-, and five-year frequency for MOA renewal.

Commissioner George asked about the out-of-region programs that may need to be removed. Burgman Gallegos reported that a few out-of-region institutions have had no enrollment for quite some time, and that the value of keeping them in PSEP, especially when PSEP sponsoring states and territories favor educating their students in the region, is low.

ALLIANCE AND FORUM CONSULTANT REPORT

Burgman Gallegos thanked President Michelau for supporting the consultant’s report for Alliance and Forum.

Findings from the Report

1. Social capital gained through engagement
2. Partnership and connection with WICHE
3. Lack of clear benefits
4. Have both individual and shared identities

Recommended Actions from the Report

1. Partner across WICHE on the strategic needs
2. Update the websites

3. Create and share a clear list of member benefits
4. Develop and implement member recruitment, orientation, and retention process

Staff have conducted orientation calls for new Forum and Alliance Executive Committee members and created an orientation presentation. The new Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, Nicholas Fuselier, will join WICHE on May 22, 2025.

STUDENT ACCESS PROGRAM OUTREACH

Colalancia reported that the Communications team hired a consultant to improve SAP's search engine optimization (SEO) on the WICHE website. In addition, the new WUE video (which debuted at the November 2024 Commission Meeting) was released publicly. The Communications team purchased a list of 14,000 email addresses of high school counselors for an email campaign sent in March 2025. This campaign included links to the WUE video, the WUE Savings Finder dashboard, the WUE webpage, and the WUE FAQs. The email saw a 38% open rate, a 25% click-through rate, a 100% delivery rate, and the video garnered 3,500 views. A second email campaign promoting WUE to high school counselors is planned for Fall 2025. Commissioner Rosselli requested that these engagement metrics be presented to the Commission.

Commissioner Jefferson MOVED TO ADJOURN the meeting. Commissioner Rosselli SECONDED. The motion was approved.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Guidelines for Institutional Eligibility for Student Access Programs

Summary of the Student Access Programs

BACKGROUND

The Student Access Programs are foundational to the formation and enduring mission of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (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 can be generally found 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.

During the officers' retreat in January 2025, 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, 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 of PSEP-sponsoring states and territories on February 11, 2025, to gather their feedback. Staff requested that the Programs and Services Committee provide input at the meeting on May 5, 2025, when the eligibility criteria were still in table form. The Executive Committee discussed the proposed policy, as drafted below, on September 18, 2025. Staff made minimal edits after that discussion.

FOR REFERENCE

PSEP Administrative Manual: wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PSEP-ManualSept2020.pdf

Discussion Questions

1. Does the proposed eligibility policy reflect WICHE's mission and vision?
2. Are there any aspects of institutional eligibility that the proposed policy should address but currently does not?
3. Are the distinctions among WUE, WRGP, and PSEP eligibility requirements clear and appropriate?

Student Access Programs Institutional Eligibility

1. PURPOSE

This section establishes the institutional and program eligibility requirements for participation in WICHE's Student Access Programs. The programs include:

- ▶ Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)
- ▶ Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)
- ▶ Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

The policies outlined in this document provide consistent and transparent guidance, superseding previous practices governed by memoranda of agreement (MOAs) or informal precedents.

2. SCOPE

These policies apply to all institutions seeking to participate in WUE, WRGP, or PSEP. Requirements address the institutional sector, location, accreditation, authorization, and renewal procedures.

3. DEFINITIONS

- ▶ *Accredited Institution*: A postsecondary institution holding accreditation from an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- ▶ *Authorized Institution*: An institution that has received legal authorization from the state or territory in which it operates.
- ▶ *Professional Program Accreditation*: Accreditation specific to a professional field (e.g., allopathic medicine, dentistry, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, and veterinary medicine).
- ▶ *MOA*: The memorandum of agreement between WICHE and the WUE/WRGP institution outlining participation terms. In the case of PSEP, the MOA is between WICHE and the cooperating program and its institution.

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Institutional Sector

- ▶ WUE and WRGP: Public postsecondary institutions located in WICHE states or territories. Private institutions do not participate.
- ▶ PSEP: Public and private institutions (nonprofit and limited proprietary).
- ▶ Policy: Eligibility regarding the institutional sector shall be explicitly defined in WICHE policy and not solely within the MOA.

4.2 Institutional Location

- ▶ Institutions must be geographically located in the WICHE region, as determined solely by WICHE.
- ▶ Exceptions: Certain historical partnerships remain eligible for the states listed. These include:
 - Creighton University – Dentistry (NM, ND, WY)
 - Illinois College of Optometry (ND)
 - Marquette University – Dentistry (ND)
 - University of Missouri-Kansas City – Dentistry (NM)
 - University of Nebraska Medical Center – Dentistry (ND, WY)
 - Programs outside the WICHE region require Commission approval.

4.3 Institutional Accreditation

- ▶ Institutions must be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- ▶ Institutions must report any change in accreditation status to WICHE within 10 business days.

4.4 Program/Professional Accreditation (PSEP only)

- ▶ Participating programs must:
 - Hold full accreditation from a professional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Have graduated at least one class.
 - Be free of accrediting body concerns at the time of agreement.
- ▶ Accreditation status changes must be reported within 10 business days.
- ▶ The Commission retains discretion to consider provisionally accredited programs in high-need fields under established criteria.

4.5 Authorization Status

- ▶ Institutions must be authorized to operate by their own state or territorial governing authority.
- ▶ Institutions must report any authorization issues to WICHE immediately upon discovery.

4.6 Eligible Fields/Majors

- ▶ WUE: All certificate, associate, and bachelor's degree programs.
- ▶ WRGP: All graduate certificate, master's, and doctoral programs.
- ▶ PSEP: Professional healthcare programs as approved by the Commission. The Commission may also approve the participation of non-healthcare programs that are deemed high need in the Western region.

4.7 MOA Renewal

- ▶ WUE and WRGP: MOAs are signed upon entry and renewed annually (June).
- ▶ PSEP: New cooperating programs must sign an MOA upon entry. PSEP renewal agreements are required every five years following initial onboarding or the signing of an updated MOA.

4.8 Commission Discretion

- ▶ The Commission reserves sole discretion to deny or revoke institutional eligibility if participation conflicts with WICHE's mission.
- ▶ WICHE staff may request additional documentation from institutions to determine eligibility.

5. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Institutions that fail to meet eligibility criteria or report accreditation or authorization changes in a timely manner may be suspended or removed from program participation by Commission action.

Recommended Action

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Student Access Programs Institutional Eligibility Guidelines.

INFORMATION UPDATES

Student Access Programs Highlights

WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)

The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is the largest regional tuition savings program in the nation, in terms of the number of participating states and Pacific jurisdictions, the largest number of participating institutions offering a discounted tuition rate, and the largest number of students utilizing the program to save money on tuition. Students from a WICHE state or Pacific jurisdiction can choose from 170 two- or four-year public colleges or universities and pay no more than 150% of that institution's resident tuition.

In academic year (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. Final WUE enrollment numbers and savings estimates for AY 2025-26 will be available in late November 2025.

The Western region is experiencing a growing number of WUE institutions that also offer resident tuition to students from neighboring border states. For example, Colorado State University's Pueblo campus has offered in-state tuition to New Mexico students for quite some time, but will expand the in-state rate to 10 more states, including Arizona, California, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. Lake Region State College (ND) charges resident tuition to students from all the WICHE and Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) member states. Starting in Fall 2026, the University of Alaska Southeast will eliminate nonresident tuition for all undergraduates and charge them resident tuition.

Several institutions are making significant changes to their participation in WUE. Arizona State University's (ASU) Tempe campus joined WUE for AY 2025-26 to promote its new Bachelor of Science in Ocean Futures program. However, ASU and all its campuses, including Tempe, will no longer offer WUE starting in academic year 2026-27. In its place, ASU is launching the ASU Commitment Scholarship, available to first-year, out-of-state U.S. citizens regardless of their state of residency. Meanwhile, California State University (CSU) Maritime Academy ended its participation in WUE following an administrative merger with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo effective Fall 2025. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo does not participate in WUE and does not plan to participate.

Student Access Program staff have collaborated closely with the Communications staff team over the past year. In March 2025, Communications staff sent an email campaign promoting WUE resources to 14,000 high school counselors in the West. Resources included links to the

WUE video (produced in November 2024), a PDF handout of participating WUE schools, the WUE website, and a slide deck discussing the benefits of WUE to students and their families. Staff also sent a similar email campaign with these resources to approximately 500 WUE contacts at its 170 participating WUE schools. The results were impressive, with a 25% click-through rate (3 to 5% is considered good), resulting in over 6,400 views of the WUE video as of this writing. The Communications team recently purchased an updated list of 15,000 high school counselors in the West and launched a follow-up email campaign in September 2025 to promote WUE to prospective college students enrolling in Fall 2026.

WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) allows graduate certificate, master's, and doctoral students who are residents of WICHE states and Pacific territories to affordably enroll in more than 2,100 graduate programs at 67 public institutions in the West. Students can enroll as nonresidents and pay up to 150% of resident tuition, though the majority of WRGP institutions charge students resident 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 provide further accessibility for residents who are place-bound.

Final WRGP enrollment numbers and savings estimates for AY 2025-26 will be available in late November 2025.

PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)

The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) has been a critically important mechanism for WICHE states and Pacific jurisdictions to increase the supply of physicians, dentists, optometrists, veterinarians, and other healthcare professionals. Since 1953, WICHE has supported the education of more than 16,265 Western residents with affordable access to professional healthcare degrees through PSEP. Some 135 accredited programs are offered through PSEP at some 65 institutions.

In AY 2024-25, 10 WICHE states, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) invested more than \$15 million to grow their healthcare workforce by reducing the educational costs of 566 students. Final PSEP enrollment numbers and state/Pacific jurisdiction investment costs for AY 2025-26 will be available in late November 2025.

Western states and Pacific jurisdictions benefit from PSEP by inspiring and, in most sponsoring states and territories, requiring professionals to return home to practice and strengthen their communities' professional healthcare workforce.

Every two years, the Commission reviews the PSEP support fee rates. At the May 2024 Commission meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, commissioners approved a 4.35% increase for the support fees for the AY 2025-26 and 2026-27 biennium. WICHE staff are completing a final review of the AY 2025 PSEP tuition and fees survey. Once the numbers are vetted, staff will begin analyzing data to propose support fee changes for the AY 2027-28 and 2028-29 biennium. In early 2026, staff will share their analysis and preliminary proposal with the Programs and Services Committee, the Executive Committee, and the certifying officers of PSEP-sponsoring states and territories. At the May 2026 meeting, the Programs and Services staff will summarize prior discussions and present an action item regarding the proposed changes to support fees.

Certifying Officers Meeting

Certifying officers 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 PSEP 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 met on May 4, 2025, just before the Commission meeting in Park City, Utah. At their meeting, they shared state/territory reports and discussed the following topics:

- ▶ Proposed requirements for PSEP programs and WUE/WRGP institutions
- ▶ WICHE's December 2024 *Knocking at the College Door* projections
- ▶ Conditional grant programs (loan-for-service) and state loan repayment programs featuring the Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program (MRPIP)
- ▶ Development of the certifying officers' SharePoint hub to maximize collaboration among state and territory offices

The next meeting of certifying officers will be held on May 17, 2026, in Seattle, Washington, prior to the Commission meeting.

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 (excluding Pacific jurisdictions), 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. Typically, staff work with the state certifying office and the state higher education office to get the appointment. Candidates are approved by their respective state's Executive Committee member on the Commission, in consultation with each state's higher education agency and its state veterinary association. Council members' appointments are for three years and are renewable.

Council members may include legislators with expertise in the profession, state veterinarians, and practicing veterinarians, all of whom are members of state veterinary associations. Deans of the colleges of veterinary medicine, WICHE's Director of Student Access Programs, and Vice President, Programs and Services, are ex officio, nonvoting members.

Council members met in Bozeman, Montana, on June 4-6, 2025. Members shared state and school roundtable reports and discussed the following topics:

- ▶ Utah State University's new College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and its semi-distributed clinical education model. The program is scheduled to enroll its inaugural class in Fall 2025.
- ▶ Colorado State University's new learning curriculum and its pioneering mid-level provider master's program in veterinary clinical care that will train one of the nation's first cohorts of Veterinary Professional Associates (VPAs). The VPA program is set to enroll its inaugural class in January 2026.
- ▶ The veterinary accrediting body's new requirements to limit the amount of coursework that CVMs can deliver via distance education, and strategies to respond to this new requirement when colleges rely on distance education for courses where specialty faculty are hard to find, especially in the areas of dermatology, radiology, and anesthesiology.
- ▶ The December 2024 *Knocking at the College Door* projections as presented by Policy staff, and the future of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) pipeline.
- ▶ Current trends in applicant behaviors in admissions, and a growing number of requests for accommodations for neurodiverse applicants. Admissions directors of the partner CVMs also deliberated new admissions tools being considered, including artificial intelligence review of their applications, timed video interviews, and timed written assessments.
- ▶ Members debated key strategies to select DVM candidates who understand what the veterinary profession is all about, and what the recommended minimum veterinary work/experience hours and GPA requirements should be for successful DVM applicants.
- ▶ The group examined conflicting studies on veterinary economics and whether or not there is indeed a DVM shortage, with pet owners choosing to limit their veterinary care visits. They discussed the concern that a dozen new colleges of veterinary medicine are set to open in 2025 and later, and whether they could fill their classes. Members also discussed the challenge of attracting and retaining new DVM faculty, who leave vet medicine for corporate practices offering higher salaries.
- ▶ Finally, VMAC members discussed veterinary students' and recent DVM graduates' struggles with resilience, professionalism, and commitment to the veterinary medical profession with its many inherent challenges.

The next VMAC meeting will be held in June 2026 in Laramie, Wyoming, and hosted by the University of Wyoming's Department of Veterinary Sciences.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS UPDATE

The Alliance and Forum

The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) offer support and networking opportunities for senior academic leaders at colleges and universities across the West. These two membership networks, 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 year, the Alliance and Forum hold respective annual meetings. The 2026 Alliance Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 15-17, 2026, in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The theme is: "Leading the Resilient Community College." The 2026 Forum Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 1-3, 2026, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The theme is "Facing Complexity, Finding Solutions." The annual meetings provide a space for connection, collaboration, and problem-solving on issues affecting two-year and four-year institutions.

Currently, the Alliance is comprised of 76 members, including 68 institutions and eight systems. The Forum is comprised of 60 members, including 49 institutions and 11 system. WICHE is currently completing our renewal cycle. Additionally, based on the recommendations of the member engagement report received in Spring 2025, as well as conversations with the Alliance and Forum Executive Committees, staff are developing a comprehensive membership recruitment and retention plan. Staff are also working on enhancing engagement opportunities for Forum and Alliance members. For example, in partnership with the Policy Analysis and Research unit, staff have initiated a monthly policy call series, allowing Forum and Alliance members to come together in community to discuss emerging federal and state policy changes and their implications for their campus communities. The new Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning, and Development, Nicholas Fuselier, joined WICHE on May 22, 2025. He has continued to implement the recommended actions from the consultant report shared at the Commission meeting in May 2025.

The Western Academic Leadership Academy

This year, WICHE celebrates the 10th cohort of the Western Academic Leadership Academy. Since the Academy's inception, 158 participants from Alliance and Forum membership institutions have gathered in Boulder, Colorado, to kick off their year of professional development, which includes face-to-face meetings, webinars, and faculty mentoring. Drawing participants from the Forum and the Alliance organizations, 19 aspiring academic leaders were selected to participate in the 2025 Academy. This cohort will have its final session and a formal graduation ceremony in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the Forum Annual Meeting.

Credit Mobility Efforts and Technology Partnerships (Grant-funded)

WICHE's interest and expertise in credit mobility remains strong. WICHE received funds in August 2022 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 in November 2023 to support technological innovations that address credit mobility and student success in the WICHE region. Six projects, involving the participation of 13 institutions, were selected. These institutions are in Arizona, Colorado, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Institutional partners are developing technological innovations to enhance their communication and improve student success. Institutions submitted their interim reports in June 2025, and WICHE is conducting campus visits between May and October 2025. The community of practice will convene in September 2025, January 2026, and March 2026 to prepare for the final report, which is due in June 2026.

The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities (Grant-funded)

The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities is funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation. The two-year fellowship program includes an in-person, three-day leadership workshop for fellows each year. Additionally, each fellow meets monthly with an on-campus mentor, participates in quarterly group sessions led by an external advisor, and gains various leadership experiences throughout the two-year fellowship. Fellows also engage in monthly online sessions to discuss leadership and professional development topics. In March 2025, Mellon granted WICHE a one-year, no-cost extension, which provided a second year of programming to Cohort 2 through April 2026. The first cohort of fellows officially graduated during the Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting in April 2025. The second cohort will graduate formally during the 2026 Forum Annual Meeting, scheduled for April 1-3, 2026, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. WICHE staff are discussing with Mellon the possibility of continuing the faculty development program. The final report for the current grant is due in September 2026.

Joint Compact for Faculty Development and Opportunity (Grant-funded)

Staff are collaborating with the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three sister regional compacts in higher education, on a project aimed at educating and informing 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 share the findings.

The compact project teams have met in person in Atlanta, Georgia, in March 2025, in Boston, Massachusetts, in May 2025, and in Boulder, Colorado, in September 2025, as well as online on several occasions. These meetings resulted in clarifying project goals, developing a research protocol for the focus group interviews, and creating an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for submission to the State Higher Education Policy Center (SHEPC) IRB Review Board.

Recognizing that the teams would need more time to schedule, conduct, and transcribe the focus group interviews, staff requested a no-cost extension from the Mellon Foundation. Mellon has approved a 12-month extension. Staff hope to utilize the findings in their work with the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities and will share more in May 2026.

COST-SAVINGS PARTNERSHIPS UPDATE

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) offers competitively awarded contracts for cost-saving programs. MHEC's technology and student health insurance initiatives leverage the benefits and potential volume of the region's purchasing power, saving institutions and other entities time and money by simplifying the procurement process. These technology contracts are available to benefit higher education institutions of all sizes within the WICHE region, as well as K-12 school districts and state and local government agencies. Additionally, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) regions also participate in these cost-savings partnerships. The WICHE Group Property Insurance operates independently of the MHEC partnership and is staffed exclusively by WICHE personnel. In July 2025, a Manager of Regional Collaborative Procurement Solutions was hired to promote awareness of the programs available to institutions and organizations in the WICHE region.

MHECare Student Health Solutions

MHECare Student Health Solutions offers campuses a school-sponsored student health insurance plan, along with the ability to customize injury and illness coverage for both domestic and international students through the national carrier UnitedHealthcare Student Resources (UHCSR). UHCSR also offers emergency medical travel services, vision and dental plans, as well as insurance for specific groups, including study abroad participants and students in summer programs.

Public and private not-for-profit postsecondary institutions within the regions covered by MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, and WICHE, under the MHECare program, can access the HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, Inc. HealthMarkets provides higher education institutions with a straightforward way for students and their dependents to find suitable health insurance plans. As one of the largest health insurance agencies in the U.S., HealthMarkets is licensed to operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Its partnership with over 200 insurance providers offers students choice and convenience in their insurance options. Institutions interested in providing this service will receive an institution-specific website that connects students, dependents, and graduates searching for coverage to HealthMarkets' services. Users can browse online or get personal assistance from a licensed insurance agent at no cost. HealthMarkets offers access to a range of health insurance plans, including coverage for injuries and illnesses, as well as supplemental options such as dental and vision care. It can also help users determine their eligibility for premium tax credits and subsidies. Additionally, institutions can extend access to HealthMarkets for faculty and staff who are not eligible for employee benefits, where appropriate.

MHEC Technologies

MHEC's Technologies Committee and staff utilize extensive competitive procurement processes to select and negotiate favorable agreements with multiple vendors. This approach reduces duplication of procurement efforts and helps eligible campuses and other entities save money while expanding their purchasing options. The technology contracts website provides details about vendors and eligible entities, along with links to the vendor contracts. For instance, the Dell Technologies contract offers innovative, cost-effective virtualization and data center modernization solutions to support higher education institutions of all sizes, K-12 districts, and state and local governments across 47 states in transitioning their infrastructure to data centers and networks that span various public and private cloud providers. Technology Contracts is among the most accessed programs within the suite of cost-saving initiatives. Throughout the West, over 1,000 entities have used these contracts to save approximately 9% compared to what they would have spent without the MHEC technology-contracted services.

Team activities encompassed stakeholder engagement and professional development. In July 2025, Programs and Services (PAS) initiated a quarterly community of practice (CoP) focused on contracting, procurement, and operational costs for various campus leaders, such as chief business officers, chief financial officers, chief learning officers, chief information officers, chief information security officers, procurement team members, and risk managers, to discuss their challenges and opportunities. The Procurement CoP aims to create a platform for higher education procurement professionals to share knowledge and explore joint purchasing opportunities through quarterly meetings dedicated to problem-solving, learning, and resource sharing. Staff also invited MHEC colleagues to join these calls so they can understand the procurement needs of the WICHE region's campuses and state higher education system offices. Additionally, in both 2024 and 2025, PAS staff attended EDUCAUSE alongside WCET colleagues, gaining valuable insights into the technological needs and policy issues facing institutions.

WICHE Group Property Program

As of July 1, 2023, WICHE supported five independent colleges and universities that were unable to obtain property insurance quotes and policies by sponsoring the WICHE Group Property Program. These institutions are members of the College Liability Insurance Company (CLIC). Staff discussed with then-Commission Chair Matt Freeman whether WICHE could act as the group sponsor. These institutions successfully secured a policy, potentially saving between \$2 million and \$3 million collectively. In June 2025, WICHE included Fine

Arts and Terrorism coverage in the property insurance after recognizing the need for these coverages for the same institutions, along with the University of Wyoming and the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE).

WICHE Programs and Services staff are members of the University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) and have attended its annual meetings for the past two years to enhance capacity in this area. Capacity building is a primary reason for meeting attendance. URMIA also presented staff with an opportunity to engage with Marsh, the insurance broker handling the insurance procurement for the institutions mentioned above, and MHEC.

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 13, 2025

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Manitou Meeting Room

Conference Level (one level down from Lobby Level)

Agenda

1 Executive

2 Welcome

3 Plenary I

4 Roundtable I

5 Programs

6 Policy

7 Plenary II

8 Reception

9 Roundtable II

10 Business

11 References

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | *Manitou*

Committee Members

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

Sean Parnell (AK)

Chad Sampson (AZ)

Robert Shireman (CA)

Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)

Wendy Hensel (HI)

VACANT (ID)

Llew Jones (MT)

Patricia Charlton (NV)

Bill Soules (NM)

Danita Bye (ND)

Michael Dembrow (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

Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA

Kate Baca, Policy Analyst

Sophia Harris, Research Analyst

Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA

Action Items



Approval of May 5, 2025, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

6-3



**Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve
WICHE’s Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining
to State Legislation** **6-13**

Discussion Items

WICHE’s Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2025 Meeting **6-15**

Potential Work on Short-Term Credentials

Commission Priorities for the Policy Analysis and Research Workplan for FY 2027

Further Discussion on the Value of Postsecondary Education

Open Educational Resources Time to Degree Research Summary

Information Items

SARA Policy Modification Process

Tuition and Fees in the West, 2025-26: Detailed Data Tables

WICHE’s Positions on Federal Postsecondary Education Policy **6-23**

Update on Unit Activities

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of May 5, 2025, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair
Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair
Tom Begich (AK), *proxy for Sean Parnell*
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
Matt Freeman (ID), *proxy for Joshua Whitworth*
Bill Soules (NM)
Cathy Dinauer (NV), *proxy for Patricia Charlton*
Danita Bye (ND)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), *proxy for Kalani Kaneko*
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Mike Smith (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Sean Parnell (AK)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)

Other Commissioners Present

Larry Tidemann (SD)

Staff Present

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Digital Learning
Colleen Falkenstern, Director, Evidence and Strategic Initiatives
Christina Sedney, Director, Policy and Strategic Initiatives
Cheryl Dowd, Senior Director, State Authorization Network and WCET Policy Innovations

Call to Order

Committee Chair Nathan Lukkes called the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. Patrick Lane called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Action Items

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 15, 2024, POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Committee Chair Lukkes asked for any changes needed for the November 15, 2024, PAR Committee meeting minutes. There were no edits requested. Commissioner Jim Chavez

MOVED TO APPROVE, and Commissioner Danita Bye SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO APPROVE A PROJECT TITLED “THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON COLLEGE CLOSURES”

Committee Chair Lukkes introduced the action item and asked Lane to describe the proposed project to the committee. Lane noted that the Commission had previously discussed the idea at the November 2024 Commission Meeting and agreed that staff should proceed with a formal recommendation for the project. He described the detrimental impact that precipitous college closures, that is, closures that occur suddenly and without adequate warning, can have on students, outlined the difficulties that state oversight agencies and their regulatory partners face in responding to these events, and highlighted areas where improved communication and coordination could mitigate some of these difficulties.

Lane outlined a plan to work with the other regional compacts and potential partners such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and the National Association of State Administrators & Supervisors of Private Schools (NASASPS) to convene a task force that may include state regulators, SHEEOs, accreditors, federal staff, and other experts to discuss common issues in precipitous closures, identify policy and practice gaps, develop recommendations, promising practices, and identify needed research. He emphasized that the goal of the work would be to produce actionable recommendations that would better equip states to support students in these challenging situations.

Commissioner Tom Begich asked if the task force would consider program closures in addition to institutional closures, and Lane replied that it would.

Lane clarified that the Commission’s approval of the proposed project would not automatically begin the work, but rather grant staff permission to seek funding for the work by adding it to the Workplan. Commissioner Frankie Eliptico MOVED TO APPROVE the recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to approve a project titled “The National Task Force on College Closures.” Commissioner Begich SECONDED the motion.

Commissioner Matt Freeman asked Lane if WICHE had discussed the project yet with any potential funders, and Lane responded that there had been some preliminary discussions, but staff have to date focused on conversations with potential partners in the effort. Lane added that while precipitous institutional closures have historically been more of an issue in other geographic regions of the country, some have occurred in the West, and the WICHE region certainly could learn from this work.

The motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO APPROVE THE FY 2026 WORKPLAN SECTION FOR THE POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH UNIT

Lane described how the approval of the FY 2026 Workplan is a key function of the Commission and encouraged committee members to offer feedback on the proposed PAR Workplan, including how the information itself is presented. He provided an overview of *Current Activities*, starting with those funded by the unit's allocation of General Fund dollars, which included a series of briefs and a curated collection of data resources. He also highlighted the growth of the peer-to-peer convenings with state and system chief academic officers, who have come to find the convenings a valuable resource across a range of issues. Lane added that staff have increasingly focused on providing informational updates about ongoing federal issues.

Lane went on to provide a summary of externally funded *Current Activities*, including the open educational resources (OER) work funded by the Hewlett Foundation and state-specific work in Colorado and Wyoming. He highlighted the Rural Higher Education Center project, "Evaluating Train in Place Rural Nursing Programs," noting it is part of a larger, federally funded project, and while the first year of funding is secure, future years of the five-year project are in question. He emphasized that, given the Commission's long-term support for this topic, staff will make every effort to continue the work even in the face of uncertain long-term funding.

Lane then shifted to the *New Directions* section of the PAR Workplan, reminding the PAR Committee that it had previously approved a streamlined version of the section, which had removed several outdated project proposals. He noted that the *Potential Future Projects* section serves as a place to roster ideas.

Lane concluded by providing an overview of two *Completed Projects*.

1. WICHE's work on the "Intermediaries for Scale" project has ended after multiple collaborations with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC).
2. WICHE completed work on short-term credentials through the release of a policy brief on the topic, but will continue to pursue additional work in the space through the Hole in State Policy project that remains in the *New Directions* section of the PAR Workplan.

Commissioner Begich asked about the cybersecurity project listed in the *New Directions* section. Lane described the project, whereby WICHE acts as a matchmaker between the federal government and states and systems interested in participating in tabletop exercises focused on responding to cyberattacks. He stated that the work had been funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and participating groups had shared positive feedback; however, he noted that there is uncertainty about ongoing federal funding for the work.

Commissioner Begich inquired whether there were other areas impacted by changes to federal funding opportunities. Lane reiterated the federal funding associated with the rural nursing project and added that the *Knocking on the College Door* high school graduate data projections rely in part on a federal data collection, the contract for which has been cancelled as of the date of the Commission meeting. Committee members requested a list of impacted projects from staff.

Commissioner Chavez brought the committee's attention to the fact that while a project on the value of higher education has been on the Workplan for multiple years, there is no specific timeline or funding strategy associated with it. He added that recent discussions, including at this Commission meeting, have emphasized the need to move forward on this work and suggested that the Commission should consider dedicating internal funds to support the work if necessary.

Lane replied that a piece of the work has been incorporated into the ECMC project on completion strategies, as the PAR Committee had previously directed staff that a critical component of postsecondary value is credential completion. He described how the project would focus on helping states evaluate and improve their completion strategies as a component of enhancing the value proposition of higher education. A different piece of the work was effectively articulating the value of higher education, and that would be very complementary to the ongoing completion work.

Commissioner Chavez responded that he would like to see a return to the full intent of the value work and to establish a clear timeframe for accomplishing it, whether with internal or external funding. Committee Chair Lukkes asked Lane what the process would be to amend the Workplan to reflect this. Lane responded that the committee could note this conversation in its motion to the Committee of the Whole, and this would ensure that the Commission was aware of this proposal and that staff have clear direction as to its high priority.

Commissioner Freeman shared that he was participating in a SHEEO fellowship and spent several months researching the value proposition of higher education and developing associated policy recommendations. He offered to share the work as a place to begin.

Commissioner Chad Sampson encouraged WICHE to think carefully about who its audience was and who its partners were in its project work, sharing that Arizona invested significant resources in articulating the value of higher education, but that these arguments did not always resonate with key audiences like the state legislature. Committee Chair Lukkes agreed, seconding the idea of careful consideration of advocates and stakeholders and cautioning against being self-referential, where higher education "was making the case for higher education."

Commissioner Gerry Pollet asked if there was a project plan to get to a strategic definition of value. The concept felt amorphous, and the need was for an advocacy campaign that is based

on a strategic plan that clarifies whose views are needed to impact and why, with a focus on the end user. Lane replied that the initial discussion for the project had centered around questions of value to whom and where the value falls short, and WICHE's thinking has become less exclusively about individuals and more about value to communities and states as well.

Commissioner Lisa Skari agreed that identifying the audience would be critical, and Commissioner Chavez asked that the group not forget students and ensure that they are considered as an important stakeholder group. Commissioner Sampson asked about how WICHE should go about identifying the key stakeholders, noting that for different groups, the messaging needs to be different to align with varying priorities. For example, a student, a community member, and a legislator will often have different priorities, and thus different messaging would be needed.

Lane proposed reaching back out to the group via email after refining the ideas discussed and exploring a reserve dedication option. Commissioner Chavez suggested that committee members might like to be more engaged in this process, perhaps through a subcommittee. Committee Chair Lukkes responded that this approach should ensure appropriate representation: someone from higher education, someone from a state legislature, someone from industry, etc.

Commissioner Colleen Sathre offered to share the work of the Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i (UHERO) as a compelling model of demonstrating higher education's value to the state.

Commissioner Freeman noted that the work must be contextualized to be effective; for example, a toolkit that states could adapt as needed, as every state is different. Committee Chair Lukkes agreed, sharing that South Dakota was working on the concept and that core themes and information could work across different contexts.

Lane confirmed interest in participating in the subcommittee from Commissioners Pollet, Begich, Chavez, Freeman, and Committee Chair Lukkes.

Committee Chair Lukkes confirmed that the Workplan is approved with the caveat that the value proposition work should be clarified with a specific timeline and funding plan developed in consultation with a subcommittee in advance of the November 2025 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Begich MOTIONED TO APPROVE, and Commissioner Robert Shireman SECONDED.

Commissioner Shireman shared that former PAR Committee Chair Christopher Cabaldon says hello, and several committee members noted the California vacancy on the Legislative Advisory Committee.

The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Items

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FALL 2025 MEETING

Christina Sedney shared an update on the upcoming Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC), noting that it would take place on September 8-9, 2025, in Seattle, Washington. She described the list of potential topics that was developed from suggestions by legislators over the past year and asked for the group's input. Commissioner Freeman emphasized the importance of a session on the interaction between states, the federal government, and accreditors, given potential changes to accreditation policy. Commissioner Pollet added that the 2024 session on accreditation had been very helpful for legislators in attendance and that he viewed the topic as worthy of continued conversation with the LAC. The following topics were suggested for the upcoming LAC meeting:

- ▶ The importance of funding for higher education in an evolving federal environment
- ▶ Artificial intelligence (AI)
- ▶ Alignment of postsecondary and workforce systems
- ▶ Understanding how federal policy changes could impact state laws and regulations
- ▶ Managing higher education expenses in a recession

KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR: DISTRIBUTION AND NEXT STEPS

Colleen Falkenstern described the distribution for the 11th edition of the *Knocking at the College Door: High School Graduate Projections* released in December 2024. She highlighted both past and upcoming speaking engagements where staff shared the findings. Falkenstern also noted the strong work by the Communications team in developing and executing the distribution strategy, sharing that the 2024 edition's outreach metrics were already far outpacing those of the 2020 edition.

Falkenstern said the unit's potential next steps for the *Knocking* work, prior to the 12th edition's release in 2028, include collecting data from the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States, looking at the 12th grade projections by male/female, and exploring data by location below the state level, such as at the district or county level. She asked the committee members for their feedback on what areas of focus would be valuable.

Commissioner Pollet asked if there had been a communications effort to share findings with state legislators. Lane responded that staff had shared the data with the Legislative Advisory Committee in Fall 2024, were planning to present at an upcoming National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) budget meeting, and were actively seeking additional opportunities. Commissioner Pollet noted that it would be valuable to share this information with higher education-focused legislative committees that need to know where enrollment stands in their states. Commissioner Begich noted that Sen. Löki Tobin was the incoming chair of the Council of State Governments (CSG) West group and could share *Knocking* information there.

Committee Chair Lukkes shared that he has been a longtime admirer of the report and the wealth of information it provides. He asked if it might be possible to track the impact of out-of-state migration of high school graduates and how this has impacted enrolling cohorts of postsecondary students. For example, he noted that while South Dakota was projected to see an increase in high school graduates in the coming years, corresponding decreases in neighboring states could still negatively impact their own enrollment trends. Lane responded that the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) does provide some data on enrollment across state lines that could be used for this purpose. These data could be examined to look at changing trends over time in terms of exports of high school graduates across state lines. Falkenstern added that WICHE could also explore modeling these trends into the future. Committee Chair Lukkes replied that he would be interested in this type of analysis.

Commissioner Begich suggested that watching international migration trends “would be interesting” given the current policy environment in the federal environment, and Lane noted that one of the newest trends observed in the data with the 11th edition of *Knocking* was increased migration domestically to the South.

Commissioner Pollet congratulated staff on the overall *Knocking* effort, adding that he was impressed with all that had been accomplished. Lane responded that the Communications team had done terrific work that enhanced the work of the Policy unit.

STATE APPROACHES TO SHORT-TERM POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS: ANALYSIS AND NEXT STEPS

Sedney shared a brief overview of WICHE’s short-term credentials efforts, noting that WICHE had partnered with the Pew Charitable Trusts to explore the different policy mechanisms states have in place over the past year. She described how the work had surfaced a variety of possible avenues for future work, including enhanced data collection and more standardized data definitions, the evolution of regulatory frameworks, and the exploration of how students navigate the short-term credential landscape. She asked for the committee’s perspective on future directions for the short-term credential work.

Commissioner Freeman responded that value was a key component of this discussion, with research showing differential return on investment to these types of credentials depending upon the student and the credential type. He emphasized that WICHE could be an important voice in the conversation about the value of short-term credentials.

Committee Chair Lukkes shared that an important component of this work was to engage industry and ensure the credentials align with labor market needs, and Commissioner Freeman agreed.

FEDERAL POSTSECONDARY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Lane reminded the PAR Committee how WICHE develops federal positions and shared how the PAR unit is thinking of next steps in this area. Lane shared how WICHE has increasingly come to function as an information clearinghouse, ensuring that constituents have up-to-date information about what is happening at the federal level that may impact their state work. He added that WICHE's Programs and Services team has asked the PAR unit to provide similar information to their networks of institutional leaders.

Lane noted that more policy changes will likely occur and that Policy staff would continue to review those that emerge. Should there be an area where WICHE would consider revising its federal positions, this could occur through the Executive Committee or might come through the PAR Committee, depending upon timing.

WICHE continues to consider data and research, and what WICHE might need to do to ensure that critical data collections continue if federal efforts are paused or canceled. Lane noted that supporting states in using their own longitudinal data systems also remains a priority, including through the use of WICHE's secure data environment and capacity to partner with researchers.

Information Items

UPDATE ON UNIT STAFFING

Lane shared the following staff updates:

- ▶ Senior Policy Analyst Liliana Diaz Solodukhin left WICHE to take a position with the Colorado Department of Higher Education.
- ▶ New policy analyst, Kate Baca, was hired.
- ▶ Director of Evidence Peace Bransberger left WICHE to take a position at Arapaho Community College.
- ▶ New research analyst, Sophia Harris, was hired.
- ▶ Colleen Falkenstern was promoted to Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives.

With these additions, the PAR unit is now structured into three hubs:

- ▶ Christina Sedney directing policy
- ▶ Colleen Falkenstern leading data and evidence
- ▶ Molly Hall-Martin leading state authorization

UPDATE ON LEADERSHIP TABLETOP EXERCISES (LTTX) FOR INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Lane referenced his earlier comments on the LTTX, noting that WICHE would continue to promote it as it offers value to the region in the important area of cybersecurity.

TUITION AND FEES, APPROPRIATIONS, AND FINANCIAL AID IN THE WEST: TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS, 2024-25

Falkenstern described the *2024-2025 Tuition and Fees* report, providing a high-level overview of recent trends. This includes a relatively positive financial picture for state higher education, coupled with impending uncertainty at the federal level and some challenging state budget situations. She noted that the 2025 tuition rates would be shared at the November 2025 Commission Meeting.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Lane noted that unit staff are exploring how they can support states, systems, and institutions in their research. He shared that the unit was working to identify shared research priorities and hopes to identify funding opportunities as well as opportunities to partner with researchers.

UPDATE ON UNIT ACTIVITIES

Lane offered an update on OER work, including the OERWest Network's April 2025 meeting in Boise, Idaho, and highlighted the possibility of a future meeting held in the Pacific region. Lane shared that the unit was discussing with funders to continue WICHE's work on short-term credentials. Lane then noted that *Knocking* outreach continues, with several upcoming presentations. Lane concluded by noting that the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) was in the midst of its policy modification process. He highlighted a proposal he was particularly interested in that aims to strengthen policies related to location, and added there were several other proposals of note as well. He shared that the committee's efforts to enhance the state voice in SARA have continued to bear fruit, and the state voice was strong in the policy modification process.

Commissioner Pollet asked for Lane's perspective on the likelihood of policy modifications related to student complaint investigation by a home state and state-level consumer protection laws passing. Lane replied that he did not think it was likely that the complaint investigation structure would be changed this year, but it was an issue that received much attention, and SARA stakeholders were working to identify the best way to structure the process.

Regarding the consumer protection question, Lane clarified that states under SARA retain the ability to investigate fraud and misrepresentation. He added that he was particularly interested in the question of enforcement in this area and exploring how SARA could do more. He further clarified that SARA had always been entirely voluntary for states and that if a state prefers to have a different set of consumer protections than those offered by SARA, they are welcome to pursue an alternative agreement. He also shared that SARA is working on strengthening institutional closure policies, including records retention,

teachout plans, and financial protections. SARA was exploring enhanced financial protection mechanisms, such as a tuition refund fund, that Lane hoped would be proposed next year.

Other Business

Lane recognized the longtime service of Commissioner Sathre to the PAR Committee. He thanked her for being a joy to work with and sharing how her consummate preparation and thoughtful contributions have strengthened WICHE's work over the years.

Adjournment

Committee Chair Lukkes adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve WICHE's Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State* Legislation

Summary

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has long served as a trusted source of information and analysis for state* higher education and policy stakeholders throughout the region. As requests for information sometimes intersect with pending state legislation, WICHE staff believe formalizing the organization's approach will help ensure consistency, transparency, and clarity in how staff respond. This proposed policy aims to reinforce WICHE's non-advocacy stance while providing a clear framework that allows staff to fulfill WICHE's responsibility to deliver objective, expert analysis that commissioners, state policymakers, and others expect. By codifying these practices, WICHE seeks to offer clarity to requestors, ensure commissioners are appropriately informed, and provide institutional and organizational support for staff responding to sensitive or politically charged inquiries. The policy also affirms WICHE's commitment to openness and collaboration, ensuring that information shared with one stakeholder is accessible to others, thereby fostering trust and reinforcing WICHE's role as a neutral and reliable resource.

The language below has been presented to WICHE's Executive Committee for discussion, and no revisions were requested.

Relationship to WICHE's Mission

This action is related to WICHE's mission by formalizing an approach to supporting sound public policy that can help promote access to and excellence in postsecondary education. Ensuring that staff are able to provide expert analysis when requested in an open and transparent manner will support the development of sound policy.

Staff Fiscal Impact

This action is not expected to have a fiscal impact on WICHE.

Action Requested

Staff request that the Policy Analysis and Research Committee approve a recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to adopt the proposed policy for responding to information requests from state education stakeholders.

* Throughout this action item, 'state' refers to states, territories, and freely associated states in the region.

Background

Consistent with longstanding practice, WICHE staff will, if requested, provide information and analysis to state higher education and policy stakeholders about our programs or other areas in which staff have expertise. Although WICHE does not advocate for or against legislation within a state, occasionally, these requests pertain to legislation that is under consideration.

The following is a proposed policy to guide WICHE staff when responding to information requests that pertain to state legislation:

Any analysis that WICHE provides will be shared with the commissioners of the relevant state and the state higher education executive officer, although the requestor's identity will be redacted. Commissioners may participate in a dialogue with staff and/or inform staff of any legal opinions relevant to the matter.

1. As a courtesy, at a commissioner's request, WICHE will share the analysis with the chairs, vice chairs, and ranking minority members of the relevant legislative committees.
2. Recipients of the information that WICHE provides are free to use it as they see fit, and WICHE will also transparently share its analysis with any other stakeholder who requests such information, although the requestor's identity will be redacted.
3. If invited, WICHE staff are encouraged to offer testimony, participate in public work sessions, and/or offer a formal response to a committee or legislator request.
4. WICHE's formal role within the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is in part to oversee state compliance with the requirements of the agreement. When staff are asked whether pending legislation complies with current SARA policy, staff are expected to answer the questions posed to the best of their ability under the guidance of legal counsel.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2025 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. <i>Fremont</i>	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:15 a.m. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	Welcome and Introductions 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 Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE
9:15 - 10:15 a.m. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	Reflections on Postsecondary Legislative Priorities 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. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i>	The State Policy Impact of Federal Policy Shifts 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

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
(continued)

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

12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Fremont

Lunch

<p>1:30 - 2:30 p.m. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i></p>	<p>State-level Approaches to Postsecondary Behavioral Health</p> <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>Moderator Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p> <p>Speakers Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health, WICHE Zainab Okolo, Senior Vice President of Policy, Advocacy, and Government Relations, The Jed Foundation</p>
<p>2:30 - 2:45 p.m.</p>	<p>Break</p>
<p>2:45 - 4:00 p.m. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i></p>	<p>A Reimagined Regulatory Triad? How Oversight May Evolve</p> <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>Moderator Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE</p> <p>Speakers Jan Friis, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p>
<p>4:00 - 4:30 p.m. <i>Admiral Ballroom</i></p>	<p>Day One Reflections</p> <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>Facilitator Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p>
<p>6:30 - 8:30 p.m. <i>Marin</i></p>	<p>Optional Dinner</p> <p>Join LAC colleagues, speakers, and guests for an informal dinner at the hotel restaurant, Marin.</p>

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast

Fremont

8:30 - 8:45 a.m.

Day Two Opening

Admiral Ballroom

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.

Facilitator

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

8:45 - 9:45 a.m.

The Completion Imperative: How States Are Investing in Completion Strategies

Admiral Ballroom

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.

Moderator

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE

Speaker

Joseph Thiel, Deputy Commissioner, Academic, Research and Student Affairs, Montana University System

9:45 - 10:15 a.m.

Extended Break

An opportunity for attendees to check out of hotel rooms if needed.

10:15 - 11:30 a.m.

Artificial Intelligence in Postsecondary Education

Admiral Ballroom

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.

Moderator

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

Speakers

Senator Kevin Cook, Idaho

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Hawai'i

Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Chief Labor Economist, Washington State Employment Security Department

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

Participant List

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NEVADA

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop

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* Denotes WICHE Commissioner

NEW MEXICO

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Senator Ronald Sorvaag

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Representative Chris Kassin

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Senator Stephanie Sauder

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Utah State Senate
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Senator Ann Millner*

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Representative Karen Peterson

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WASHINGTON

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Representative Mari Leavitt

Washington State House of Representatives
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Representative Gerry Pollet*

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SPEAKERS

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Barbara Damron*

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Chief Labor Economist, Washington State Employment Security Department

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INFORMATION ITEM

WICHE'S Positions on Federal Postsecondary Education Policy

The Commission has approved a set of principles and positions to guide the organization's engagement on key issues and topics. These positions focus on the needs of WICHE's members and how federal policy could complement state and compact efforts to improve postsecondary outcomes for all students.

WICHE's proposed federal positions are based on several high-level general principles.

- ▶ **Principle 1.** States and territories, including the postsecondary systems and institutions within them, are the primary partners in ensuring access to high-quality higher education for all students, and in ensuring accountability of our nation's postsecondary enterprise. Thus, they have a unique and critical role to play in the higher education policymaking process.
- ▶ **Principle 2.** Solutions to our nation's higher education challenges and problems should focus on how to support positive outcomes for all students — particularly those groups who have been poorly served in the past and are facing significant barriers in the future — and protecting students and taxpayers from fraud.
- ▶ **Principle 3.** Higher education policy decisions should be informed by data, rigorous research, and evidence.
- ▶ **Principle 4.** Higher education in the West has unique characteristics and requires intentional federal policymaking that recognizes the needs of the region.

These principles are embedded in the following proposed positions:

- ▶ **Actionable data and information are key to better outcomes for students, and any data system(s) must be developed thoughtfully.** WICHE remains neutral on the creation of a federal student unit record system. WICHE will continue to share its expertise and bring a perspective derived from the region to federal efforts to develop and improve data resources.

Additionally, federal policy should support the development of data resources and infrastructure that provide accurate and actionable information about states, territories, and institutions in the West (and, where appropriate, freely associated states), while ensuring attention to key issues including privacy, security, sustainability, and burden. This should include appropriate data resources for and engagement with Tribal Colleges and Universities, which are prevalent throughout the West.

- ▶ **A state-federal partnership has the potential to enhance affordability and be an essential part of the solution for improving student access and success.** Affordability of postsecondary education is a pressing topic throughout the West that is of wide concern. Given the historical roles of both federal and state funding of postsecondary education, a reinvigorated state-federal partnership is crucial to assessing and improving affordability. States and territories will not be able to meet their postsecondary attainment goals without significant federal investment in ways that account for the different governance structures and characteristics of postsecondary education systems across the West. The federal government is uniquely positioned to provide resources to improve affordability and, given the national and state interests in increasing attainment, a well-designed partnership is essential to improving affordability.

Federal proposals on affordability should balance state and territory characteristics, state and territory support for postsecondary education, and research and evidence in developing the detailed models to design and implement such programs. Further, these approaches must be sustainable at the federal and state levels. WICHE has a history of developing financial aid models that would serve the development of a state-federal partnership well and has substantial expertise to contribute. Additionally, federal policy supporting Minority-Serving Institutions should provide sufficient resources to reduce gaps in postsecondary outcomes for underrepresented students.

- ▶ **Higher education innovations to improve student outcomes should be supported but must also ensure robust student protections.** WICHE has played a significant role in fostering innovation in postsecondary education but recognizes that any federal efforts to promote new policies and practices through flexibility must protect students from bad-faith actors. Finding the appropriate balance is crucial, and WICHE staff's expertise in policy and technology can play an important role.

Further, innovations in postsecondary education and training that involve major departures from existing regulatory and oversight models can be a useful tool to demonstrate viability and effectiveness, but they must also provide appropriate assurances to students. New innovations must have appropriate protections and either have or lead to a strong base of evidence, along with rigorous evaluative requirements. WICHE will continue to engage the U.S. Department of Education to leverage available resources and approaches to evaluate and, where appropriate, elevate new policies and programs that improve student outcomes and to protect the students participating in the experiment.

- ▶ **Digital learning is critical for higher education and economic development in the 21st century.** Even prior to the recent pandemic and the wide-scale reliance on digital learning that it created at every institution, the importance of digital learning was abundantly clear. The effectiveness of digital learning is, however, impacted by both

student and institutional technology accessibility. The pandemic’s disruption of face-to-face instruction has demonstrated the impact of “broadband deserts” on students and institutions. WICHE supports the development and use of digital learning as a means of improving student access and success, especially for those students who are not well-served by more traditional face-to-face instruction. Additionally, the West, including Tribal lands and Pacific islands, face particular challenges in developing the necessary infrastructure to support digital learning, which can be addressed through federal policy

Federal policy also oftentimes differentiates between educational modalities, which may be appropriate in some instances, where there are evidence-based reasons. However, students enrolled in distance education should not face additional obstacles due to such differentiation without sufficient justification.

- ▶ **An appropriate balance between federal and state authority is essential for maintaining and developing effective postsecondary education authorization and oversight approaches.** Given substantial federal investment in postsecondary education, it may be appropriate for the federal government to consider evidence-based criteria for institutions and states to be eligible to participate in such funding programs. Federal agencies should also be deferential to states when taking actions that could affect state policymaking discretion. Federal efforts should:

- Involve substantial consultation with states and their representatives to identify potential alternative approaches that meet stated federal objectives;
- Be based on strong evidence, research, and data; and
- Do so to the least extent necessary to accomplish stated federal objectives.

When engaging in discussions with representatives from federal agencies and other entities about issues that affect state policies, programs, or responsibilities, WICHE staff will:

- Promote adherence to the U.S. constitutional framework that enshrines states with primary responsibility for education policy;
- Ensure that Western postsecondary perspectives are included in the federal policymaking process;
- Work to ensure communication among parties takes place; and
- Endeavor to provide supporting high-quality, objective evidence, research, and data that inform federal actions.

Since 1953, WICHE has worked collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life. [Visit wiche.edu](https://www.wiche.edu).

Plenary Session II

Navigating Financial Uncertainty: Strategies for Institutional Resilience

Thursday, November 13, 2025
2:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Centennial Ballroom
Main Level / Lobby Level

Agenda

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5 Programs

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7 Plenary II

8 Reception

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PLENARY SESSION II

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 2:45 – 4:00 p.m. | Centennial Ballroom

Navigating Financial Uncertainty: Strategies for Institutional Resilience

This session will explore the pressing financial challenges facing higher education institutions today, including fluctuating enrollment trends, shifting federal and state funding landscapes, and increasing operational costs. A panel of higher education leaders will share strategies for fostering financial resilience, such as innovative funding models, cost-saving initiatives, and long-term fiscal planning.

Designed to spark meaningful dialogue among commissioners, the session will encourage participants to reflect on how institutions can adapt to financial uncertainty while continuing to deliver high-quality education and robust student support. Commissioners will be invited to share insights, ask questions, and explore collaborative approaches to navigating these challenges across the region.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- ▶ What are the current financial challenges facing higher education institutions?
- ▶ How can institutions develop innovative funding models to ensure financial resilience?
- ▶ What cost-saving measures can be implemented without compromising the quality of education?
- ▶ How can institutions plan for long-term financial stability in an uncertain economic environment?

FACILITATOR

Tim Storey, Chief Executive Officer, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

PANELISTS

Bennett Boggs, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development

Todd Saliman, President, University of Colorado

Nick Swayne, President, North Idaho College

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Tim Storey, Chief Executive Officer, National Conference of State Legislatures

Tim Storey is the chief executive officer for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), headquartered in Denver, Colorado. He has held that position since July 2019. Before becoming CEO, he worked for 30 years at NCSL, serving and studying the legislative institution — specializing in the areas of elections, redistricting, legislative organization, and leadership. During that time, he participated in and led 30 in-depth studies of legislative operations in nearly half of America’s legislatures. Storey staffed NCSL’s Redistricting and Elections Committee for over two decades, authoring numerous articles and papers on the topics. During that time, he led NCSL’s StateVote effort to collect and analyze state election results before assuming the role of directing NCSL’s programs for top legislative leaders. Born and raised in western North Carolina, Storey attended Mars Hill College in western North Carolina and received his master of arts from the University of Colorado. He lives in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, with his awesome wife Amy. They have three great kids who are now out exploring the world: Caroline, Will, and Erin. And three dogs...a requirement for Coloradans.

Panelists



Bennett Boggs, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development

Bennett Boggs serves as the commissioner of the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD), which oversees the state’s public workforce development system and guides the state’s higher education investments and policies. MDHEWD serves Missourians through 23 comprehensive job centers, supporting justice-involved individuals through Reentry Centers, managing \$160 million in state student financial aid, and administering apprenticeships, achieving a ranking of third in the nation in completed programs. MDHEWD also coordinates higher education funding, manages a longitudinal P20W data system, and oversees the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). Boggs has an extensive background in higher education, serving in leadership roles for state agencies in Kentucky and Colorado, as well as within both public and private higher education institutions. He has also worked with the Kentucky state legislature and for the National Conference of State Legislatures, based in Denver, Colorado. He is a passionate believer in the power of partnerships to strengthen services for learners and workers by

aligning programs with employer needs, facilitating work-based learning experiences, and leveraging data tools to inform decision-making.

Boggs earned a bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University, a master's degree in education from The College of William and Mary, and a doctorate in higher education policy studies from the University of Virginia. He also completed the Institute for Management and Leadership in Education at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.



Todd Saliman, President, University of Colorado

Todd Saliman is the 24th president of the University of Colorado (CU). A proud CU alum and lifelong Coloradan, Saliman counts connecting with communities across Colorado to ensure CU meets the state's evolving needs among his top priorities as president. Under his leadership, CU's outreach and engagement programming has grown dramatically and now includes regular visits, listening tours, and community conversations across the state. He is deeply committed to ensuring that CU's campuses reflect the communities statewide, so that all students, faculty, and staff feel they have a place at CU.

Saliman considers helping students cross the finish line to graduation one of CU's core responsibilities. He has a special focus on raising awareness about the value of a four-year degree and breaking down barriers to higher education. A tireless champion of the extraordinary work happening on CU's campuses, Saliman seeks to reinforce the university's position as a national and world leader in research, scholarship, the humanities, health care, and innovation. He collaboratively engages with faculty, campus leaders, stakeholders, and funders to help elevate work in these critically important areas.

Before becoming president, Saliman served as CU's senior vice president for strategy, government relations, and chief financial officer, leading the university's budget and finance operations for nearly 10 years. He is a former member of the Colorado General Assembly, having spent four years on the Joint Budget Committee. He served in the cabinets of the Govs. Bill Ritter and John Hickenlooper and directed the Office of State Planning and Budgeting in Gov. Ritter's administration.



Nick Swayne, President, North Idaho College

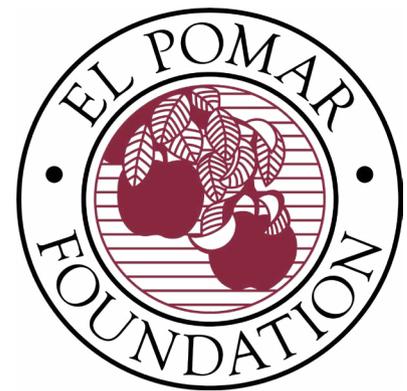
Nick Swayne is an accomplished higher education president, strategic innovator, and decorated military Veteran with a legacy spanning community college leadership, statewide academic partnership, and global recognition for transformative education. Since 2022, he has led North Idaho College as its 11th president, executing a turnaround that

reversed a 12-year enrollment decline, rebuilt leadership teams, and restored the college's accreditation standing. Swayne's pioneering work with workforce training, dual credit pathways, and affordable bachelor's degree collaborations established NIC as a regional leader in student success. Previously, he founded the JMU X-Labs innovation ecosystem at James Madison University, which is used by over 6,000 students annually and has been cited as a model of transdisciplinary, experiential education featured in national media, including the *New York Times* and the *Chronicle*. He served as executive director of the four Virginia consortium, doubling the number of university partners and spearheading initiatives in collaborative research, course sharing, and degree completion across Virginia's public universities. He was elected to four terms on the Harrisonburg City School Board, serving in multiple capacities, including chair and vice chair. A two-time recipient of the Governor's Technology Award for innovation, Swayne's programs have been recognized for boosting student achievement and access for underrepresented groups. Beyond education, he is a U.S. Army Veteran honored with the Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, and Defense Meritorious Service Medal. Widely regarded for his visionary leadership, board governance, and dedication to mentoring, Swayne continues to champion collaboration, integrity, and community engagement in higher education.

Guide to the Reception

and Local Dining Options

supported by El Pomar Foundation

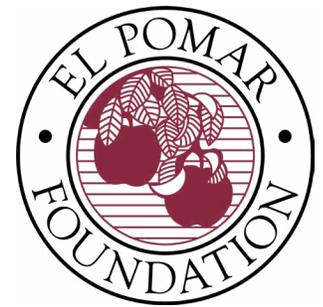


GUIDE TO THE RECEPTION AND LOCAL DINING OPTIONS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 | 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | *Penrose House*

El Pomar Foundation | Penrose House

The reception on Thursday, November 13, will take place at a historic estate, the Penrose House. The home that is now a nonprofit event center, embodies transformative contributions and a civic legacy to the Colorado Springs community. Nestled in the Broadmoor neighborhood beneath the beautiful backdrop of Cheyenne Mountain, the estate spans 18.4 acres. Built in 1910, The Penrose House was designed in the Mission and Spanish Revival styles. These styles are characterized by stucco walls, red-tiled roofs, arched corridors, and ornamental ironwork — reflecting the distinctive features of early Spanish missions in the American Southwest. This historic estate, operated by El Pomar Foundation, is used exclusively for nonprofit and government-related events. The estate remains a cherished and respected landmark, blending historical elegance with community purpose.



RECEPTION INFORMATION

Penrose House
1661 Mesa Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
5:30-7:30 p.m.

Group transportation to the reception will be provided for speakers and commissioners.

Attendees need to gather in the front lobby of the hotel in time to depart by 5:15 p.m.

At the conclusion of the reception, group transportation will be provided back to the hotel.

The dress attire is business casual or cocktail attire. Please, no jeans.

We look forward to this reception, where we can enjoy time for connection and conversation. Thank you to El Pomar Foundation for their generous support of this reception that brought all of us together tonight, strengthening our connections and partnerships.



THE ENDURING LEGACY OF SPENCER AND JULIE PENROSE

Spencer and Julie Penrose were visionary philanthropists whose enduring impact continues to shape Colorado. Spencer, known for his entrepreneurial spirit, used his mining success to transform the Pikes Peak region into a world-class destination. Julie, a pioneering philanthropist, championed access to healthcare and the arts; she recognized their essential role in a thriving society. Together, their shared vision became a reality for the community, with everything from popular tourist spots to arts organizations, hospitals, schools, museums, and sports traditions. Many of the organizations they brought to life are still woven into the heart of Colorado Springs, helping to define what makes the city flourish.

- ▶ Pikes Peak Highway (1916)
- ▶ Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (1916)
- ▶ The Broadmoor (1918)
- ▶ Pauline Chapel (1919)
- ▶ Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College (1919)
- ▶ The Broadmoor Pikes Peak & Manitou Cog Railway (1925)
- ▶ Cheyenne Mountain Zoo (1926)
- ▶ Fountain Valley School (1929)
- ▶ Central City Opera (1932)
- ▶ Will Rogers Shrine of the Sun (1937)
- ▶ El Pomar Foundation (1937)
- ▶ Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo (1937)
- ▶ Broadmoor World Arena (1938)
- ▶ Penrose Heritage Museum (1941)
- ▶ Penrose House Conference Center (1944)
- ▶ Penrose Hospital (1955)

With a solid foundation of their formative experiences and community generosity, Julie and Spencer Penrose believed that supporting thoughtful, visionary programs and projects could lead to meaningful change across the community by expanding the positive impact and inspiring individuals to serve the common good. They established El Pomar Foundation to have an ongoing, sustained commitment to nurturing, supporting, and maintaining their work. Today, El Pomar Foundation preserves and shares the Penrose legacy by fostering future generations through development initiatives, nonprofit partnerships, and active community engagement. The foundation supports nonprofits and government entities in the areas of arts and culture, civic and community initiatives, education, health, and human services.

From the plaque near the front door of the landmark home of Penrose House:

Originally built as a single-family residence in 1910, the Mediterranean-style home was christened El Pomar because it sat on land once used as an apple orchard. El Pomar is Spanish for "the orchard."

After Spencer Penrose's death, Julie donated El Pomar to the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in recognition of their importance to the local community and the care they provided Spencer during his final years. For nearly 50 years, the Sisters of Charity operated a retreat center and lived and worshipped at the home.

El Pomar Foundation, established by the Penroses in 1937 to continue the couple's philanthropic efforts, acquired the home from the Sisters of Charity in 1992 and transformed the home into a nonprofit conference and education center, renamed Penrose House.

Respect for the past and promise for the future combine to create an unmatched atmosphere that allows all to chart their own one-of-a-kind legacies.

To learn more about Penrose House visit elpomar.org.

RECEPTION SPEAKER



Kyle H. Hybl, President and Chief Executive Officer, El Pomar Foundation

Kyle Hybl serves as President and Chief Executive Officer for El Pomar Foundation and Vice President of The Garden City Company. Kyle is Chairman Emeritus of the University of Colorado System, a board he served on from 2007-18. Kyle serves as Chairman of the National Cybersecurity Center and Colorado Thirty Group. He is Corporate Secretary for Junior Achievement, USA and a board member of American Council of Young Political Leaders. In 2018, Kyle was appointed as a member of the Air Force Civic Leaders Program.

Kyle earned bachelor's and juris doctor degrees from the University of Colorado Boulder. He is a former Air Force Captain and Judge Advocate.

Restaurants near Cheyenne Mountain Resort

There are several easy-access restaurants both near and on the hotel property. If you need assistance making a reservation at any one of these restaurants or if you would like to arrange transportation with WICHE staff to a restaurant, please stop by the Help Desks located on the main/lobby level of the hotel near the Centennial Ballroom and the conference level near the breakout rooms, or call Laura Ewing at 303.589.3369. Please do not hesitate to ask for transportation assistance for dinner.

Country Club Corners, a dining area down the street from the hotel, is an area that has a welcoming, community-focused vibe with restaurants offering casual seating and a variety of cuisines. The concentration of eateries makes this strip along East Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard easy to access, should you wish to leave the hotel property. It is a 10-minute or less casual walk to the group of restaurants and about a two-minute drive by car.

COUNTRY CLUB CORNERS RESTAURANT LIST: \$\$

Tokki

tokkicolorado.com

Unique Korean cocktail bar and restaurant serving Korean tapas and beverages.

Reservations are recommended. Live music is frequently scheduled.

182 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.375.0185

Miguel's Mexican Bar and Grill

miguelmex.com

A colorful and flavorful experience!

110 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.527.0500

Marigold Bistro

marigoldcoloradosprings.com

Awarded one of the 2025 best restaurants in Colorado Springs. A full menu of comfort food!

146 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.630.0201

PizzaAmoré

pizzamoreco.com

Wood-fired Italian Kitchen. Appetizers, salads, Neapolitan wood-fired pizza perfection, sandwiches, and desserts.

236 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.247.8830

Hatch Cover Bar and Grill

hatchcover.biz

A relaxed bar and grill atmosphere with over 20 HD TVs, pool tables, darts, and even a karaoke stage.

252 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.576.5223

La Concha Bakery and Coffee

bakelaconcha.com

Honoring three generations of baking tradition and specializing in Mexican pan dulce, including conchas, chochitos, and sourdough bread fermented for over two years! Their coffee is locally roasted with beans from Colombia and Nicaragua.

124 E. Cheyenne Mountain Boulevard

Phone: 719.243.4014

DINING AT CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN RESORT: \$-\$\$

Room service available

Elevations Lounge

11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Located near the Main Lobby, serving food and beverages

Gates Grille

11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Located at Colorado Country Club, exclusively reserved for Cheyenne Mountain Resort guests and Country Club members

Mountain View Restaurant

7:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Located on the Lobby Level, serving a full breakfast buffet

General Store: Premium Coffee and Creamery

6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Located on the Lobby Level

BROADMOOR HOTEL AWARD-WINNING RESTAURANTS: \$\$-\$\$\$\$

historichotels.org/us/hotels-resorts/the-broadmoor/restaurants/restaurants.php

A 10-15 minute drive from Cheyenne Mountain Resort

1 Lake Avenue

Golden Bee (across the street from The Broadmoor)

The Hotel Bar

La Taverne

Lake Terrace Dining Room

Natural Epicurean

Penrose Room

PLAY at The Broadmoor

Restaurant 1858

Ristorante Del Lago

Summit

MORE ABOUT THE BROADMOOR

A Colorado Springs resort steeped in history spanning almost a hundred years, The Broadmoor is rich in tradition and culture. Unique in all the West, this award-winning, five-star hotel is unrivaled in the world for food, drink, and adventure, and has an unprecedented European flair. Exploring The Broadmoor property is a delightful experience and well worth your time. The hotel features an impressive collection of artwork displayed throughout its halls, including an expansive autograph photo gallery showcasing many of the notable guests who have visited the hotel over the years. Be sure to stroll through the main building and don't miss the extended property just across the picturesque lake — it offers even more to discover.

Roundtable Discussions Session II

Friday, November 14, 2025

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Manitou Meeting Room
Conference Level (one level down
from Lobby Level)

Roundtable 3

*Dual Credit Programs: Are They
Meeting Expectations?*

Shoshoni Meeting Room
Conference Level (one level down
from Lobby Level)

Roundtable 4

Global Students, Local Solutions

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION II

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2025 | 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Roundtable 3

Manitou

DUAL CREDIT PROGRAMS: ARE THEY MEETING EXPECTATIONS?

(Affordability & Finance; Access & Success; Value & Accountability)

Join us for a comprehensive roundtable discussion on dual credit and concurrent enrollment programs, which allow high school students to earn college credits before graduation. This session will explore the benefits, challenges, and implications of these programs for students, educators, and institutions. Higher education leaders and policymakers will explore how these programs can enhance college readiness, reduce the time to degree completion, and leverage significant state investments. Additionally, the discussion will address concerns about the effectiveness, academic standards, and long-term impact of these programs on both students and institutions.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ To what extent are state investments in dual credit programs resulting in meaningful student outcomes and cost savings for families?
- ▶ How can we ensure that dual credit courses maintain rigorous academic standards comparable to traditional college-level coursework?
- ▶ What challenges do institutions face in integrating dual credit students into their academic pathways and support systems?
- ▶ What data or metrics should we prioritize when evaluating the success of dual credit programs?
- ▶ What innovations or policy changes could strengthen dual credit programs moving forward?

FACILITATOR

Jason Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, University of Utah

Roundtable 4

Shoshoni

GLOBAL STUDENTS, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

(Affordability & Finance; Access & Success)

Join us for a critical roundtable discussion on the challenges faced by international students and the institutions that serve them. This session will explore the current political landscape, including recent federal policy changes, and their impact on international students and higher education institutions. Higher education leaders and policymakers will identify key challenges, including visa issues, enrollment trends, retention, and the overall student experience. The discussion will also focus on potential solutions to ensure the continued success and support of international students.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ What are the most pressing visa-related challenges faced by international students and institutions? How can institutions better support students navigating these complexities?
- ▶ How have recent federal policy changes impacted international student enrollment? What strategies can institutions employ to mitigate declines and attract international students?
- ▶ What factors contribute to the retention of international students? How can institutions develop effective retention strategies to ensure international students complete their programs successfully?
- ▶ What resources and support systems are essential for international students to thrive academically and socially? How can institutions enhance these offerings?
- ▶ What are the potential long-term impacts of current visa policies on international student enrollment and institutional diversity? How can institutions plan for and address these challenges?
- ▶ What collaborative efforts between institutions, government agencies, and international organizations can help address the challenges faced by international students?

FACILITATOR

Clay Harmon, Executive Director, AIRC: The Association of International Enrollment Management

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 3

FACILITATOR



Jason Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, University of Utah

Jason L. Taylor is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and an assistant dean for transfer student success in undergraduate studies at the University of Utah. He received his doctorate in higher education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a research specialization in evaluation methods and a concentration in public policy. Taylor’s research examines how higher education and community college policies and practices shape educational opportunity structures for marginalized and underrepresented college students in the areas of college access, college transition, college identity and success, and college affordability. Taylor has conducted and led several quantitative and mixed-methods studies related to college readiness, developmental education, college affordability, adult pathways to college, dual credit and enrollment, early college experiences, transfer policy and reverse transfer, career and technical education, and educational access and equity. He has published 28 peer-reviewed manuscripts and book chapters, edited two books and edited 37 policy and evaluation reports. He serves as president-elect of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges, an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges.

Roundtable 4

FACILITATOR



Clay Harmon, Executive Director, AIRC: The Association of International Enrollment Management

Clay Harmon is the executive director of the Association of International Enrollment Management (AIRC), a professional association and standards development organization dedicated to quality assurance and standards of best practice in international student recruitment and enrollment. Prior to joining AIRC, he had an extensive career in international higher education, including both education abroad and international enrollment management. Harmon holds a bachelor of arts in Asian studies from the University of Puget Sound, a master’s degree in higher education from Harvard University, and a doctorate in leadership for educational equity in higher education from the University of Colorado Denver. His academic interests include the history of U.S.-China educational exchange and English language proficiency requirements for international applicants.

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Friday, November 14, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Centennial Ballroom

Main Level / Lobby Level

Agenda

1 Executive

2 Welcome

3 Plenary I

4 Roundtable I

5 Programs

6 Policy

7 Plenary II

8 Reception

9 Roundtable II

10 Business

11 References

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – BUSINESS SESSION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2025 | 10:00 - 11:15 a.m. | Centennial Ballroom

Agenda

Call to Order

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

 **Approval of the May 6, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes** 10-3
Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report of the Chair 10-14
Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report of the President 10-16
Demarée K. Michelau

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee
Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

INFORMATION ITEM

Review of Action Items of the Executive Committee Between May 2025 and November 2025 10-19
Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), WICHE Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Programs and Services Committee
Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

 **Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve Student Access Programs Institutional Eligibility Guidelines** 5-11

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee
Commissioner Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

 **Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve WICHE's Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State Legislation** 6-13

Report of the Legislative Advisory Committee
Commissioner Gerry Pollet (WA)

Report of the WCET Executive Council
Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV)

Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Council

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

Report and Recommended Action of the Audit Committee

Commissioner David Lassner (HI), Committee Chair

Acceptance of the FY 2025 Audit and Financial Statements

Report and Recommended Action of the Nominating Committee

Commissioner David Lassner (HI), Committee Chair

Election of Officers of the Commission for 2026 **10-26**

DISCUSSION ITEM

Update on WICHE's FY 2026 Budget **10-30**

INFORMATION ITEM

Non-General Fund Reserves for FY 2026 **10-33**

Remarks by Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Outgoing Chair

Remarks by Incoming WICHE Chair

Reminder to Submit Selection of 2026 Committee Members

Other Business

Adjourn Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Meeting Evaluation

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Nov2025CommMtg>



Thank you for your feedback!

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the May 6, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting – Business Session Minutes

Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Antwan Jefferson (CO), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Todd Haynie (AZ)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
Terrence George (HI)
David Lassner (HI)
Colleen Sathre (HI)
Rick Aman (ID)
Matt Freeman (ID)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Bill Soules (NM)
Danita Bye (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Nathan Lukkes (SD)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/Guam)
Geoffrey Landward (UT)
John Carmichael (WA)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)
Mike Smith (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Sean Parnell (AK)
Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
Angie Paccione (CO)
Joshua Whitworth (ID)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/RMI)
Patricia Jones (UT)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice
President, Programs and Services
Margo Colalancia, Director, Student Access
Programs
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and
Vice President, Digital Learning
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the
President and the Commission
Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence
and Strategic Initiatives
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director,
Operations and Program Implementation
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis
and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Craig Milburn, Chief Financial Officer
Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral
Health Program
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
Communications

Guests Present

Cassidy Dragunat, Utah Certifying Officer
Levi Sim, Utah State University

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Laura Ewing reported to Chair Damron that the Committee of the Whole had a quorum.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 15, 2024, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Damron 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 May 2025 agenda book. Chair Damron gave an additional overview of her leadership work since January 2025. She reported the following:

- ▶ The Executive Committee met in the months of February, March, and May 2025.
- ▶ The committee will also meet in the months of August, September, and November 2025.
- ▶ In January and February 2025, Chair Damron hosted President Demarée Michelau in two visits to New Mexico, including a statewide speaking engagement on demographic and economic trends at Central New Mexico Community College. In collaboration with Commissioner Bill Soules and other legislative leaders, Chair Damron helped coordinate President Michelau's visit to the New Mexico Legislature, where President Michelau was honored by both Senate and House Education Committees.
- ▶ She led the Executive Committee through President Michelau's annual review and evaluation process. The evaluation took place over several months, from March to May 2025.
- ▶ Worked closely with President Michelau and Dennis Mohatt on expanding behavioral health initiatives in Guam, including the placement of a psychiatry resident from the University of New Mexico. Plans are underway to broaden residency and healthcare support through partnerships with clinics and the governor's office.
- ▶ Chair Damron attended the Academic Partnerships meeting in April 2025, in Reno, Nevada, and will attend the WCET annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, in October 2025.

Report of the President

The Report of the President was included in the May 2025 agenda book. President Michelau thanked staff and the Utah delegation for their contributions to the planning and execution of the May 2025 Commission Meeting. She reported the following additional information:

- ▶ Positive and rewarding collaboration with Chair Damron over the past six months to further the work of the Commission.
- ▶ WICHE has actively responded to rapid changes across higher education and state systems.
- ▶ There has been a strong emphasis on supporting states and territories through the shifting federal and local landscapes.
- ▶ Patrick Lane led regular calls with both Policy staff and state and system chief academic officers, respectively, resulting in productive discussions, especially around federal policy shifts. The conference calls will continue with both groups.
- ▶ Student Access Programs (SAP) was reviewed for clearer institutional eligibility requirements and improved policy transparency. The work will continue to ensure that the focus on SAP will remain responsive to effectively anticipate future institutional and student demand.
- ▶ Navigated the uncertainty of the federal government's changing stance on higher education. Monitoring the stances will continue to be a high priority for President Michelau and staff.
- ▶ There continues to be a strategic vision emphasis on proactive planning to address anticipated changes over the next three, five, and 10 years.

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee Between February 2025 and May 2025

Chair Damron presented a report on the business conducted by the Executive Committee. She summarized the action items between February and May 2025:

- ▶ Approved 2025 State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewals for New Mexico and Wyoming.
- ▶ Initiated WICHE's first-ever WICHE executive compensation analysis
 - Selected Quatt for its deep expertise in higher education and nonprofit compensation.
 - The study and the analysis are expected to be completed by the end of August 2025. The analysis will guide future compensation philosophy and practices.
- ▶ Conducted annual evaluation of President Michelau's performance and included:
 - Thorough self-assessment, commissioner, and staff feedback survey.
 - The results showed strong, positive support for President Michelau's performance.
 - There is no contract extension granted until after the compensation study concludes.
 - Approved a raise for the President and her FY 2026 goals and objectives.

- ▶ Approved WICHE to serve as fiscal agent for the Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative.
- ▶ Reviewed updates on the *Knocking at the College Door* analysis distribution and impact.
- ▶ Discussed institutional eligibility criteria for Student Access Programs.
- ▶ Received an activity update on the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC).
- ▶ Engaged in discussions around a refresh of WICHE's strategic vision to prepare for the May 2025 Committee of the Whole vote.
- ▶ Discussed WICHE's evolving role at the federal level to develop a strategy (to be determined).

Report of the Programs and Services Committee

Programs and Services (PAS) Vice Chair Todd Haynie presented the committee's business report from its May 2025 meeting. The details included:

- ▶ The committee reviewed the PAS FY 2026 Workplan and approved the unit work.
- ▶ The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities was granted a one-year, no-cost extension by the Mellon Foundation to continue supporting the second cohort and will create a plan for sustaining the leadership development program for faculty leaders.
- ▶ Discussed institution requirements for institutions and programs participating in the Student Access Programs (SAP). Set a goal to align policy requirements with staff practices. The added clarity will benefit institutions interested in joining SAP tuition savings programs and assist staff in their administration and review of proposed new institutions and programs. The discussion focused primarily on the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). The committee discussed the following categories:
 - **Sector:** Categories include public nonprofit, private nonprofit, and proprietary institutions. The committee agreed that clarity of the eligibility requirements is to be developed and implemented into the policy.
 - **Institution location:** Most programs are in a WICHE state; however, a few out-of-region programs were added years ago because WICHE states and their residents needed programs in specific fields, but there were too few programs in the WICHE region. The committee agreed that out-of-region programs with enrollment would be grandfathered into the list of participating institutions.
 - **Institutional accreditation status:** A clear policy is to be developed and implemented for institutional accreditation by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Institutions must notify WICHE within 10 business days of any change in their accreditation status. It remains to be determined whether the policy will outline the actions to be taken if a PSEP institution loses accreditation. Participating programs have already graduated their first class before being considered for participation in

PSEP. Committee members affirmed the staff's proposal to review the policy adopted in 2009, which allowed for provisionally accredited programs in critical, high-need fields when there is an insufficient number of fully accredited programs available in the region.

- **Program/professional accreditation:** The conversation on program accreditation was similar to the institutional accreditation discussion. Staff proposed to clarify policy, procedures, PSEP MOA language, and clearly explain the following criteria:
 1. A program must be accredited by a professional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 2. It must have graduated its first class.
 3. It must be free of any requirements or concerns by the accrediting body, as of the signing of the agreement.

Any changes in program accreditation must be reported to WICHE within 10 business days.

The committee members affirmed the staff proposal to review the policy adopted in 2009 that allows for provisionally accredited programs for critical, high-need fields when there is an insufficient number of fully accredited programs available in the region.

- **Memorandum of Agreement renewal and frequency:** New, participating PSEP programs must sign an initial memorandum of agreement (MOA) when onboarded, with renewal for PSEP programs every five years. Renewal requirements are to be determined.
- **WICHE discretion clause:** The clause will be added to the MOAs and the policy and procedures documentation for all three programs, (WUE, WRGP, PSEP). The clause grants the Commission the authority to re-evaluate any program of concern and require additional review of an institution or program to determine whether it is aligned with WICHE's mission.
- ▶ Staff will summarize and update the PAS Committee's recommendations, incorporating the proposed changes. Staff will provide the updated eligibility requirements for WUE, WRGP, and PSEP institutions and programs to the PAS Committee as an action item at the November 2025 Commission Meeting. Before November 2025, WICHE leadership may also conduct additional consultations with the Executive Committee and others.

The committee meeting report concluded with information about the effectiveness of outreach efforts to promote WUE benefits by the Communications team. An email campaign was sent to 14,000 high school counselors in the WICHE region. The campaign was highly successful and surpassed standard marketing metrics for email open rates and click rates.

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee Chair Nathan Lukkes gave the following report:

NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON COLLEGE CLOSURES

- ▶ The committee reviewed a proposed project to address policy and practice gaps in abrupt college and programmatic closures.
- ▶ Staff reported an opportunity to engage regional compacts, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), accreditors, state regulators, and federal agencies on a collaborative project called the National Task Force on College Closures. The PAR Committee approved moving the motion to the Commission.
- ▶ Committee Chair Lukkes made a motion to MOVE TO APPROVE the National Task Force on College Closures project, and Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH SECTION OF THE WORKPLAN

- ▶ The committee had an in-depth discussion about approved, unfunded projects in the PAR portion of the FY 2026 Workplan.
- ▶ Five commissioners (Lukkes, Begich, Jim Chavez, Gerry Pollet, and Matt Freeman) volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to assist with scoping and funding strategies.
- ▶ The PAR Committee approved the PAR section of the FY 2026 Workplan.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- ▶ Potential Topics for the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) September 2025 meeting:
 - Higher education finances and expenditure management
 - Accreditation
 - Artificial intelligence
 - Postsecondary-workforce alignment
 - State-federal legal conflicts
- ▶ Report Distribution
 - Staff updated the committee on *Knocking at the College Door* outreach.
 - Release of *Tuition and Fees* May 2025 report
 - Commissioners encouraged expanded legislative engagement and exploration of migration trends
- ▶ Short-term Credentials
 - Committee recommended future work exploring credential value and industry engagement
- ▶ Staff Updates

- Federal issue tracking
- Cybersecurity exercise opportunities for members
- Participation in State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) policy review

Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Committee

Commissioner Rodney Jacob reported on the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC) meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, on May 1, 2025. The BHOC serves as a key coordination body for WICHE’s Behavioral Health Program (BHP), which oversees 38 funded projects across 15 states, Guam, and CNMI. BHOC met alongside the National Association for Rural Mental Health conference. The attendees included representatives from multiple WICHE states and territories, as well as WICHE Commissioners and staff. The meeting was chaired by Reyna Saures (CNMI).

Highlights from the meeting included:

- ▶ Program updates that covered major initiatives like ROTAC, RCORP, Alaska API support, rural Veteran suicide prevention, psychology internships, and community college collaborations in Saipan.
- ▶ New projects underway in Colorado, Guam, Hawai’i, Alaska, and Utah.
- ▶ Financial overview that showed a stable six-year growth trend and forecasted a slight dip for FY 2025 due to federal project cycles.
- ▶ Project spotlight on the Montana Statewide Crisis Services Evaluation.
- ▶ Roundtable discussion, where states and territories shared concerns, especially about behavioral health workforce shortages, and their collaborative efforts to address them.

The next BHOC meeting will be held virtually. A date was not yet determined.

Report of the WCET Executive Council

Commissioner Fred Lokken gave an update on the WCET Executive Council that included the following details:

WCET MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

- ▶ WCET membership has grown to 448 institutions that span all 50 states.
- ▶ Over one-third of members are from WICHE states.
- ▶ WCET is recognized as a national leader in digital and distance learning policy.

KEY WCET INITIATIVES

- ▶ Spring Leadership Summit centered on the humanization of educational technologies.
- ▶ Re-running 2023 survey to assess institutional AI policies.
- ▶ The WCET Annual Conference is scheduled for October 21-23, 2025, in Denver, Colorado, with 400 attendees expected to attend.

STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN)

- ▶ SAN is comprised of 950+ institutions and agencies.
- ▶ SAN will continue to support members in regulatory compliance for cross-state digital learning.

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE (ELE)

- ▶ ELE's recent work is AI in pedagogy, institutional policy development, and implementation support.
- ▶ Distance Education Cost Analysis
 - 2025 cost survey updated from 2017 findings.
 - The 2025 cost survey concluded that distance education costs approach parity with face-to-face instruction.

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY EFFORTS

- ▶ WCET components created tools and resources to help institutions comply with new Title I Department of Justice regulations.
- ▶ All WCET entities are committed to internal and external accessibility compliance.
- ▶ Continued development of AI-related resources.
- ▶ There are ongoing efforts across initiatives to align with regulatory frameworks and improve student outcomes.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF A SUPER CATCH-UP PROVISION UNDER THE SECURE 2.0 ACT

President Michelau presented information on the super catch-up provision. It is an optional provision to offer to employees between the ages of 60 and 63. Management of the provision for eligible staff requires minimal administrative work and does not incur any cost for WICHE to manage the program. Vice Chair Ann Millner (UT) MOVED TO APPROVE the super catch-up provision, and Immediate Past Chair Antwan Jefferson SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE FY 2026 SALARY AND BENEFIT RECOMMENDATIONS

President Michelau reported that staff salary increases are based solely on performance, not merit. She said staff performed exceptionally and recommended an overall 3% salary pool for increases. Immediate Past Chair Jefferson MOVED TO APPROVE a 3% staff salary increase for FY 2026, and Commissioner David Lassner SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE FY 2026 ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET, GENERAL FUND AND NON-GENERAL FUND

Craig Milburn reported:

WICHE financial position is solid. The Commission approved a \$4 million FY 2025 budget in May 2024. The budget is projected to finish \$800,000 higher than budgeted. This is because expenditures were \$100,000 less and revenue was approximately \$700,000 more; \$800,000 was added to reserves. Additional details that Milburn reported:

- ▶ The General Fund includes indirects coming from grants and contracts and interest; both are higher than anticipated and budgeted.
- ▶ The only budget that was slightly over forecast was the miscellaneous fund due to a consultant working with the four compacts for federal fundraising strategy work and expenditures for Salesforce development.
- ▶ A balanced budget for FY 2026 was shared.
- ▶ The reserves will have approximately \$6.3 million by the end of FY 2025.
- ▶ Budget summary: The \$4 million budget as a General Fund includes approximately \$2.7 million of state dues. The two self-supporting units, BHP and WCET, are doing very well, with budgets of roughly \$14 million each, which is a large part of the WICHE budget.

President Michelau reported that due to the timing of the agenda book going to print, the budget does not include the March 2025 actuals. She said a FY 2025 budget summary will be reported to the Executive Committee in August 2025. She said the FY 2026 annual dues are \$174,500. The U.S. Department's Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program (TAP) grant awarded funding to the Pacific territories and freely associated states. The funding was partially used for FY 2025 annual dues. The status of the TAP grant and applying for two years is unknown, but it will apply for the grant as soon as the application becomes available.

President Michelau reported that Milburn will retire from his position as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) on June 30, 2025. An executive search was started to hire a Vice President of Finance and Administration (VPFA). To ease the transition from Milburn's departure date and when the new VPFA begins employment, an interim CFO was contracted. The interim CFO has worked as a certified public accountant for WICHE for over 25 years and knows the organization well. Milburn will also be on call as needed to mitigate any issues that could arise during the transition. She and the Commission congratulated Milburn and thanked him for his service.

Commissioner Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE the FY 2026 operating budget, General Fund and Non-General Fund. Commissioner Frankie Eliptico SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF DEDICATED RESERVE LEVELS FOR NON-GENERAL FUND ACTIVITIES

President Michelau reported the details of the Non-General Fund. The three categories in the fund were minimum reserve, reserve for unexpected shortfall, and program development. She stated that the details of the report in the May 2025 Commission Meeting agenda book indicated that the levels remain the same for all units, as approved in May 2024. The final report of the FY 2025 will include the dedicated reserve levels for Non-General Fund activities, and the amounts at the November 2025 Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Haynie MOVED TO APPROVE the dedicated reserve levels for the Non-General Fund activities, and Commissioner Larry Tidemann SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE REVISED WICHE VISION STATEMENT

President Michelau reported the activity around the revision of the WICHE vision statement. She noted the statement was discussed twice in the Executive Committee. The current vision statement overlapped with the mission statement, and the Executive Committee wanted to refine the length of the statement to a shorter version. Between the mission and vision statements, the Executive Committee wanted to explicitly call out Pacific territories and freely associated state members (Pacific Island members). The mission statement in the bylaws mentioned the Pacific Island members in its long form (two forms of the statement, there are times that a modified, shorter, and more concise form of the statement is also used).

The consensus, without requiring a vote, was that the mission statement in either the long form or the condensed, concise form is acceptable when used in written, digital, and electronic materials. President Michelau specifically asked Commissioner Eliptico and Commissioner Jacob for their feedback and perspective as it relates to the Pacific Island region. They expressed their appreciation for the distinct inclusion of the Pacific Islands, the value it places on their membership, and the value and contribution it makes to WICHE and the residents represented by the work of WICHE.

President Michelau continued her report, presenting details about the vision statement and the collaborative work that took place in the Executive Committee to create the new version of the vision statement, which was to be considered for approval. She presented the proposed, revised WICHE vision statement, emphasizing the importance of including the Pacific Island members:

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

Commissioner Hilda Rosselli MOVED TO APPROVE the revised vision statement, and Commissioner Begich SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE FY 2026 WORKPLAN

President Michelau reported that the FY 2026 Workplan will outline the strategic priorities of each WICHE unit for the next fiscal year. The document is primarily used internally to guide the focus of the work and to accomplish its objectives. The PAS Committee approved several amendments to the PAS section of the Workplan to be included in the final document.

Commissioner Lokken MOVED TO APPROVE the FY 2026 Workplan, and Immediate Past Chair Jefferson SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

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

President Michelau presented the action item to the Commission with the following details:

- ▶ Commissioners reaffirm the WICHE Codes of Ethics annually in May; no signatures are required for this reaffirmation.
- ▶ These codes apply to the Commission, WICHE President, and staff, and the codes reflect WICHE's ethical obligations to the organization and its principles.
- ▶ The code of ethics is provided to all new staff and is available via the staff handbook and the Commission portal.
- ▶ The reaffirmation of the code of ethics is separate from the Conflict of Interest statement, which is signed biennially.

Commissioner Begich MOVED TO APPROVE the reaffirmation of the WICHE Code of Ethics as presented in the May 2025 Commission Meeting agenda book, and Commissioner Lokken SECONDED the motion. The Commission approved and reaffirmed the Code of Ethics.

Other Business

Chair Damron asked the Commission for other business to be discussed during the business meeting. The November 2025 Commission Meeting was announced to be held in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on November 13-14. The Call to the Meeting will be sent by email on September 13, 2025.

There was no other business discussed. Chair Damron adjourned the meeting at 11:09 a.m.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Barbara Damron, New Mexico

Dear Fellow Commissioners,

What a busy six months it has been since our May 2025 meeting in Park City, Utah! I continue to be so very honored to serve as your Chair, and I approach all my duties and privileges in this role with each of you in mind, endeavoring to represent the Commission well. I would like to share several highlights from the past six months with you.

WICHE Psychology Internship Consortia: Given my background in nursing and psychology, I have been working with President Michelau and Vice-President of Behavioral Health Dennis Mohatt with our Psychology Internship Consortium (PIC). A few years ago, I became interested in expanding the PIC to include a placement at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. I am happy to report that not only has that placement now been approved, but we have our first psychology interns starting there this year. I was fortunate to be invited to speak at the New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortium Graduation (NM-PIC) held in Los Alamos on July 25, 2025, where five interns graduated from the NM-PIC program. Additionally, I was invited to attend the graduation of two interns from the Guam Psychology Internship Consortium, the first American Psychological Association (APA) accredited internship in the Pacific outside of Hawai'i. This notable event was held at the Ricardo J. Bordallo Governor's Complex and featured remarks from Governor Lourdes "Lou" Leon Guerrero and Lt. Governor Josh Tenorio.

Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC): This year was the 30th anniversary of the LAC, and I was fortunate to attend the meeting and welcome the 31 state legislators (including several WICHE Commissioners) in Seattle, WA, September 8-9, 2025. I had attended an LAC meeting years ago when I was the New Mexico SHEEO, and these meetings continue to provide timely, important updates on pressing issues to the attendees, as well as allowing for impressive, robust discussion. The legislators in attendance came from 12 states and Guam and discussed key issues in postsecondary education policy making, from federal policy changes to artificial intelligence.

WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET): WCET is the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of digital learning in higher education. I was honored to serve on the closing panel at WCET's annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, October 21-23, 2025. The panel was entitled Transforming Education and Workforce Through Effective Partnerships.

Hosting of Arthur U. San Agustin, Special Assistant of Health to the Office of the Governor of Guam: Over the last few years, I have been active in working with WICHE to

place psychiatry residents from the University of New Mexico in Guam for a rotation there, helping ease the behavioral health shortage in Guam. This has resulted in multiple virtual and in-person meetings with the Guam Office of the Governor, specifically with Mr. San Agustin. I organized and hosted a day-long series of in-person meetings on October 30, 2025, with Mr. San Agustin and health science leaders from the University of New Mexico, in order to pursue sending additional medical residents and advanced practice nurse trainees to Guam.

Executive Compensation Study: After reviewing proposals, WICHE contracted with Quatt Associates to conduct an executive compensation study. I have been working closely with this firm for the last six months to define the scope of work, identify comparator groups, and clarify the methodologies to be used. The WICHE Executive Committee has been active and instrumental in the undertaking of this study.

Executive Committee Meetings: The Executive Committee continues to meet regularly between our in-person Commission meetings. The Executive Committee met in August and September of 2025, during which we discussed and acted on numerous topics as summarized in the minutes. The main topics addressed during these meetings dealt with SARA renewals, the Executive Compensation Study, legislative requests to WICHE, and planning of our Commission meetings.

Committee Appointments: The WICHE Chair is responsible for ensuring that all committees have chairs and the appropriate mix of commissioners as members. It has been a pleasure appointing chairs and members to various committees as needed and seeing our commissioners' willingness to take on leadership roles.

WICHE November Meeting: I was delighted to help President Michelau in planning both Commission meetings during my tenure as the Chair. It was particularly enjoyable for me to work to secure our musical guests who are performing for us during this meeting. I was also able to secure a meeting with El Pomar Foundation CEO, which resulted in our lovely reception at the famous Penrose House.

Serving as the WICHE Chair has been one of the most enjoyable chairmanships of my career. The staff of WICHE is outstanding, and I have so much respect for each of you commissioners. The mission and work of WICHE are needed more than ever, and I am humbled to have been able to give back to this wonderful organization, which has done so much for students throughout the West. I deeply appreciate the confidence you placed in me by electing me to this position, and I hope that my service has reflected that trust.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Demarée Michelau

Greetings, Commissioners!

As we gather this November in beautiful Colorado Springs, Colorado, I am reminded of the power of our regional collaboration and the shared commitment we bring to improving postsecondary education across the West. In a time when everything around us can feel increasingly polarized, I find reassurance in knowing that my WICHE colleagues, near and far, are working tirelessly and collaboratively on behalf of our students and in service to their states and to the region we all care deeply about. The WICHE team has been actively engaged since our last meeting, and I'm pleased to share a few key highlights from our work, as well as a look ahead to what's on the horizon.

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAM IMPACT

Over the past several months, I've had the privilege of engaging with partners across the region in meaningful ways. Together with my colleague Kristin Hultquist of HCM Strategists, I facilitated a retreat for the board of trustees at Western Colorado University, where we led strategic discussions centered on emerging trends in higher education, institutional priorities, and leadership development. I also traveled to Guam to celebrate the graduation of the second cohort of interns from the Guam Psychology Internship Consortium — the first APA-accredited internship program in the Pacific outside of Hawai'i. This milestone represents a significant step forward in expanding behavioral health training opportunities in underserved rural and remote regions.

And although my participation was cut short, I attended the Legislative Advisory Committee meeting in Seattle, Washington, where a group of 31 engaged legislators from 12 Western states and Guam discussed pressing policy issues and opportunities for collaboration.

In response to growing uncertainty in the higher education landscape, including changes at the federal level and shifting financial pressures, WICHE is actively working to support its stakeholders through regular engagement and the timely sharing of information. One key effort is our ongoing series of calls with academic leaders at both the state and institutional levels. These conversations provide a valuable forum for discussing emerging challenges, sharing insights, and strengthening regional collaboration.

We are also working closely with states to ensure continued support for WICHE's mission and programs. In Arizona, WICHE is undergoing sunset review of the state's continued partnership and funding of its WICHE membership, and we are partnering with the Arizona Board of Regents to ensure a successful outcome. As legislative sessions approach across the region, we are collaborating with commissioners to engage with policymakers, being

mindful that many newly elected legislators may not yet be familiar with WICHE or the work we do. These efforts aim to reinforce our longstanding partnerships with states and institutions and to highlight the value we bring to their constituents.

FUNDRAISING HIGHLIGHTS

WICHE continues to strengthen its relationships with both philanthropic and federal partners. This year, I worked closely with McAllister & Quinn, a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm that specializes in federal grant strategy and government relations. In partnership with the other regional higher education compacts, we developed a coordinated federal strategy that acknowledges our individual priorities while identifying areas of collective opportunity. This approach positions us to respond effectively to national challenges and pursue shared goals.

I traveled to New York with Ray Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, and Nick Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, to meet with the Mellon Foundation. Our discussions focused on WICHE's work and explored future opportunities that build on what we have already accomplished.

Additionally, I joined members of the senior leadership team in Washington, D.C., for meetings with the Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and ECMC Foundation. These conversations focused on building and strengthening meaningful relationships, with the goal of partnering to advance shared priorities and identify future opportunities for collaboration and support.

While the broader funding landscape remains uncertain, we are encouraged that our federal funding has remained steady so far. We have applied for a Technical Assistance Program grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, which would cover WICHE annual dues for our Pacific Island members. As of this writing, we are currently awaiting a decision.

In parallel, we continue to engage consistently with philanthropic partners, identifying areas of mutual interest and shared priorities. These relationships are critical to advancing WICHE's work and ensuring that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of our region.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

WICHE's financial position remains strong, with the organization closing FY 2025 well-positioned for the year ahead. This summer marked a significant transition in our leadership team: Craig Milburn, our longtime Chief Financial Officer, retired after more than 25 years of dedicated service. We are grateful for his contributions and wish him well in retirement. Kris Flewelling has served capably as interim CFO during this transition, and we

are excited to welcome Ashley Clark as our new Vice President, Finance and Administration. The transition has been relatively smooth, and we are confident in the continued strength of our financial stewardship.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look to the future, WICHE remains committed to advancing access, innovation, and collaboration in higher education. We recognize that this is a time of uncertainty, with changes at the federal level and other contextual factors likely to impact the financial picture for states, institutions, and postsecondary systems across the West. WICHE stands ready to support our partners as they navigate these challenges, offering trusted expertise, collaborative partnership, and practical resources to help them adapt with confidence and thrive in a changing landscape.

I am deeply grateful for the collective strength of the WICHE Commission. Your leadership, insight, and steadfast commitment to collaboration and to students in your states and territories are what make our work possible. In a time of complexity and change, your engagement and guidance continue to shape a stronger, more connected region, and I am honored to work alongside each of you.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. I look forward to our time together in Colorado Springs and to the conversations that will shape our collective path forward.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Between May 2025 and August 2025

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Park City, Utah – May 5, 2025

Committee Members Present

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

Committee Members Absent

Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)

Additional Commissioners Present

Hilda Rosselli (OR)

Staff Present

Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and the Commission
Demarée Michelau, President

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. MDT, and quorum was confirmed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF MARCH 13, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Damron asked for any corrections to the March 13, 2025, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Other Business

Chair Damron provided an update on the executive compensation study for the WICHE President. After reviewing proposals from multiple firms, Quatt Associates — an organization with extensive expertise in nonprofit compensation — was selected by the officers to conduct the study. The project is expected to be completed by August 2025, with the findings to be presented at the August or September Executive Committee meeting. Additional staff compensation studies will follow, with timing to be determined. The total cost of the study is \$25,000, which is significantly below the allocated budget of \$75,000.

Closed Session

The Executive Committee went to closed session at 8:07 a.m. to conduct President Demarée Michelau's annual performance evaluation. During the closed session, the following actions were taken by the Executive Committee:

- ▶ Determined the extent to which the President has fulfilled the responsibilities of her position over the previous year.
- ▶ Assisted the President in evaluating which aspects of the role have been successfully executed and identified areas for growth.
- ▶ Determined the President's remuneration for the coming year.
- ▶ Approved the FY 2026 performance goals and objectives for the President.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:59 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Video Conference August 14, 2025

Committee Members Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair
Antwan Jefferson (CO), Immediate Past
Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
David Lassner (HI)
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

Robert Shireman (CA)

Matt Freeman (ID)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Mike Meotti (WA)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice
President, Programs and Services
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and
Vice President, Digital Learning
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the
President and the Commission
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis
and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Shelley Plutto, Interim Director, W-SARA,
Policy Analysis and Research
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
Communications

Call to Order

Vice Chair Ann Millner called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and quorum was confirmed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF MAY 5, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Vice Chair Millner asked for any corrections to the May 5, 2025, Executive Committee meeting minutes. There were none. Vice Chair Millner declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF IDAHO'S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT (SARA)

Shelley Plutto presented the details of Idaho's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

(SARA) renewal application. Idaho has 14 participating institutions: eight public, five private/not-for-profit, and one for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2023), Idaho's SARA institutions enrolled 13,232 distance education students through SARA, and 11,373 students located in Idaho were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. Idaho reported no SARA-qualifying complaints, no institutions on heightened cash monitoring during the renewal period, and had no changes in ownership. North Idaho College was the only institution placed on provisional status, and it was removed from provisional status once the accreditor removed "show cause" from the accreditation report. The Idaho State Portal Entity (SPE) has required additional monitoring of New St. Andrews College, including quarterly monitoring of the institution's same-day balance sheets, due to the institution having a reduced financial score. Idaho has experienced turnover of SARA personnel at its institutions. The SPE has been using a revised and more efficient onboarding process to assist new institution staff with the SARA responsibilities. WICHE SARA (W-SARA) staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) deemed Idaho to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Kathleen Goepfinger MOVED TO APPROVE Idaho's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF SOUTH DAKOTA'S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCALITY AGREEMENT (SARA)

Plutto presented the details of South Dakota's State SARA renewal application. South Dakota has 17 participating institutions: 10 public, six private/not-for-profit, and one for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2023), South Dakota SARA institutions enrolled 2,939 distance education students through SARA, and 4,662 students located in South Dakota were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. There were no significant changes to the entity that serves as the State Portal Entity (SPE). During the renewal period, South Dakota received no SARA-qualifying complaints, and no institutions were on heightened cash monitoring. No institutions were denied renewal, and none had a change in ownership. W-SARA staff and the W-SARA Re RSC deemed South Dakota to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Larry Tidemann MOVED TO APPROVE South Dakota's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed; there was one abstention from Commissioner Tidemann.

Information Item

UPDATE ON SARA POLICY MODIFICATION PROCESS

Plutto reported an update on the status of the SARA Policy Modification Process. The public comment periods and the amendment period officially closed, and all four regional compacts were actively engaged in the voting process. W-SARA submitted 30 proposals, and final voting will begin on August 27, 2025, and will be completed by September 2, 2025. The publicly posted results will be available on the NC-SARA website on September 9, 2025. The NC-SARA Board will vote on the proposed policy modifications from each regional compact and RSC during its Fall Board Meeting on October 23, 2026.

Plutto said that several major proposals appear to be on track for approval:

- ▶ Feasibility of reviewing new institution applications.
- ▶ Clarification on where to submit student complaints.
- ▶ Provisional status accreditor sanctions, informed by the Century Foundation.

Information Item

ALIGNING THE POLICY TO PRACTICE: THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OVERSIGHT COUNCIL (BHOC)

President Demarée Michelau provided an update on BHOC policy developments. She emphasized that the primary purpose of BHOC is to maintain strong connections with and provide advisory support to behavioral health agencies throughout the WICHE region. Several goals are currently under review to enhance the effectiveness and overall value of BHOC's work. Recommendations stemming from this review will be presented to the Executive Committee in September 2025 for consideration, and subsequently to the full Commission for approval at the November 2025 Commission Meeting.

During the discussion, a question was raised regarding updates to the appointment process for BHOC members. Dennis Mohatt said that the appointment process is under evaluation and will be refined to ensure consistent representation of key behavioral health professionals on the council, while also preserving continuity in its membership and ongoing work.

Discussion Item

INFORMATION REQUESTS PERTAINING TO STATE LEGISLATION

President Michelau presented draft guidelines aimed at clarifying how WICHE staff should respond to information requests related to state legislation. The guidelines are not about routine data requests (e.g., tuition and fees), but rather about sensitive legislative inquiries where WICHE may be asked to provide feedback or analysis. The purposes of the guidelines are to:

- ▶ Ensure staff clarity and transparency in responding to such data requests.
- ▶ Provide objective analysis while maintaining appropriate boundaries to maintain the integrity of a confidential request and delivery.
- ▶ Inform requesters about who may see the feedback or analysis.
- ▶ Ensure that Commissioners are appropriately informed when legislation in their state is under review.

President Michelau said that the requests can be complex, especially as WICHE is increasingly asked, for example, to assess whether pending legislation aligns with SARA policy. The guidelines are intended to offer support and protection for staff, while maintaining professional standards and discretion. She emphasized the need for thoughtful implementation, acknowledging that state contexts vary and that rigid rules, such as mandatory notifications, may not be appropriate in all cases. It was noted that WICHE has historically maintained confidentiality in responding to information requests and keeping the requester anonymous. Formalizing this approach would help avoid misunderstandings or missteps. The committee discussion continued with an emphasis on the importance of staff maintaining neutrality and ensuring a nonpartisan approach in their work with information and analysis.

It was noted that requests for data related to Western states are likely to increase, particularly from external stakeholders. The Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) could serve a key role in identifying the types of information most relevant to legislators, helping to shape future data collection priorities. There was also recognition that legislators value clear, accessible formats, such as infographics, to enhance understanding and usability of the information provided.

Discussion Item

NOVEMBER COMMISSION MEETING UPDATE AND AGENDA REVIEW

President Michelau gave an update on the November 2025 Commission Meeting that will take place on November 13–14 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with the theme, Resilience and Leadership in the West: Navigating Change in Higher Education. A new commissioner orientation is scheduled for November 12. She gave the following update for the plenary and roundtable sessions:

The upcoming plenary sessions will focus on the themes of value, finance, and navigating financial uncertainty in higher education. Four roundtable discussions were proposed, covering the following topics:

- ▶ Innovative financial aid models to improve affordability.
- ▶ Challenges and opportunities for rural colleges.
- ▶ The effectiveness and future of dual credit programs.
- ▶ Issues facing international students and the institutions that serve them.

It was noted that significant changes to financial aid and loans had occurred since the May 2025 Commission Meeting, making the upcoming November 2025 Commission Meeting discussion on financial uncertainty strategies especially relevant to institutions and among the most timely and pressing issues currently facing them, particularly in relation to student financial aid. The planned discussions should also foster valuable dialogue, with attention to the substantial impacts on students in healthcare professions and overall emerging challenges with financial aid and student loans.

President Michelau announced that El Pomar Foundation will host a reception at the Penrose House.

Information Item

UPDATE ON WICHE'S BUDGET AND AUDIT

President Michelau presented the update on WICHE's budget and audit. She introduced Kris Flewelling, the Interim Chief Financial Officer. The new Vice President, Finance and Administration, is Ashley Clark, and her first day of employment will be August 21. Flewelling will play a critical role in onboarding Clark to her new position. President Michelau said she and Flewelling met with Forvis Mazars, the auditor, for an update on the audit that began on August 1, 2025. Everything is on time with the audit and progressing as expected.

Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) began on July 1, 2025. It was reported that all but four states and territories paid their annual dues, indicating a strong level of commitment to WICHE's work across the region.

Information Item

UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION STUDY

Chair Barbara Damron stated that the WICHE Executive Compensation Study, conducted by Quatt Associates, is expected to be completed by the end of August 2025. A report with the results of the study and compensation assessment will be presented at the September 2025 Executive Committee Meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Eliptico thanked President Michelau and Patrick Lane for their work and support on the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance (TAP) grant.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Election of Officers of the Commission for 2026

Summary

WICHE bylaws state that the chair and the vice chair shall be elected at the Commission meeting in the fall and hold office for one year or until their successors are elected and qualified. In September 2025, the Nominating Committee — comprised of Committee Chair David Lassner (HI), with Commissioners Robert Shireman (CA), Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam), Danita Bye (ND), and Larry Tidemann (SD) — solicited nominations from the Commission for the 2026 vice chair position. Consistent with their charge, the committee members considered all nominations and selected a candidate for 2026 vice chair. WICHE tradition generally results in the vice chair assuming the chair position in the year following their term of service.

When reviewing nominations, the Nominating Committee considered geographic representation, professional affiliation, and the variety of backgrounds and perspectives. After careful consideration, the Nominating Committee is pleased to recommend the following slate of officers to the Commission:



CHAIR — COMMISSIONER ANN MILLNER (UT), SENATOR, UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE

Sen. 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, the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, the School Security Task Force, and the Senate Ethics Committee. Additionally, Sen. 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 commissioner of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Education Commission of the States (ECS) commissioner, ExcelinEd Policy Leaders Network member, and chair of the NCSL Higher Education Task Force.

Born in Middlesboro, Kentucky, and raised in Clarksville, Tennessee, Sen. 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.

Sen. 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 aerospace defense industries, and expanding access to affordable healthcare.



VICE CHAIR — COMMISSIONER FRANKIE ELIPTICO (U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES/CNMI), VICE PRESIDENT, ADMINISTRATION AND ADVANCEMENT, NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

Frankie Eliptico is vice president of administration and advancement at Northern Marianas College (NMC), capping nearly two decades of leadership at the institution. He has previously held the role of interim president for three years, guiding the institution through some of its most difficult years, including recovery from the devastation brought by Super Typhoon Yutu and the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through his leadership, the college has secured over \$120 million that is now helping to rebuild the NMC campus. The three-story flagship building, the Proa Union Building, is scheduled for completion in October 2025. Groundbreaking for the other four new buildings will occur over the next few months.

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.

Beyond his role at NMC, he is a dedicated community leader, having served in leadership positions in numerous nonprofit organizations. In addition to his role as WICHE Commissioner, he also sits on the board of governors for the Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies, which empowers fiduciaries across the Asia-Pacific region with best practices in governance, responsible investment, and financial stewardship. He has also chaired the board of the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to environmental conservation, as well as the Northern Mariana Islands Humanities Council.



IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR — COMMISSIONER BARBARA DAMRON (NM), PROFESSOR EMERITA AND VISITING PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO COLLEGE OF NURSING

Barbara Damron, Ph.D., is a professor emerita at the University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Center College of Nursing, where she is also serving as a visiting professor through June 2026.

Damron joined UNM in 2006 and was a tenured professor at the College of Nursing and at the School of Medicine's Department of Family and Community Medicine. She has served as senior advisor to the dean of the College of Nursing, with responsibility for all government work at the college, among other administrative duties. Damron was also a Ridenour/Mason New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium Fellow, and she continues to serve as senior advisor to the director at Project ECHO®, with responsibility for government work there. Additionally, Damron was chair of the Faculty Senate Government Relations Committee, where she led all government activities for UNM's Faculty Senate.

Prior to those roles, Damron was the chief government relations officer for UNM, including the central campus, the Health Sciences Center, and all branch campuses. As the first person to hold this position, she oversaw all federal, state, Tribal, county, and city government affairs for the entire UNM system. During this time, she was the only in-house registered lobbyist. Prior to this, she served from 2015-18 as the New Mexico Higher Education Department Cabinet Secretary and as the State Higher Education Executive Officer (SHEEO), where she had oversight of the state's 28 public institutions of higher education, four Tribal colleges, and over 190 private and proprietary postsecondary schools. She also chaired the New Mexico Education Trust Board and New Mexico's 529 Education Savings. She is a commissioner and 2025 chair of the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE) and serves on the boards of Complete College America, Southwestern Adventist University, and the International Women's Forum – New Mexico. She previously worked as the National Academy of Medicine's Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellow on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in Washington, D.C., for Sen. Lamar Alexander. Damron has over 40 years of experience as an education executive, a healthcare executive, a college professor, an international consultant, an advanced practice nurse, and a cancer scientist.

Damron led New Mexico's Common Course Numbering System, aligning all lower division courses among community colleges, comprehensive/regional universities, research universities, and Tribal colleges. As cabinet secretary, Damron oversaw the 34 state- and federally funded postsecondary student financial aid programs and worked to secure funding for English Language Learner (ELL) training for teachers statewide. Damron serves on numerous national and state education and health governing boards and has received over 30 state, national, and international awards.

Her earlier research focused on cancer prevention and early detection. She was funded by the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, and the Susan B. Komen Foundation, among others. She now focuses her research on higher education, where she is conducting a study funded by the U.S. Department of Education to test the effectiveness

of Project ECHO® in implementing co-requisite remedial education across colleges and universities. Damron is also writing a comprehensive reference and policy book chronicling the history of higher education in New Mexico and pathways for the future.

Damron received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, and her Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas. She completed a doctorate in educational psychology, with a concentration in social/personality/developmental psychology applied to oncology, from the University of Texas at Austin. She also received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Southwestern Adventist University.

Damron and her husband, J.R. Damron, live in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and have two grown children and one dog. She enjoys hiking, playing the piano and organ, reading, and all things higher education.

Action Requested

Approval of the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Update on WICHE's Budget

Fiscal Year 2025

In May 2024, the Commission approved a balanced budget for the FY 2025 General Fund. At the end of FY 2025, the actual revenues exceeded the expenditures, leaving a surplus of \$807,694. This surplus can be seen in the General Fund budget report comparing FY 2025 with FY 2026. Also, as seen on the second accompanying report titled Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary, all WICHE program areas generated excess revenue.

Overall, WICHE had a very positive financial year. All the WICHE units that had excess revenue in FY 2025 added to their reserves for FY 2026. The PSEP and Communications programs are fully funded by the General Fund and, therefore, experienced no gain or loss, as seen in the Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary report. The General Fund began the year with a reserve of \$5,483,721. WICHE added to this reserve \$807,694 and another \$517,903 due to excess reserves from Programs and Services. WICHE now has a reserve of \$6,809,318. Of this total, the Commission has designated certain portions to be held for specific purposes. These are \$491,927 as a minimum reserve, \$409,939 for unexpected shortfalls, \$850,000 for operating accounts receivable, and \$150,000 for the president's strategic objectives. This leaves \$3,731,855 available for future designations by the Commission. These amounts can be seen in the report titled General Fund Budget Comparing FY 2025 with FY 2026.

Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026

The FY 2026 General Fund Budget, approved by the Commission at the May 2025 meeting, is also a balanced budget. As of the time of this report, we are only one quarter into the current fiscal year, but it appears that the General Fund is operating within budget. Over the coming months, the program managers will each monitor the progress of their programs and adjust as necessary to meet their budgets. WICHE staff will submit preliminary FY 2027 budgets to the Executive Committee in February 2026 and the complete, proposed FY 2027 budgets to the full Commission in May 2026.

For accessible versions of the following documents, please email info@wiche.edu.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
General Fund Budget

Comparing FY 2025 with FY 2026

Revenue and Expenditures

	FY 2025				FY 2026				
	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2025 Actual	Actual 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 Actual	
Revenue									
4102 Indirect Cost Reimbursements	\$1,200,000	\$1,748,833	\$548,833	45.7%	\$1,246,000	\$46,000	3.8%	(\$502,833)	-28.8%
4104 Indirect Cost Sharing-WICHE	(\$600,000)	(\$623,182)	(\$23,182)	3.9%	(\$618,000)	(\$18,000)	3.0%	\$5,182	-0.8%
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	\$1,100,017	\$370,017	50.7%	\$770,000	\$40,000	5.5%	(\$330,017)	-30.0%
4560 SHEPC excess rents	\$36,000	\$0	(\$36,000)	-100.0%	\$20,000	(\$16,000)	-44.4%	\$20,000	
4600 Other Income	\$30,000	\$43,856	\$13,856	46.2%	\$24,024	(\$5,976)	-19.9%	(\$19,832)	-45.2%
4850 Credit Card Transaction Rev. / Units	\$30	\$2	(\$28)	-94.5%	\$24	(\$6)	-20.0%	\$22	1354.5%
Total Revenue	\$4,100,030	\$4,973,526	\$873,496	21.3%	\$4,234,048	\$134,018	3.3%	(\$739,478)	-14.9%
Expenditures									
0102 Student Access Program	\$469,658	\$481,851	\$12,194	2.6%	\$527,512	\$57,854	12.3%	\$45,660	9.5%
0104 Policy Analysis & Research	\$505,387	\$548,913	\$43,526	8.6%	\$520,549	\$15,162	3.0%	(\$28,364)	-5.2%
0105 Communications & Public Affairs	\$483,139	\$449,970	(\$33,170)	-6.9%	\$465,331	(\$17,808)	-3.7%	\$15,361	3.4%
0106 Programs & Services	\$129,956	\$169,379	\$39,423	30.3%	\$131,735	\$1,779	1.4%	(\$37,644)	-22.2%
0110 President's Office	\$679,918	\$650,165	(\$29,753)	-4.4%	\$724,660	\$44,743	6.6%	\$74,495	11.5%
0111 Commission Expense	\$420,703	\$333,724	(\$86,979)	-20.7%	\$415,229	(\$5,474)	-1.3%	\$81,505	24.4%
0112 Administrative Services	\$960,176	\$1,001,087	\$40,911	4.3%	\$987,391	\$27,215	2.8%	(\$13,696)	-1.4%
0115 Miscellaneous Gen. Fund	\$344,321	\$414,535	\$70,214	20.4%	\$352,199	\$7,879	2.3%	(\$62,336)	-15.0%
0116 Program Development	\$25,000	\$42,002	\$17,002	68.0%	\$25,750	\$750	3.0%	(\$16,252)	-38.7%
0131 LAC Meeting	\$81,137	\$74,205	(\$6,932)	-8.5%	\$83,571	\$2,434	3.0%	\$9,366	12.6%
Total Expenditures	\$4,099,395	\$4,165,832	\$66,437	1.6%	\$4,233,927	\$134,532	3.3%	\$68,096	1.6%
Surplus (Deficit) for the Fiscal Year	\$635	\$807,694	\$807,059		\$121	(\$514)			
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%	\$4,877,854	\$1,295,999	36.2%	\$1,145,999	30.7%
Reserves at Beginning of Year	\$5,483,721	\$5,483,721	\$0	-95.8%	\$6,809,318	\$1,325,597		\$1,325,597	
Reserves Dedicated during Year									
6 FY25 Unit Excess Reserves f	\$0	(\$517,903)	\$517,903		\$0	\$0		(\$517,903)	100.0%
7 Deficit (Surplus) for the Fiscal Year above	(\$635)	(\$807,694)	\$807,059		(\$121)	(\$514)	81.0%	(\$807,574)	100.0%
Reserves Dedicated during the Fiscal Year	(\$635)	(\$1,325,597)	\$1,324,962		(\$121)	(\$514)		(\$1,325,477)	
Reserves at End of Year	\$5,484,356	\$6,809,318	\$1,324,962		\$6,809,439	\$1,325,083			

- (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) FY25 Excess Unit Reserves is from PAS

Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary for FY 2025

	Programs & Services	Policy Analysis	PSEP	Behavioral Health	WCET	Communications & Public Affairs
Revenue						
Membership Dues and Fees	\$ 1,080,109	\$542,829.00		\$ 201,000	\$ 1,968,993	
Conference Registration Fees	\$ 19,734.43			\$ 38,156	\$ 317,269	
Grants and Contracts	\$ 924,029	\$ 528,911		\$ 9,270,308	\$ 2,631,375	
Indirect Cost Sharing				\$ 446,960	\$ 176,223	
Interest	\$ 35,704.23			\$ 4,123	\$ 87,575	
Miscellaneous Income		\$ 95,657		\$ 150	\$ 105,896	
General Fund Allocation	\$ 168,091	\$ 568,914	\$ 481,851			\$ 449,969
Total Revenue	\$ 2,227,668	\$ 1,736,311	\$ 481,851	\$ 9,960,696	\$ 5,287,331	\$ 449,969
Expenses						
Salaries	\$ 401,490	\$ 760,951	\$ 283,895	\$ 3,433,533	\$ 1,611,513	\$ 214,520
Benefits	\$ 165,357	\$ 310,641	\$ 123,295	\$ 1,360,329	\$ 665,836	\$ 85,695
Audit, Legal & Consulting	\$ 34,274	\$ 178,510	\$ 5,597	\$ 2,193,426	\$ 581,859	\$ 95,803
Subcontracts	\$ 572,734	\$ -			\$ 1,152,715	
Travel	\$ 166,590	\$ 135,544	\$ 22,840	\$ 793,367	\$ 445,112	\$ 3,757
Printing and Copying	\$ 2,295	\$ 1,911	\$ 783	\$ 8,948	\$ 1,502	\$ 2,556
Rent	\$ 24,716	\$ 53,145	\$ 12,365	\$ 108,501	\$ 26,039	\$ 15,910
Computer/Network	\$ 30,774	\$ 61,256	\$ 25,179	\$ 193,631	\$ 115,497	\$ 15,087
Communications	\$ 3,550	\$ 7,795	\$ 2,663	\$ 44,887	\$ 16,647	\$ 3,583
Supplies and Expense	\$ 7,339	\$ 20,135	\$ 5,234	\$ 228,093	\$ 61,407	\$ 4,352
Marketing	\$ 2,632				\$ 7,334	\$ 7,920
Depreciation						\$ 786
Indirect Costs (General Admin)				\$ 1,027,941	\$ 401,201	
Credits for other programs	\$ 159,402	\$ 140,845			\$ (142,998)	
Total Expenses	\$ 1,571,153	\$ 1,670,733	\$ 481,851	\$ 9,392,656	\$ 4,943,664	\$ 449,969
Excess Revenue (Loss)	\$ 656,515	\$ 65,578	\$ -	\$ 568,040	\$ 343,667	\$ -

INFORMATION ITEM

Non-General Fund Reserves for FY 2026

Background

As with the General Fund, the Non-General Fund accounts require and accumulate reserves. The Commission recognized this in the past by establishing a policy that the self-funded units strive to achieve reserves of at least 25% of their annual operating funds. Similar to the General Fund, these reserves serve to cover three categories of unbudgeted expenditures:

1. A minimum reserve for the cost of closing the operation if circumstances require that to be done.
2. Unanticipated shortfalls, such as contract or grant overruns, bridge funding between contracts or grants, unanticipated salary or service cost adjustments, etc.
3. A modest amount for one-time unbudgeted program development activities, such as proposal writing, unique software requirements, unique meeting opportunities, etc.

Therefore, Commission policy states that dedicated reserves for Non-General Fund activities — categorized into minimum reserve, reserve for unexpected shortfalls, and program development — shall be reported to the Commission at the fall meeting upon official close of the fiscal year and approved by the Commission for the upcoming fiscal year as part of the WICHE annual budget at the spring meeting. Further, reserves in excess of this approved amount revert to the General Fund reserve. In May 2025, the Commission approved the FY 2026 budget and the formula for determining the FY 2026 target reserves for Non-General Fund accounts. The following pages provide a summary of the FY 2026 reserves for the Non-General Fund accounts.

For accessible versions of the following documents, please email info@wiche.edu.

FY 2026 WICHE Unit Reserves

	Actual	Calculated
WCET		
FY26 Budget approved May 2025 (Core Programs)	\$ 4,357,776	
20% Minimum Reserve		\$ 871,555
20% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 871,555
10% Program Development		\$ 435,778
FY26 Allowed Reserve		\$ 2,178,888
FY26 Budget approved May 2025 (SAN)	\$ 769,780	
20% Minimum Reserve		\$ 153,956
50% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 384,890
30% Program Development		\$ 230,934
FY26 Allowed Reserve		\$ 769,780
<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>		\$ 2,948,668
WCET FY 2025 Total Available Reserve	\$ 1,706,507	
FY 2025 Reserve Designations		
WCET Outreach and Research for SAN	\$ (100,000)	
Future Fellows	\$ (25,000)	
Annual Meeting Deposit	\$ (50,000)	
WCET Accessibility	\$ (50,000)	
FY 2025 Excess Revenue	\$ 343,667	
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 1,825,174	
<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	\$ 1,123,494	
Policy		
FY26 Budget approved May 2025 (Core Programs)	\$ 617,557	
0% Minimum Reserve		\$ -
N/A Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 125,000
25% Program Development		\$ 154,389
FY26 Allowed Reserve		\$ 279,389
FY26 Budget approved May 2025 (W-SARA)	\$ 559,929	
100% Minimum Reserve		\$ 559,929
0% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ -
0% Program Development		\$ -
FY26 Allowed Reserve		\$ 559,929
<i>FY 2025 Total Allowed Reserve</i>		\$ 839,318
Policy FY 2025 Total Available Reserve	\$ 639,102	
FY 2025 Reserve Designations	\$ -	
FY 2025 Excess Revenue	\$ 65,578	
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 704,680	

2026 WICHE COMMISSION COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

The WICHE Commission conducts business through the full Commission and the following committee structure:

- ▶ **Executive Committee:** Except as otherwise provided in the compact, during the intervals between the meetings of the Commission, the Executive Committee may exercise all the powers of the Commission. These executive committee meetings that are held between the in-person commission meetings are conducted via conference call about once per month.
- ▶ **Policy Analysis and Research Committee:** Meets generally during the Commission meeting and governs the activities related to policy analysis and research.
- ▶ **Programs and Services Committee:** Meets generally during the Commission meeting and governs the activities related to programs and services.

The commissioners from each state choose among themselves who will serve in what capacity, typically at the November Commission meeting. During your time together, please caucus with your delegation and determine who among your delegation will serve on which committee:



Please return this completed form to Laura Ewing or the Help Desk, or fill out digitally using the QR code. Please complete before the end of the meeting. Thank you!

State/Pacific Jurisdiction: _____

Executive Committee: _____

Programs and Services Committee: _____

Policy Analysis and Research Committee: _____

References

REFERENCES

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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



WUE

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



WRGP

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



PSEP

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.

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.

Optimal behavioral health care

WICHE Behavioral Health Program's (BHP) fastest-growing initiative is the **PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP 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 (ID-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 of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

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.

DATA EXPERTS WICHE staff provide analysis on finance, financial aid, articulation and transfer, strategic planning, student demographics, and more, as well as host peer-to-peer calls of state, system, and institutional chief academic officers to identify areas of potential collaboration and resource sharing across the West.

DATA RESOURCES 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.

- ▶ **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 – 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 for a complete list.

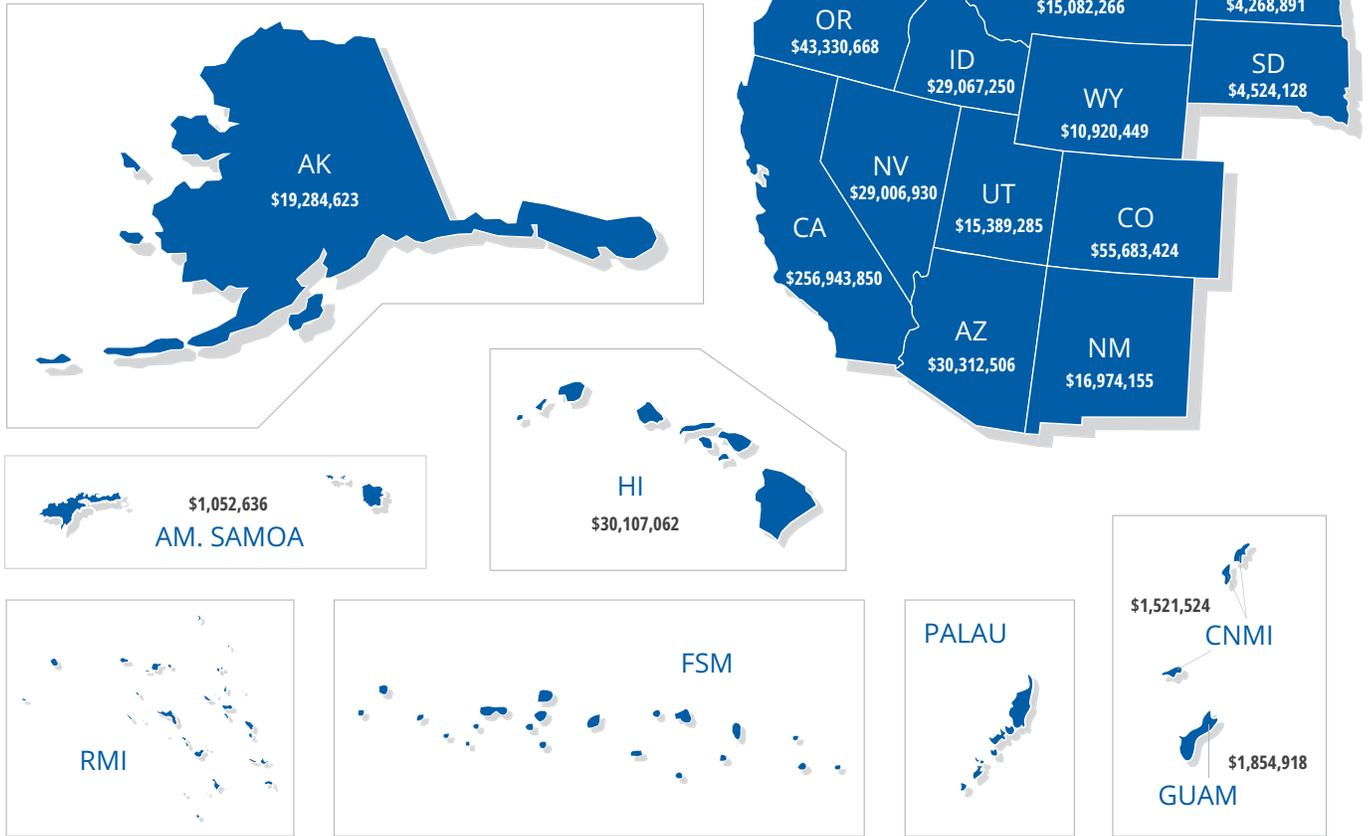
STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN)

helps guide institutions through state regulations around online courses and programs. See wcetsan.wiche.edu/member-institutions-organizations for a complete list.

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.

WICHE Region

\$670,616,334 = Total student savings through WICHE's Student Access Programs AY 2024-25



WICHE Commission *October 2025*

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Sean Parnell
VACANT

ARIZONA

Kathleen Goepfinger
Todd Haynie
Chad Sampson

CALIFORNIA

Ellen Junn
Robert Shireman
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COLORADO

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Angie Paccione
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IDAHO

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Gerry Pollet

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Fred Baldwin
Joseph Schaffer
Mike Smith




Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

FY 2026 WORKPLAN

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

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 Its 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: 2026 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: 2026 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
MHECare Student Health Solutions	A/F, A/S	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.12	Two vendors offering student, faculty, and staff health insurance
WICHE Group Property Insurance	A/F	WICHE	0.1	Marsh and five private colleges participating in CLIC

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, 2,867 students saved an estimated \$40 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.

MHECARE STUDENT HEALTH SOLUTIONS is offered in partnership with our sister compact, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. The program comprises student health insurance provided by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources and the HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, Inc., which offers various health insurance options and services to students, faculty, staff, and institution alums who cannot obtain insurance from elsewhere.

The **WICHE GROUP PROPERTY INSURANCE** is exclusively available to institutions that formerly participated in the Midwestern Higher Education Compacts Master Property Program. The participating institutions are all independent/private higher education institutions and members of the College Liability Insurance Company (CLIC). WICHE’s sponsorship ensures these institutions can maintain campus property insurance.

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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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	■ ■ ■ ■	U.S.	\$1.5M - \$2M	1.75 4 years	TBD
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S	■ ■ ■ ■	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.

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.

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

HAWAII 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	■ ■ ■ ■	Western	TBD	1 year	State of Colorado Behavioral Health Administration
Expansion of Behavioral Health Aide (BHA) Model in Pacific Jurisdictions	W/S, A/S	■ ■ ■ ■	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	■ ■ ■ ■	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.

WICHE COMMISSION

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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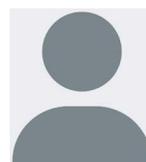
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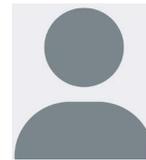
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APPROVED FUTURE COMMISSION MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Date	Location
November 13-14, 2025	Colorado Springs, Colorado
May 18-19, 2026	Seattle, Washington
November 5-6, 2026	Colorado
May 3-4, 2027	New Mexico
November 4-5, 2027	Colorado

Date	Location
May 8-9, 2028	Alaska
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

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WICHE STAFF

Names in bold type indicate new WICHE staff or staff roles since May 2025.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

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Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and to the Commission
Jeanette Porter, Senior Administrative Coordinator

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President

Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access Programs

Nick Fusilier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development

Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator

Onnika Hanson-White, Administrative Assistant III

Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation

Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director, Student Access Programs

Olivia Tufo, Manager, Regional Collaborative Procurement Solutions

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Patrick Lane, Vice President

Kate Baca, Policy Analyst

Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives

Molly Hall-Martin, Director, WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)

Sophia Harris, Research Analyst

Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA

Melissa Sanders, Administrative Assistant III

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

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Jason Alves, Director of Veterans Initiatives

Genevieve Berry, Project Manager, MHTCC

Gina Brimmer, Director of Special Projects

Madison Chamberlain, Fidelity Specialist

Kristy Crawford, Fidelity Specialist

Janell Daly, Senior Administrative Coordinator

Margie DeAnda, Project Coordinator – Hawai'i Recruitment

Karly Dickinson, Psychologist – Technical Assistance Associate

Madison Dupre, Administrative Assistant III

Nicole Eastin, Fidelity Reviewer

Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead – Psychologist

Andie Hancock, Budget Coordinator

Todd Helvig, Director of Education and Training

Tonya Horn, Director of Program Evaluation and Research

Miah Jacobs-Brichford, Fidelity Specialist

Lucy Kraus, Administrative Assistant III

Andrew Martinez, Director of Operations

Camelia Naranjo, Veteran Initiatives Program Manager

Bobbi Perkins, Director, Mountain Plains ROTAC/Technical Expert Lead

Melissa Porphir, Fidelity Specialist

Annette Robertson, Fidelity Review Program Manager

Vanessa Roup, Technical Assistance Associate, RCORP/ROTAC

Flora Shirzadian, Data Specialist

Pamela Temple, Administrative Assistant III

Allison Treu, Fidelity Specialist
Ivory Tubbs, Technical Expert Lead, RCORP

WCET – WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Digital Learning
Jenni Atwood, Senior Manager, Finance and Project Management, Every Learner Everywhere
Sherri Artz Gilbert, Senior Director, Operations and Membership Administration
Emilie Cook, Senior Manager, Content, Community and Digital Engagement, Every Learner Everywhere
Laura DaVinci, Director, Every Learner Everywhere
Cheryl Dowd, Senior Director, State Authorization Network and WCET Policy Innovations
Lindsey Downs, Assistant Director, Communications and Community
Norma Hollebeke, Associate Director, Innovation and Programs, Every Learner Everywhere
Joyce Holliday, Senior Administrative Coordinator, Every Learner Everywhere
Kathryn Kerensky, Director, Digital Learning, Policy and Compliance
Kim Nawrocki, Assistant Director, Events and Programs
Patricia O’Sullivan, Associate Director, Strategy Execution, Every Learner Everywhere
Megan Raymond, Senior Director,

Membership and Programs
Leigha Wade, Administrative Assistant III
Jana Walser-Smith, Director, Interstate Compliance and SAN Member Outreach

ACCOUNTING SERVICES

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Christine Chavez, Accounting Specialist
Diane Haslett, Accountant I

COMMUNICATIONS

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Joseph Garcia, Senior Graphic Designer

HUMAN RESOURCES

Deirdre Coulter, Director of Human Resources
Georgia Frazer, Human Resources Assistant

IT SERVICES

Linc Neshiem, Chief Technology Officer
Chris Cartwright, IT Systems Engineer

October 2025

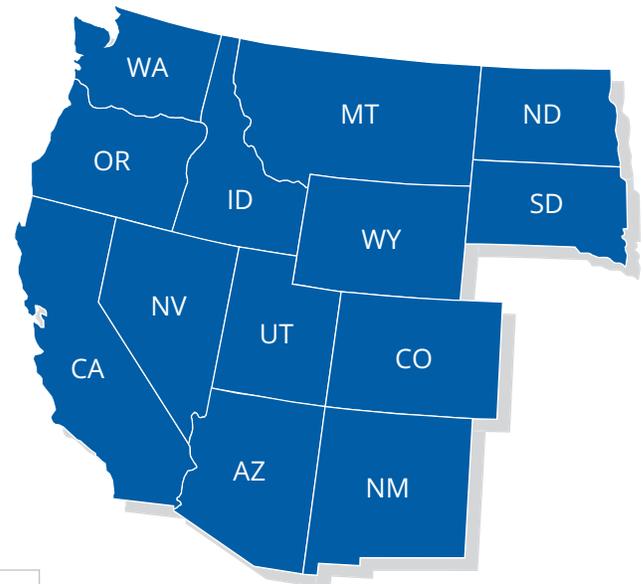
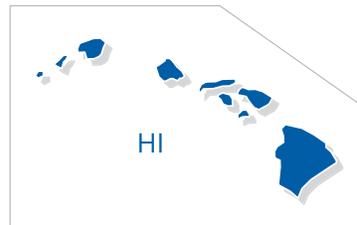
WICHE ORGANIZATION



WICHE REGION

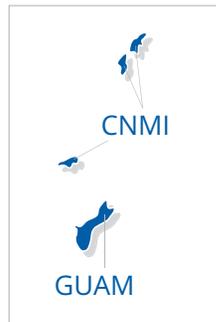
WICHE STATES

- 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)

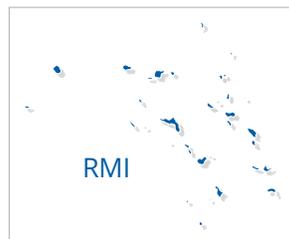


U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES & FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

- 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	completecollege.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

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

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	highered.colorado.gov/cche.html
CDHE	Colorado Department of Higher Education	highered.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	wpsaha.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

As we come together to explore the theme of *Resilience and Leadership in the West: Navigating Change in Higher Education*, this moment carries special significance: the November 2025 Commission Meeting marks our first return to Colorado since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last five years, we have faced unprecedented challenges together, and it is through your resilience and leadership that we have continued to serve students and strengthen our region. The conversations we have continue to shape the future of postsecondary education in the West with fresh ideas and new solutions, just as they have since our founders first met in 1951. I look forward to gathering again at the May 2026 Commission Meeting in Seattle, Washington. Until then, thank you for your partnership, energy, and the spirit of collaboration that you bring to our work.

Thank you for all that you do, and keep doing great things!

– **Demi Michelau**, WICHE President