



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2025



Acknowledgments

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Accessibility Statement

This document has been created with accessibility in mind. Consideration of heading structure, content labels, and alternate descriptions have been carefully applied to maximize both usability and accessibility of the information within this publication. Effort has been made to follow recognized accessibility standards and best practices, ensuring that content is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for everyone regardless of platform or assistive technologies. While no document can be guaranteed to be entirely barrier-free for all people, every effort has been taken to minimize obstacles and provide content that supports the widest possible audience. For more information, email info@wiche.edu.

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ABOUT WICHE

Created by Western governors in 1951 through the Western Regional Education Compact, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) was formed to facilitate regional cooperation and resource sharing in the region. One of four regional interstate higher education compacts in the United States, WICHE was established as a body corporate and an agency of each compacting state and territory. The Compact was ratified by the U.S. Congress in 1953, and its language is embedded in the state statutes of its member states and territories.

Our Mission

WICHE works 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.

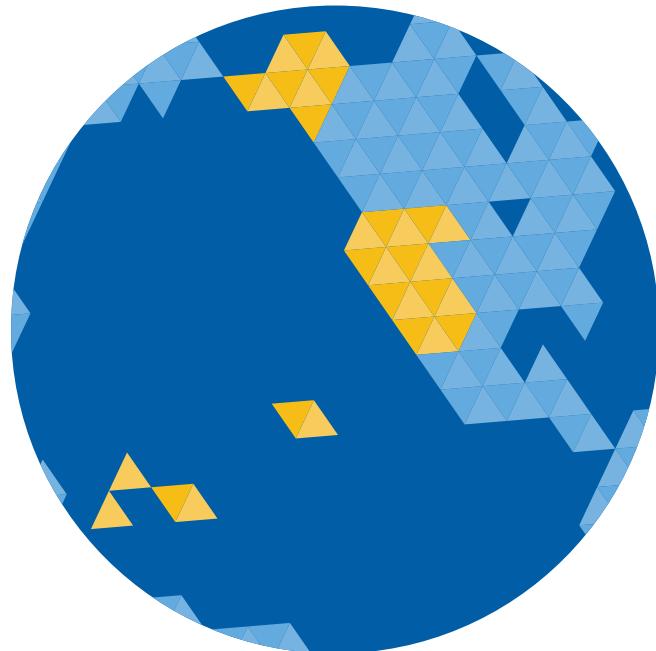
Our Vision

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

Our Region

Alaska	U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States
Arizona	
California	
Colorado	
Hawai'i	
Idaho	
Montana	
Nevada	
New Mexico	
North Dakota	
Oregon	
South Dakota	
Utah	
Washington	
Wyoming	

- ▶ American Samoa
- ▶ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- ▶ Federated States of Micronesia
- ▶ Guam
- ▶ Republic of the Marshall Islands
- ▶ Republic of Palau



A NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

As we reflect on fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) in the pages of the *WICHE Annual Report FY 2025*, one theme stands out: the enduring value of higher education in shaping the future of the West. Amid shifting demographics, economic uncertainty, and a growing emphasis on demonstrating the value of higher education, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) continues to serve as a trusted partner — helping our Western states and Pacific jurisdictions, postsecondary institutions, and students navigate both challenge and opportunity.

This fiscal year marked the 11th edition of *Knocking at the College Door*, WICHE's flagship report projecting the number of high school graduates across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For more than four decades, this analysis has helped policymakers, education leaders, and researchers plan for the future. From declining enrollments in some states to rapidly shifting demographics in others, these projections underscore both the complexity and promise of higher education's next chapter.

WICHE's programs and partnerships continued to turn insight into action this fiscal year. Through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), more than 50,000 students collectively saved \$671 million on tuition costs in academic year (AY) 2024-25. Meanwhile, in April 2025, leaders of two- and four-year postsecondary institutions across the West convened in Reno, Nevada, for a joint annual meeting where they reaffirmed the importance of collaboration between community colleges and universities, as well as their shared commitment to exchanging ideas and resources to serve students and their communities.

At the same time, WICHE's Behavioral Health Program deepened its work to strengthen the region's mental health workforce. The establishment of a psychology internship consortium in Guam and the full accreditation of New Mexico's psychology internship program are milestones in building capacity where it is most needed. WICHE also looked to the future by expanding cost-saving opportunities through cooperative purchasing with our sister compact, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), sharing how open educational resources (OER) and short-term credentials can enhance access and affordability, and exploring the impact that generative artificial intelligence (AI), digital learning regulatory issues, and new accessibility rules will have on public entities.

Yet even as we celebrate these successes, we recognize that the road ahead will demand continued collaboration and innovation. Changing demographics, rising costs, and rapid technological shifts are testing higher education's resilience. In this extraordinary moment, WICHE remains a vital forum where leaders from across the political and geographic spectrum come together to advance a common goal: expanding educational access and excellence for all residents of the region.

As we start a new year, we do so with gratitude for our Commissioners, partners, and staff whose dedication to students drives this important work. Together, we reaffirm the power of higher education to open doors for people and strengthen communities across the West.



Demarée K. Michelau

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE



Barbara Damron

Barbara Damron, Chair, WICHE Commission

ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, OPPORTUNITY

From its signature tuition savings programs to strategies for closing postsecondary attainment gaps, WICHE works to increase access and success for students in higher education through sharing resources and ideas.

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)

WUE, the nation's largest tuition savings program, broadened access to postsecondary education and saved **49,177 students an estimated \$615.6 million in tuition in academic year (AY) 2024-25**. The 170 public two- and four-year participating institutions in the WICHE region charge WUE students no more than 150% of resident tuition instead of the full nonresident rate. While WUE institutions may tailor participation criteria, including admission requirements, eligible majors, and number of students accepted, most offer a reduced tuition rate to incoming transfer students and first-time-in college students from the West. Through this program, many students can access majors that public institutions in their home state or Pacific territory may not offer. WICHE member states and territories also benefit from participation in WUE. The exchange helps public colleges and universities meet their recruitment and enrollment goals. Some graduates stay in the state in which they studied after graduation, a bonus for those areas seeking to bolster and diversify their college-educated workforce. For locations with more demand for public

higher education than supply, WUE is an ideal solution, allowing their residents access to postsecondary education without having to add capacity at home which can be costly. In AY 2024-25, compared to the previous academic year, overall WUE enrollments increased 4%, WUE enrollment at four-year universities increased 5%, and WUE enrollment at two-year colleges saw a decrease of 4%.

wue.wiche.edu



Thanks to WUE, I attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where I found the perfect setting to pursue my college education. The program expanded my horizons and allowed me to choose a university that truly aligns with my interests and goals.

LEVENTE, Washington resident,
University of Alaska Fairbanks,
Communications

Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)

WRGP allows nonresident students in the WICHE region to pay no more than 150% of resident tuition for approximately 2,100 master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral programs at 67 participating public universities. **In AY 2024-25, 2,867 students saved \$40 million in tuition through WRGP.** The number of graduate programs available through WRGP continues to grow, as participating public universities may make any graduate program eligible at the WRGP tuition rate.

Among the most popular programs in AY 2024-25 were law, education, business management, and several professional health programs. Additionally, many WRGP programs are offered online, enabling place-bound students, who may face barriers to leaving their home state or Pacific territory, to earn their educational credentials. Participating public universities in the WICHE region also benefit from WRGP. The program helps universities recruit students to pursue educational goals at their public institutions. During a time of increasing concern over enrollment, WRGP is more important than ever.

wrgp.wiche.edu



I chose the University of Arizona for my PhD in Epidemiology largely because WRGP offered in-state tuition. This benefit gave me financial flexibility and peace of mind throughout my program. WRGP made graduate school attainable, and I strongly encourage students from Western states to take advantage of this opportunity.

JENNIFER, New Mexico resident,
University of Arizona, Epidemiology

Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

PSEP provides affordable access for students in the Western region to approximately 140 accredited professional healthcare programs at 65 institutions in 10 fields:

- ▶ Dentistry
- ▶ Medicine
- ▶ Occupational therapy
- ▶ Optometry
- ▶ Osteopathic medicine
- ▶ Pharmacy
- ▶ Physical therapy
- ▶ Physician assistant
- ▶ Podiatry
- ▶ Veterinary medicine

In AY 2024-25, 566 students received \$15 million (reflecting investment by their home legislatures) in tuition benefits through PSEP. Since 1953, WICHE has supported the education of 16,265 Western residents with affordable access to professional degrees through PSEP. Many PSEP graduates subsequently return home to fill key healthcare positions. Thanks to PSEP, a student can save between \$36,500 and \$142,800 on tuition throughout a professional health degree program depending on the field of study. This savings not only reduces financial pressures — enabling students to work in rural areas that typically have lower salaries compared to urban areas — but also empowers students to pursue professional options that may be sorely needed, but less lucrative.

Western states and territories benefit by inspiring and, in most participating states, requiring professionals to return home to practice and strengthen their communities' professional healthcare workforce. Guam passed the Biråda Act in April 2022 and established a scholarship office to administer Guam's participation in PSEP for its residents, becoming the first U.S. Pacific territory to participate. Guam's inaugural cohort of four PSEP students received support in AY 2024-25 and saved almost \$53,000 on tuition.

psep.wiche.edu



PSEP has been instrumental in making optometry school financially accessible. It significantly reduced the burden on my family and allowed me to concentrate fully on my education. I'm incredibly thankful for this support and encourage other students to explore the opportunities PSEP provides for graduate study.

EMILY, Hawai'i resident, Pacific University, Optometry

Cost-saving Opportunities

WICHE collaborates with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to offer **cost-savings programs** to postsecondary institutions; K-12 districts and schools; governments at the city, state, county, and local levels; and education-related nonprofits in the West.

The largest of these programs, in terms of purchasing volume, is MHEC's cooperative technology contracts for an array of hardware, software, and technology services. During FY 2025, eligible entities throughout the West took advantage of these competitively bid contracts to purchase \$90 million in technology from

Dell Technologies, HP Enterprise, HP Inc., Lenovo, Oracle, Presidio, SAS Institute, and XEROX.

In FY 2024, entities that used the technology contracts saved an average of 9%. (Contract use is calculated for the prior fiscal year, and thus, the savings are reported for that same time period.)

MHEC also offers **student health solutions** for colleges and universities in the West, with options for fully insured school-sponsored health plans through UnitedHealthcare Student Resources.

Finally, there is insurance through HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, which partners with approximately 200 insurance carriers. While this service is available to students, their dependents, and graduates, it is also available for faculty and staff who want to buy insurance but are ineligible for employee benefits.

wiche.edu/key-initiatives/cost-savings-mhec-collaborations

Academic Partnerships

WICHE brings together senior academic leaders and provides opportunities for dialogue about current issues facing individual institutions through its leadership and professional development groups.

Visit wiche.edu/academic-partnerships to learn more about becoming a member of the following Academic Partnerships programs:

The **Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum)** and the **Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance)** are two membership networks that facilitate the exchange of ideas, share resources, and foster expertise among key academic leaders within the WICHE region. Members include public and private institutions at the doctoral, master's, and bachelor's levels for the Forum and community colleges and technical schools for the Alliance. Related systems and state coordinating and governing boards are also included for both membership groups. In FY 2025, the Forum had a total of 62 members (52 institutions and 10 systems) while the Alliance consisted of 77 members (69 institutions and eight systems).

In April 2025, the Forum and Alliance held a joint annual meeting with the theme "Partnerships: Stronger Together," in Reno, Nevada, highlighting the meeting's collaborative nature. The meeting featured a preconference workshop led by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and a keynote speech from President Mordecai Brownlee of the Community College of Aurora in Colorado. At this meeting, Tonia Dousay, University of Alaska Anchorage,

received the 2025 Colleagues Choice Innovation Award. Panel discussions covered topics like transfer, workforce alignment, dual enrollment, and credit for prior learning. The meeting concluded with a presentation from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and the South Dakota Board of Regents, which focused on institutional financial viability and program review.

The **Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)** is specifically designed to strengthen the pool of qualified chief academic leaders within institutions in the Western region. These leaders play a crucial role in shaping academic priorities and fostering excellence. Participants in the Academy are nominated by members of the Forum and the Alliance, two crucial networks within the WICHE region that serve as valuable platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange among academic leaders.

The Academy's activities revolve around several key areas:

- ▶ Understanding the context of academic leadership: This involves grasping the unique challenges and opportunities faced by academic officers.
- ▶ Setting academic goals and priorities: Leaders learn how to align institutional objectives with broader educational goals.

- ▶ Developing specific skill sets: Aspiring chief academic officers learn about the necessary competencies to excel in their possible future roles.

The faculty of the Academy comprises experienced provosts and chief academic officers from the WICHE region. These faculty members actively participate in the Forum and the Alliance, ensuring their insights are grounded in practical experience. The ninth cohort of the Academy, consisting of 18 participants, convened in July 2024. During this gathering, they met with the Academy faculty and heard from guest speakers who shared their expertise. Almost 34% of those who completed the Academy advanced in their careers within two years.

The **WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities**, funded by a two-year grant from the Mellon Foundation, allows institutions in the West to grow their academic administration by preparing humanities faculty to take on leadership roles effectively and confidently. The program launched in Fall 2023 with its first cohort of eight faculty fellows, all representing two- and four-year institutions in the West. Each participant chooses a project to focus on during their time in the two-year program, supporting leadership development through experiential learning. The key competencies for the WICHE Academy for

Leaders in the Humanities revolve around three key areas: career planning and development; project management; and organizational design and agility.

The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities welcomed the eight-member Cohort Two in September 2024 and graduated the eight-member Cohort One in April 2025. Of the first cohort, six of the eight fellows transitioned into new leadership roles. The second year of the grant focused primarily on navigating leadership changes with grace and thoughtfulness. As Cohort Two fellows and institutions convened to begin their fellowship journey, the curriculum added topics related to campus programs and policy shifts that occurred in late 2024. The regional representation of participants for the first cohort included North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Colorado, and Alaska. The regional representation of participants for the second cohort included Washington, California, New Mexico, Colorado, and Alaska. Staff continued conducting site visits in Alaska, California, Colorado, North Dakota, and South Dakota to understand how best to support each fellow's project and create a sustainable faculty-focused leadership development program.

Credit Mobility

Upon sunsetting, the Interstate Passport® program transitioned its remaining grant funding in 2024 to support transfer pathways through technological interventions. The **Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiative** supports six projects across 13 institutions between postsecondary institutions in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The institutions were selected using criteria to determine the robustness of their transfer pathways, institutional support, and demonstrated ability to execute their projects in a two-year span. Project partners are working together to develop and implement technology solutions and track the impact on students transferring between postsecondary institutions. WICHE plans to share its findings from this community of practice in fall 2026.

Forging the Next Generation of Higher Education Leaders

Colleges and universities are facing rapid changes like shifting enrollment trends, evolving workforce needs, and increasing pressures about the value of higher education. Strong leadership has never been more essential.

Through its four Academic Partnerships programs, WICHE helps meet the evolving needs of postsecondary institutions in the West by developing thoughtful, connected, and resilient higher education leaders.

For Jeffrey Alexander, president of Truckee Meadows Community College in Nevada, participating in the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) opened new perspectives.

"The opportunity to gather with peers from across the region was terrific," said Alexander, who served as vice chair and later chair of the Alliance executive committee. "The Alliance gave me a wider lens on the West and introduced me to new efforts across the region."

One of those initiatives, credit for prior learning, has become a statewide model in Nevada.



Jeffrey Alexander, President, Truckee Meadows Community College in Nevada

“When leaders are prepared and supported, they create healthier institutions, and that directly benefits students.”

In South Dakota, Stacey Berry, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Dakota State University, credits her fellowship with the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities in preparing her for more senior roles. “It gave me both the confidence and the concrete skills to step into academic leadership roles I could not have imagined myself in before,” said Berry, an English professor. She especially valued networking with peers:



Stacey Berry, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences at Dakota State University in South Dakota

“When leaders are prepared and supported, they create healthier institutions, and that directly benefits students.”

That sentiment was echoed by James Holloway, president of the University of Toledo in Ohio and former provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of New Mexico. He served as executive committee vice chair and later chair of the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum), an experience which provided him with valuable insight. Holloway learned from peers about crisis management, state relations, and new ways to engage Native American students, and he called the joint meetings between the Forum and the Alliance “a revelation.” “Four-year institutions have distinct differences from two-year community colleges, but we also have some important overlaps. It helped me think more about how we

James Holloway, President, University of Toledo in Ohio, and former Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of New Mexico



Cheryl Siemers, Interim Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage

“Investing in the next generation of postsecondary leaders is an investment in our state, our communities, and the individual students we serve.”

can partner across the higher education sectors, and these are lessons I have carried into every leadership role since.”

That same spirit of learning and regional collaboration also impacted Cheryl Siemers, interim chancellor at the University of Alaska Anchorage, on her leadership journey. The opportunity to be a part of the Western Academic Leadership Academy

(Academy) came at a pivotal time in her career. Encouraged by mentors who saw her potential, Siemers participated in the yearlong leadership development program at WICHE where she strengthened her ability to navigate both daily decisions and big-picture planning. “Investing in the next generation of postsecondary leaders is an investment in our state, our communities, and the individual students we serve,” she said. “As leaders, we don’t go into these roles thinking we have all we need to know to succeed. Rather, we’ve learned how to ask the right questions and do the research and the listening we need to do to help ourselves and our institutions excel.”

POLICY AND RESEARCH

From data analysis to policy guidance to leadership training, WICHE assists higher education decision-makers in planning wisely, benchmarking their progress, advancing their agendas, and investing their resources strategically.

Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)

Created by the WICHE Commission in 1995, the **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)** strengthens state-level policymaking in higher education by engaging state legislators in the top issues of the day and hearing their views on important topics in their states. The LAC met in Denver, Colorado, in September 2024. The meeting focused on how higher education is changing, while still showing some of the same trends as in years past. Topics included the promise and peril of nondegree credentials that can help to meet state workforce needs in crucial areas but also can create new oversight challenges. Additionally, sessions included a look at emerging trends in generative artificial intelligence, postsecondary accreditation, and ensuring student housing and food security. In attendance were 24 legislators from 13 WICHE states and territories, representing Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Each representative on the WICHE Commission's Executive Committee, in consultation with their fellow Commissioners, appoints legislators to the LAC (see page 42).



The LAC has been invaluable to me and my legislative colleagues from Washington. We've learned about and implemented new approaches to expand access, increase degree and certificate completion, strengthen mental health support for students, and address shortages in our professional workforce, thanks to deep discussions with fellow legislators and expert presenters.

GERRY POLLET, Representative, Washington State Legislature, and WICHE Commissioner



Attending the LAC conference was a valuable experience. I enjoyed connecting with legislators from across the West and learning how other states are tackling the same challenges we face in Idaho. I came away encouraged by the collaboration and energized to keep building solutions that strengthen Idaho's students, families, and future.

KEVIN COOK, Senator, Idaho Legislature

Open Educational Resources (OER)

With funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, WICHE continued its partnership with the other three regional higher education compacts to advance the adoption and usage of **open educational resources (OER)**.

WICHE has focused on convening experts across the region to scale the adoption of these important tools, advance a national strategy to promote OER, partner with other leading organizations in the field, and improve the research base in support of policy and practice.

WICHE's **OERwest Network** brought together leaders from across the region in Boise, Idaho, in April 2025 to continue to build sustainable and effective statewide strategies that scale the adoption and use of OER. WICHE also released groundbreaking research examining the association between OER usage by students and degree completion. This work showed that students who access OER are more likely to complete degrees, with strong associations for older students.

wiche.edu/oer

WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)

WICHE is an integral partner in the **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)**. Created in 2013, SARA

helps expand access to quality higher education through the establishment of common standards for the regulation of distance education across state lines. SARA ensures meaningful consumer protections for students and increases student access and options. The agreement is coordinated by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) in collaboration with the four regional higher education compacts. As the compact serving the West, WICHE is responsible for the implementation of the agreement in the region through the **WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)**.

To help carry out its responsibilities, WICHE convenes the **W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC)**, which is composed of representatives from each W-SARA member state. The RSC reviews state applications and renewals and recommends action to the WICHE Commission. Steering committee members serve as valuable thought partners to one another, as well as to colleagues across the country, with a shared commitment to improving student protections across varied state contexts.

The RSC also plays a pivotal role in the SARA policy modification process, advancing new policies to improve student protections and strengthen institutional eligibility standards. WICHE staff also helped lead national working groups to

help protect students from precipitous institutional closures.

The third year of the policy modification process concluded December 2025, resulting in several new and amended SARA policies. The process itself showcased transparency and a true state-led decision-making process, representing a substantial improvement in SARA governance.



"W-SARA has been an incredible partner in supporting states with their SARA work. What really stands out is the space they've created — a safe, dynamic, and collaborative environment where states can come together regularly to dig into the nuanced (and, at times, challenging) work of implementing SARA within the unique contexts of each state in the region. The W-SARA staff and the broader WICHE community are exceptional, responsive, supportive, and truly go above and beyond — just fantastic people to work with!"

LANNA DUECK, Executive Director,
Arizona SARA Council

Regional Support and Resources

WICHE provides a range of **regional support** to help promote high-quality postsecondary opportunities to residents of the West. WICHE convenes chief academic officers in the region for conference calls focusing on policy and practice issues, new and emerging research, and discussions of important national and federal issues. These serve as a resource for staff from state agencies, systems, and institutions in the region to learn from one another. WICHE also collects, analyzes, and curates data on a range of topics focused on higher education in the West. This includes:

- ▶ [Tuition and Fees in the West](#): This resource includes tuition and fees information for all public institutions in the West. This work also includes an [annual policy brief](#) examining trends in appropriations and state grant aid, as well as federal funding.
- ▶ [Benchmarks: WICHE Region](#): This collection of information covers the West's progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education.
- ▶ [Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West](#): A resource of data on more than 35 indicators.
- ▶ An internal database of important postsecondary education data used to respond to inquiries from WICHE partners and supply needed information to strategically guide WICHE's work.



“

Managing a project as complex as the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) — with nine distinct programming categories and over 50 individual programs — is no small task. Over the past four years, WICHE has played a vital role in supporting WIP through ongoing project management, strategic guidance, and process oversight. Their contributions have been instrumental in WIP's success by providing structure, tracking progress, and offering both strategic and operational support to WIP's leadership and program teams. WICHE has also provided opportunities to showcase WIP's accomplishments, organizing webinars, and in-person meetings that provided a venue to share our story and outcomes with other states and partners.

LAUREN SCHOENFELD, Executive Director, Wyoming Innovation Partnership

State Policy Approaches to Short-term Credentials

WICHE partnered with the Pew Charitable Trusts to explore how state policymakers engage with the growing field of short-term postsecondary credentials. WICHE reviewed existing research, interviewed practitioners across the country, and convened an expert advisory group to inform the work, ultimately producing the report ***State Approaches to Short-term Postsecondary Credentials: Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Gaps***. The report and accompanying webinar examined the fragmented landscape of oversight and funding, presented state-level examples of innovative approaches, and identified gaps where further policy development could improve student outcomes.

Wyoming Innovation Partnership

WICHE continues to provide project management support to the **Wyoming Innovation Partnership**, an innovative statewide initiative seeking to modernize and focus the state's efforts to develop a resilient workforce and economy. One goal of the partnership was improved alignment with the state's economic development agenda through increased collaborations among state entities and local partners. Working under contract with the Wyoming Community College Commission and in

coordination with the governor's office, WICHE provides a variety of services to help the overall effort succeed, including the development of a strategic approach to sustain this effort by moving it out of state government.

Supporting Health Workforce Needs of the West

WICHE has continued to sustain **regular virtual convenings** to support regional members' efforts to meet their health workforce needs. The West, like most of the country, is facing critical healthcare shortages, particularly in nursing. WICHE's work in this area builds on previous efforts to identify policy and practice solutions to the challenges faced by states. The resulting network has helped state nursing workforce experts build a strong community of practice to help address the numerous, difficult challenges related to the health workforce. The interest and engagement across the region in WICHE's virtual convenings underscores the importance of this effort in the West. With the WICHE Commission regularly expressing the importance of work in this area, WICHE continues to focus on this effort.

wiche.edu/nursingworkforce

Rural Nursing Research Study

WICHE started a new research project focused on understanding how nursing programs support rural nursing students through place-based education opportunities. The research is part of MDRC's National Rural Higher Education Research Center, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education. In partnership with three colleges, WICHE will conduct the qualitative research study over four years.

ECMC: Landscape of Completion Strategies in the West

With support from the ECMC Foundation, WICHE conducted a **landscape analysis of state- and system-level completion strategies** across the region. The initial phase of this work included a document analysis of state and system-level higher education strategic plans to identify prioritized completion initiatives, common themes across the region, and areas for future research. In addition to the document analysis, WICHE staff convened a series of focus groups with stakeholders from across the region to better understand how strategies and initiatives are designed and implemented.

Turning Data into Direction

How Knocking at the College Door Informs Leaders Across the Nation

Since 1979, WICHE has published *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*. This analysis projects the number of high school graduates for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, making it an important resource for policymakers, decision-makers, researchers, and planners in education and workforce development. The 11th edition was released in December 2024, with the following key findings:



The total number of high school graduates is expected to peak in 2025 and then decline steadily through 2041.



The number of underrepresented graduates who identify as Hispanic or Multiracial is expected to grow.



Compared to 2023, 38 states will see declines in the number of graduates by 2041 as most regions in the U.S. will shrink.



COVID-19's impact on the education pipeline is modest, but will be felt for years to come.



Beyond the cliff: Potential strategies and solutions to meet the challenges ahead.

wiche.edu/knocking

WICHE's data analysis, produced by the Policy Analysis and Research staff and generously supported by the College Board and Lumina Foundation, includes a comprehensive report and interactive online dashboards.

Knocking was cited extensively in the national media, including NPR, *Forbes*, *Newsweek*, and *Bloomberg*, as well as higher education media, such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Community College Daily*, *EdSource*, and state and local news.

WICHE staff are frequently invited to share insights from *Knocking* at national and regional gatherings of education and workforce leaders, presenting at meetings and conferences hosted by organizations such as the American Council on Higher Education, the State Higher Education



“The data and reporting prepared by the WICHE team helped the Central New Mexico Community College leadership team focus our financial and programming strategies to better serve our changing population under challenging conditions.”

TRACY HARTZLER, President, Central New Mexico Community College



“We rely heavily on WICHE’s invaluable data in Knocking at the College Door. Each year, it provides a clear-eyed assessment of the student pipeline that allows our executive team to budget, strategize, and ultimately, find the best path forward for institutional success.”

DAVID TANDBERG, President, Adams State University, in Colorado

Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), National Conference of State Legislatures, Education Writers Association, National Federation of Municipal Analysts, and National Conference of Higher Education Resources. WICHE staff were also invited to present at Adams State University, Central New Mexico College, Colorado Commission on Higher Education, Laramie County Community College, and Nevada System of Higher Education, among others. Through these presentations and workshops, WICHE helps states, systems, and institutions translate demographic projections into informed strategies for the future of postsecondary access and attainment.

If you or your organization are interested in a presentation, please email knocking@wiche.edu.

LEADERSHIP IN DIGITAL LEARNING

WICHE helps higher education leaders effectively deploy technology to enhance learning and increase student access and success.

WCET – A Cooperative Exchange of Resources, Solutions, and Services

WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies focuses on expanding access to and improving the quality of digital learning instruction and student support services. WCET is composed of three areas: WCET membership, the State Authorization Network, and Every Learner Everywhere. Of WCET's 448 members, 33.5% are in the WICHE region. During FY 2025, WCET provided members with information on federal distance education regulations, generative artificial intelligence (AI), the cost and price of distance education, and new accessibility rules for public entities.

WCET Outreach and Engagement

WCET conferred several awards recognizing the outstanding work of WCET members.

The **WCET Outstanding Work (WOW) Award** recipients in 2024:

- ▶ Mississippi Community College Board – Mississippi Virtual Community College
- ▶ SUNY COIL, Maritime, NCC, Oneonta, UCAB & SUNY Online – COIL+OSCQR Standards
- ▶ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board – Division of Digital Learning
- ▶ University of Hawai'i System – Anatomy and Physiology OER Project

The **2024 Jonsen & McGill Award**, which honors an individual who has made a significant contribution to higher education digital learning, was presented to Russ Poulin, former WCET executive director, and Luke Dowden, chief online learning officer, Alamo Colleges District.

The **2024 Sally M. Johnstone Award** recognizes young professionals who have made a significant contribution above and beyond his or her rank to the digital learning community. Kylah Torre, senior director of the Division of Digital Learning at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, received the award.

WCET's *Frontiers* blog reached 26,000 readers through featured posts on topics like federal regulations related to professional licensure, state authorization reciprocity, and distance education; generative AI use in instruction; digital accessibility; the cost and price of distance education; online student support services; and distance education and digital learning advances by members.

WCET routinely reaches out to the field through **monthly webinars** on topics such as the cost and price of distance education, curriculum alignment strategies, accessibility, and generative AI. These webinars drew almost 4,400 registrants.

WCET uses a robust **community engagement** platform to facilitate member

collaboration, which includes a general member community of almost 4,400 active users, as well as specialized communities on accessibility, young digital learning professionals, and chief online learning officers.

In October 2024, 265 people attended WCET's **36th Annual Meeting** in Long Beach, California. Issues explored included how to better deploy digital learning in instruction and student support, artificial intelligence, and digital learning regulatory issues.

wcet.wiche.edu

Every Learner Everywhere

Every Learner Everywhere is a grant-funded solution network hosted within WCET. Every Learner consists of partner organizations committed to helping higher education institutions use digital learning and evidence-based teaching practices to improve outcomes for all students. The network provides two- and four-year institutions with consulting, training, and resources to support the adoption and implementation of digital learning and evidence-based teaching practices. In the past year:

- ▶ Every Learner and its partners provided **professional development and technical assistance** to 301 institutions and almost 850 faculty, administrators, and staff in those institutions.

- ▶ The network offered **multiple free services** to all institutions, including the Transform Learning webinar series, which focused on evidence-based teaching practices, two courses for adjunct faculty to improve their teaching, and one webinar on cultural relevance in teaching. In addition, the network hosted a community of practice for faculty interested in improving their teaching practices. There were 511 participants across these webinars and the community of practice.
- ▶ Every Learner has provided deeper **technical assistance** to 35 institutions by partnering with cross-campus teams consisting of a total of 145 faculty, administrators, and staff to redesign introductory courses, applying real-time data and evidence-based strategies to create flexible learning environments that drive stronger student outcomes.

Every Learner Everywhere also helps institutions improve student success through a **series of publications**. These publications deliver subject matter and insights, with a total of almost 7,500 views and downloads:

- ▶ *The Impact of Digital Learning on Minoritized and Poverty-Affected Students: 12 Instructors' Stories*
- ▶ *A Profile of Historically Black Colleges and Universities: A Profile of Hispanic-Serving Institutions*

- ▶ *A Profile of Tribal Colleges and Universities*
- ▶ *Where AI Meets Accessibility: Considerations for Higher Education*

everylearnereverywhere.org

State Authorization Network (SAN)

Developed by WCET in 2011, **SAN** is a national membership organization that empowers more than 957 participating institutions and agencies nationwide to successfully implement statutory and regulatory requirements to improve student protections in digital learning and other activities that occur across state lines. SAN provides policy analysis, training, tools, and networking to implement compliance strategies for institutions to operate and deliver instruction across state lines lawfully and effectively. In the past year:

- ▶ SAN added an annual in-person two-day **implementation workshop** opportunity in Boulder, Colorado, serving 40 attendees. The workshop complemented the lessons learned during an eight-week, asynchronous course covering the foundations of state authorization.
- ▶ SAN held an in-person **Advanced Topics Workshop** in Boulder, Colorado, titled “Compliance Proof Your Professional Licensure Plan.” The workshop served 40 attendees and addressed the ongoing challenges of state and federal compliance management for institutions



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“Every Learner Everywhere helped us turn good intentions into measurable action through a training co-hosted with the Association of Public & Land-grant Universities (APLU). For the first time, we were able to sit down as a cross-campus team and document the impact of our student success efforts. The experience gave us the tools and shared language to use data proactively so we can support students based on their specific needs, whether that's tutoring services, housing services, or even addressing food security, before challenges become barriers. Every Learner Everywhere has truly helped us reimagine how we serve our students, strengthening both our institutional culture and our commitment to student success.”

MARLENA PANGELINAN, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Guam



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Since 2018, Utah has ensured all its SARA participating institutions are SAN members. Two Utah SARA institution representatives get to attend monthly SAN Coordinator meetings and share what they learn with other institution representatives. Several dozen Utah SARA institution folks who have participated in SAN webinars as well as in person trainings all give SAN high marks. And everyone gets sanNEWS and sanDISCUSS emails (the latter encouraging dialogue and debate among multiple SAN voices in multiple states). SAN is, hands down, the source of information on emerging and evolving regulations for distance education (DE) and on best practice in serving and providing important student consumer protections to DE students.

CYNTHIA “CYD” GRUA, Assistant Commissioner, Academic Affairs and Utah State Portal Entity, Utah System of Higher Education

serving students in programs leading to a license or certification.

- ▶ The **library of resources** on the Getting Started with Compliance Management Gateway webpage on the SAN website continues to grow. The site features new one- and two-page abstracts, charts, and short papers with new topics including project management, writing a public comment, and reading statutes and regulations. During the last fiscal year, analytics indicate the resources listed on the Getting Started webpage received approximately 14,000 views. The SAN website, which includes additional information and event direction, received more than 74,000 views.
- ▶ SAN staff presented virtually and in person to more than **30 state meetings and conferences** throughout the year on topics related to compliance for interstate activities of institutions and related statutory and regulatory updates affecting digital learning.
- ▶ The **SANsational Award** annually recognizes outstanding efforts of SAN members in developing a high-quality, comprehensive solution to a challenging state authorization issue. The 2025 SANsational Award winners are:
 - Aims Community College (Colorado)
 - Dakota State University (South Dakota)

- Campbell University (North Carolina)
- Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Florida)
- Southern New Hampshire University
- University of Kentucky

wcetsan.wiche.edu

Digital Learning Policy Analysis and Research

WCET and SAN are the unquestioned leaders in postsecondary digital learning policy work. Staff partner to track emerging laws and regulations at both the state and federal levels regarding digital learning in postsecondary education. Once enacted, staff interpret the requirements of new policies in understandable language and share compliance strategies with our members and, often, the higher education community at large. WCET and SAN are committed to protecting students by supporting institutional personnel in understanding how to meet regulatory expectations and exploring good practices to better serve student needs.

- WCET and SAN hosted a special in-person policy event, “Distance Ed at a Crossroads: The Changing Landscape of New Regulations,” in St. Louis, Missouri,

in July 2024. More than 150 SAN and WCET members came together to collaborate and prepare for the potential impact of proposed federal regulatory changes to distance education, including state authorization reciprocity, attendance requirements, consumer protections, third-party servicers, and the implications of the Supreme Court’s recent Chevron decision.

- As in 2024, SAN and WCET collaborated to participate in the **2025 SARA Policy Modification Process**. With the goal of strengthening consumer protections within the state authorization reciprocity framework, SAN and WCET submitted four proposals. These collaborations were focused on meeting the goal of strong student consumer protections that could be effectively implemented by institutions to support student’s educational goals.

Expanding Education Through Online Innovation

When Ryan Faulkner joined the College of Eastern Idaho (CEI) as the inaugural director of online learning, he faced the challenge of building an online program from the ground up.

With guidance and resources from WCET, his efforts have helped CEI expand access to education statewide — today 40% of all student credits at the community college are earned through online courses.

"I can easily say without WCET's assistance, guidance, influence, and professional connections, CEI Online would not be where it is today serving students," Faulkner said, who is now dean of the program. "I came to the college right as it transitioned from a state technical college to a community college. The college administration understood the major change of the college would be to provide more academic and general education courses and that we needed to reach our entire region of the state. They also knew the college would

grow quickly and that online course and program development would be essential in reaching our potential."

The program began with a team of one for the first two years, which presented many initial challenges. While surveys showed that CEI students were weary of online courses in the years after the COVID-19 pandemic and craved more opportunities to interact with each other, they also wanted more options for high-quality, affordable courses. Meanwhile, Faulkner was dealing not only with building the new online program, but the aftermath of COVID-19, while building a new online team with limited resources.

As he put it: "It was clear I needed to connect with other professionals and seek guidance."



Ryan Faulkner, Dean of Online Learning, College of Eastern Idaho

“Without WCET’s assistance, guidance, influence, and professional connections, CEI Online would not be where it is today serving students.”

Enter WCET. Rick Aman, at the time CEI’s president and a WICHE Commissioner for the state of Idaho, encouraged Faulkner to join WCET on behalf of the college. After an introductory phone call with WCET, Faulkner said he was invited by staff to co-present to the WCET community on a panel webinar. “Within a few months, I went from building a new online program at a small, newly created community college in southeast Idaho to having a national voice and connecting with some of the most intelligent higher education digital technology minds I’ve ever known,” said Faulkner, who also serves now as vice chair of WCET’s Steering Committee.

“Having access to current research and updated policy information is instrumental in providing quality online education,” Faulkner added. “As the state of Idaho consists of over 83,000 square miles and most of our communities are considered rural, it is crucial to have online courses and programs to extend that academic reach.”

Additionally, thanks to his college’s memberships in both WCET and SAN, Faulkner has connected with “amazing professionals” in online education from within his state at Boise State University to the University of Idaho, as well as peers from across the country in California, Illinois, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Florida, Texas, and Mississippi. From professional licensure, state authorization, regular and substantive interaction, student identity verification, artificial intelligence, and accessibility requirements, Faulkner feels informed and prepared. Over the last two years, CEI Online reports that more students see the value of taking classes online to complete affordable degrees and certificates quicker.

“All of these areas are crucial to us providing not only high-quality online education but keep us compliant with laws and policies,” he said. “I can safely say that WCET provides so many valuable tools that have allowed us to plan and be ahead of change as best as possible.”

OPTIMAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

WICHE helps prepare a qualified behavioral health workforce and optimize its delivery of behavioral healthcare services. These efforts range from suicide prevention, general student mental health and wellness, and programs aimed at addressing the acute shortage of behavioral health specialists in rural areas.

Suicide Prevention

Through the **Together With Veterans (TWV) Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention Program**, the WICHE Behavioral Health Program (BHP) promotes Veteran-led public health suicide prevention efforts in rural communities. Through funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the WICHE BHP provides a program toolkit, offers training and coaching to each TWV community, and hosts an annual summit attended by local TWV leaders from each participating community. Program guiding principles emphasize that Veterans provide local leadership, collaborate with key community agencies and partners, use evidence-informed suicide prevention strategies, and create action plans that consider the unique needs and strengths of their community. Using the TWV process, Veteran-led coalitions empower Veterans and their advocates to build awareness about suicide, identify and promote access to community resources, and foster local collaborations to support Veterans and their families. Since the program's inception in 2015, 38 sites have been launched across 26 states, territories and two sovereign nations. Of the 38 program sites, 11 are in WICHE region states and territories. TWV communities reported serving almost 20,000 Veterans in FY 2025.



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“Together With Veterans (TWV) has truly changed how we work in Central Oregon. It has brought together Veterans, local leaders, law enforcement, and health professionals to have honest conversations about what's working and where we can do better. That collaboration has helped reduce barriers to mental health care and helped us build real connections across our community. Thanks to TWV's guidance and support, we've created a stronger safety net for Veterans and their families, one that's rooted in trust, purpose, and compassion.”

LAUREN CONNALLY, Facilitator,
Together With Veterans Central Oregon

mirecc.va.gov/visn19/togetherwithveterans/



“

Working with WICHE has been a great partnership. Through technical assistance and training, WICHE has supported efforts in Montana to expand Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services and implement those services with fidelity (with some minor modifications to account for our remote areas). One thing that stands out is the communication between WICHE and our providers (specifically regarding fidelity reviews and training), as well as communication with the state (from contracting to availability to the annual report and throughout our administrative rulemaking process). Their support and collaboration have been reassuring. The goal is always to help people improve their lives by getting the right service at the right time. WICHE has helped us ensure that ACT services are being delivered to Montanans appropriately and that those services meet the needs of individuals while accounting for the challenges faced by providers, given the frontier nature of Montana.

ISAAC COY, Treatment Bureau Chief,
Behavioral Health and Developmental
Disabilities Division, State of Montana

Promoting Best Practices in Behavioral Health Services

The BHP Fidelity Review Program provides consultation, training, and technical assistance to support effective implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs), facilitate continuous quality improvement of behavioral health service delivery, and promote longevity of the behavioral health workforce in Western states. The BHP conducts independent evaluations (fidelity/quality assurance reviews) of providers who offer evidence-based practices designed to support individuals with significant behavioral health needs to live safely and successfully in the community. These practices include Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Forensic ACT (FACT), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Supported Employment (SE), and Consumer Operated Services (COS). The BHP also specializes in adapting EBPs for implementation in rural and remote communities, including development of state-specific fidelity and quality assurance review tools with criteria that are relevant to rural contexts.

Currently, the BHP provides fidelity review and quality assurance services to Arizona, Montana, and South Dakota. In 2024-25, the Fidelity Review Program conducted 54 fidelity/quality assurance reviews, offered 16 trainings, and provided ongoing consultation and technical assistance

to state agencies and behavioral health providers in these three states.

Since 1985, the WICHE BHP has hosted the **Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG)**, which serves as an information-sharing network and collaboration group for behavioral health data and evaluation staff and managers from WICHE states and territories. Funded by membership fees paid by states, WICHE hosts WSDSG monthly conference calls and an annual in-person forum to learn about and discuss emerging issues and best practices in behavioral health data collection, reporting, and system evaluation.

The WICHE BHP is conducting **descriptive research on the Alaska Behavioral Health Aide Program (AK BHA)**. Funded by a National Institutes of Health research grant, the WICHE BHP collaborates with the Northwest Indian College, the Center for Alaska Native Health Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to describe and evaluate the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's innovative approach to training behavioral health aides (BHA). The AK BHA provides training and education to village-based counselors, increasing the workforce in remote areas. This three-phase research project will support the long-term goal of gathering evidence on the effectiveness of the AK BHA program in building local capacity for

place-based behavioral health services in rural and remote American Indian and Alaska Native community settings.

The WICHE BHP serves as the technical assistance lead for the **Rural Communities Opioid Response Program - Behavioral Health Care Technical Assistance (RCORP-BHCTA)**. With funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and in partnership with JBS International, the WICHE BHP provides technical assistance to 87 RCORP-BHCTA grantees to strengthen their capacity to develop multi-organization networks that can plan, implement, and sustain programs to improve access to and quality of behavioral health care services, including services for individuals with substance use and opioid use disorders. The purpose of RCORP-BHCTA is to:

- ▶ Provide technical assistance to RCORP grantees to support their efforts to implement and sustain behavioral health and substance use disorder (SUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery services
- ▶ Identify and/or develop, promote, and maintain tools and resources
- ▶ Develop and enhance meaningful partnerships
- ▶ Identify and strengthen rural communities' behavioral health capacity

The RCORP-TA portal supports these purposes by providing grantees access

to a repository of resources and tools, peer grantees, and a platform to request technical assistance. Grantee sites in the WICHE region currently supported by the WICHE BHP are Arizona, California, Colorado, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

Workforce Development

Through the **Rural Psychology Internship Consortia**, the WICHE BHP continues to help establish and support 10 rural psychology internship consortia in Alaska, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Utah. These consortia attract advanced behavioral health trainees to experience internships in underserved areas. The goal of the consortia is to provide high quality and culturally competent services to residents and retain trainees in their respective states and Pacific jurisdiction once their internships are completed. Though each state manages its own internship program, WICHE assists by establishing the conceptual framework, supporting efforts to obtain and maintain American Psychological Association accreditation for each site, and providing other administrative roles, including acting as the employer of interns on behalf of the consortia in Alaska, Hawai'i, Nevada, and New Mexico.

More than 300 interns have graduated since the inception of the program and over 50% of graduates have remained to practice in their internship training states/territories. In FY 2025, 30 interns graduated from the program.

The WICHE BHP helped to establish the **2 + 2 Bachelors in Social Work**, a partnership between Northern Marianas College (NMC) and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) to enable students from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) to earn a Bachelor of Social Work Degree (BSW). Through this program, students complete their first two years of study at NMC, and complete upper-division study virtually through the UAF program. The UAF program was developed to serve students in remote Alaska villages and is specifically designed around indigenous and rural/remote students and culture, making this unique program especially attractive to students from the Pacific region. To date, nine students graduated with BSW degrees. Three of those have since received a master's degree in social work (MSW).

Strengthening the Behavioral Health Workforce

In more than a decade, the Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium (HI-PIC) has trained nearly 100 psychology interns across four islands, helping the state earn national recognition for building a sustainable behavioral health workforce.

With more than half of its graduates choosing to remain in Hawai'i to live and work, HI-PIC is strengthening the state's capacity to meet its growing mental health needs.

"Even prior to the internship, I always felt that public mental health in Hawai'i was a very significant need," said Dr. Canaan Higa, a past HI-PIC intern. "Now that I'm in the field, though, I just did not understand how big of a need it really was."

In 2008, the Hawai'i Behavioral Health Services administration partnered with the WICHE Behavioral Health Program

(BHP) to conduct a statewide workforce assessment. The results showed that much of the state, particularly its rural regions, were designated as professional workforce shortage areas. In response, the Hawai'i Departments of Education, Health, and Corrections and Rehabilitation partnered with the WICHE BHP to launch HI-PIC. The goal of the consortium was to address the state's longstanding shortage of behavioral health professionals.

Dr. Higa, now a clinical lead for the department's Family Court Liaison Branch, earned his psychology doctorate from Pacific University in Oregon. Although he



Dr. Canaan Higa (*left*), Dr. Tod-Casey Takeuchi, Dr. Katlyn Hale, Dr. Mei-Lin Lawson, Dr. Stephan Ogasawara. *Not pictured:* Dr. Alexandria King, Dr. Jade Heffern, Dr. Sara Fromboluti, and Dr. Melissa Carter.

earned a degree out of state, Higa decided to complete his HI-PIC internship in Kaua'i, the community where he was born and raised.

HI-PIC's support in the transition from trainee to professional is why Dr. Higa decided to stay for his postdoctoral internship. Kaua'i is also where he was able to reignite his passion for juvenile forensic psychology. He attributes the success of HI-PIC to retain providers in

Hawai'i to the program's unique ability to fit the individual needs of interns.

"I think the biggest gap that HI-PIC helped me bridge was during my internship where I was given opportunities to actually make clinical decisions and take full ownership of them," he said. "It was a significant step that made the transition from student to professional much less daunting."

Since its initial cohort of five interns, HI-PIC has expanded to training 10 interns a



“Through my work as a practicum supervisor for the graduate psychology programs in Hawai‘i, I am encouraged by the number of future providers joining our field as well as their passion for serving the Hawaiian community.”

Dr. Canaan Higa, Clinical Lead, Family Court Liaison Branch, Hale Ho'omalu Juvenile Detention Center

year across nine sites. This has resulted in 10 years of accreditation standing with the American Psychological Association (APA), the longest term recognized by the body. In that time, HI-PIC successfully trained 99 interns across four islands — O‘ahu, Hawai‘i Island, Maui, and Kaua‘i. After their first year of internship, more than half of students decide to stay to live and work in Hawai‘i, and just under half continue to stay in state during the second year after completion of the internship. In fact, of 14 faculty members of HI-PIC, nine are former interns like Dr. Higa, who now train and

educate the next generation of mental health professionals.

“Although the need is still there, I have been impressed with the quality and passion of the providers we have in our system and they do good work with their clients,” he said. “Through my work as a practicum supervisor for the graduate psychology programs in Hawai‘i, I am encouraged by the number of future providers joining our field as well as their passion for serving the Hawaiian community.”

WICHE COMMISSION *as of June 30, 2025*

ALASKA

Tom Begich*, Executive Director, Nick Begich Scholarship Intern Fund
Pearl Brower, President/CEO, Ukpiaġvik Iñupiat Corporation

Sean Parnell, Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage

ARIZONA

Kathleen Goeppinger*, President Emeritus, Midwestern University
Todd D. Haynie, President, Eastern Arizona College
Chad Sampson∞, Executive Director, Arizona Board of Regents

CALIFORNIA

Ellen Junn, President Emerita, California State University, Stanislaus
Robert Shireman*, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation
VACANCY

COLORADO

Jim Chavez, Executive Director, CCD Foundation & Governmental Affairs

Antwan Jefferson*

WICHE Immediate Past Chair, Associate Dean and Associate Teaching Professor, University of Colorado Denver

Angie Paccione, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

HAWAII

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Terrence George, President and CEO, Harold K. L. Castle Foundation
Colleen Sathre, Vice President Emerita, Policy and Planning, University of Hawai'i

IDAHO

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Matt Freeman*, Executive Director of Relations, Albion Center for Professional Development, Idaho State University

Joshua Whitworth∞, Executive Director, Office of Idaho State Board of Education

MONTANA

Maryrose Beasley, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Homestead Veterinary Service

Clayton Christian*, Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System

Llew Jones, Representative, Montana State Legislature

NEVADA

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Catherine (Cathy) Dinauer, Executive Director, Nevada State Board of Nursing

Fred Lokken*, Chair, Advocacy Committee, Instructional Technology Council, Truckee Meadows Community College

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Patricia Sullivan, Interim Director, Physical Sciences Laboratory, New Mexico State University

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Kyle Davison*, Senator, North Dakota Legislative Assembly

Brent Sanford∞, Interim Chancellor, North Dakota University System

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Hilda Rosselli, Educational Policy Consultant, Rosselli Consulting

Lisa Skari, President, Mt. Hood Community College

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Ashley Wenger-Slaba, Senior Vice President, Employee Experience, Education & Workforce Relations, Sanford Health

UTAH

Patricia Jones, CEO, Women's Leadership Institute

Geoffrey Landward, Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education

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Mike Meotti*, Executive Director, Washington Student Achievement Council

Gerry Pollet, Representative, Washington House of Representatives

WYOMING

Fred Baldwin*, Physician Associate

Joseph Schaffer, President, Laramie County Community College

Mike Smith, Vice President, Governmental Affairs and Community Engagement, University of Wyoming

U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Frankie M. Eliptico*, Vice President, Administration and Advancement, Northern Marianas College

Guam

Rodney J. Jacob, Partner, Calvo Jacob & Pangelinan

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Kalani Radford Kaneko, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senator, Majuro Atoll

* Executive Committee Member

∞ New Commissioner

OUR TEAM *as of June 30, 2025*

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

Jeanette Porter, Senior Administrative Coordinator

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Margo Colalancia, Director of Student Access Programs

Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator

Nick Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development

Onnika Hanson-White, Administrative Assistant III

Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation

Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director, Student Access Programs

Olivia Tufo, Manager, Community Engagement and Development

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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 Pluto, Interim Director, W-SARA

Melissa Sanders, Administrative Assistant III

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health

Jason Alves, Director of Veterans Initiatives

Genevieve Berry, Project Manager, MHTTC

Gina Brimner, Director of Special Projects

Madison Chamberlain, Fidelity Specialist

Kristy Crawford, Fidelity Specialist

Janell Daly, Senior Administrative Coordinator

Margie DeAnda, Project Coordinator – HI Recruitment

Karly Dickinson, Technical Assistance Lead

Madison Dupré, Administrative Assistant III

Nicole Eastin, Fidelity Specialist

Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead

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

Debra Kupfer, Senior Consultant

Andrew Martinez, Director of Operations

Camelia Naranjo, Veteran Initiatives Program Manager

Bobbi Perkins, Director, Mountain Plains ROTAC and Technical Expert Lead (RCORP)

Melissa Porphir, Fidelity Specialist

Annette Robertson, Fidelity Review Program Manager

Vanessa Roup, Technical Assistance Associate – RCORP/ROTAC
Flora Shirzadian, Data Specialist
Allison Treu, Fidelity Specialist
Ivory Tubbs, Technical Expert Lead (RCORP)

WCET – THE 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 Network
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

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Craig Milburn, Chief Financial Officer
Christine Chavez, Interim Accounting Specialist, (Temp)
Diane Haslett, Accountant I

COMMUNICATIONS

Melanie Sidwell, Vice President
Joseph Garcia, Senior Graphic Designer

HUMAN RESOURCES

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

IT SERVICES

Linc Nesheim, Chief Technology Officer
Chris Cartwright, IT Systems Administrator

87 Total Number of Employees

68 STANDARD EMPLOYEES

19 INTERNS AND POST-DOC FELLOWS

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

as of June 30, 2025

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Senator Shelley Hughes
Representative Justin Ruffridge
Representative Andi Story
Senator Löki Tobin

ARIZONA

VACANCY

CALIFORNIA

VACANCY

COLORADO

Representative Jennifer Bacon
Senator Dafna Michaelson Jenet

HAWAII

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett
Senator Michelle Kidani
Senator Donna Mercado Kim
Representative Lisa Kitagawa

IDAHO

Senator Kevin Cook
Representative Soñia Galavez
Representative Steve Miller
Senator Janie Ward-Engelking

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Representative Llew Jones*
Representative Paul Tuss

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Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui
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Senator Ann Millner*

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Representative Debra Entenman
Representative Mari Leavitt
Representative Gerry Pollet*
Representative Vandana Slatter

WYOMING

Representative Landon Brown
Senator Wendy Schuler
Representative Art Washut

U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

Senator Kalani R. Kaneko*
Senator Tina Rose Muña Barnes

*Denotes WICHE Commissioner

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

In FY 2025, WICHE had an annual operating budget of nearly \$20.7 million. Beyond that, WICHE paid out more than \$15 million in Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) fees that is passed from our states and territories on to participating institutions which support students pursuing careers in 10 high-demand health fields, especially in underserved rural areas of the West. Annual dues for FY 2025 were \$169,000 per participating state.*

FY 2025 Operating Revenue Total \$20,691,708

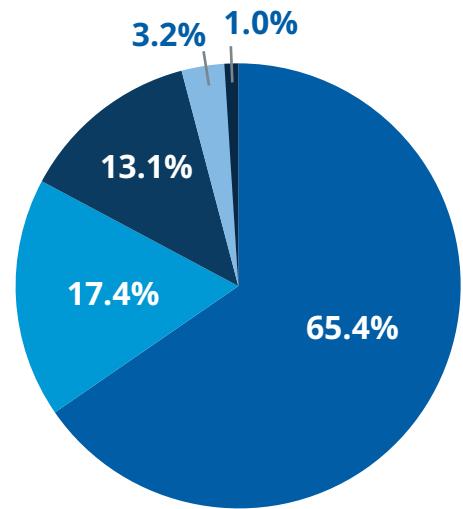
GRANTS AND CONTRACTS \$13,529,722 / **65.4%**

INSTITUTIONAL DUES AND FEES \$3,591,931 / **17.4%**

WICHE DUES AND OPERATIONS \$2,704,000 / **13.1%**

REGISTRATION FEES AND OTHER INCOME \$665,055 / **3.2%**

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH MEMBERSHIP \$201,000 / **1.0%**



FY 2025 Operating Expense Total \$19,601,976

BEHAVIORAL MENTAL HEALTH \$8,945,696 / **45.6%**

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES \$4,943,664 / **25.2%**

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH \$1,670,733 / **8.5%**

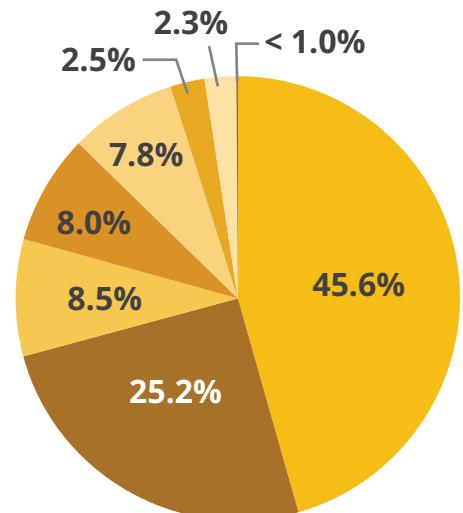
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS \$1,571,213 / **8.0%**

SELF-SUPPORTING SERVICES \$1,534,956 / **7.8%**

STUDENT EXCHANGE \$481,851 / **2.5%**

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES \$449,969 / **2.3%**

SUPPORTING SERVICES (ADMINISTRATIVE) \$3,894 / **< 1.0%**

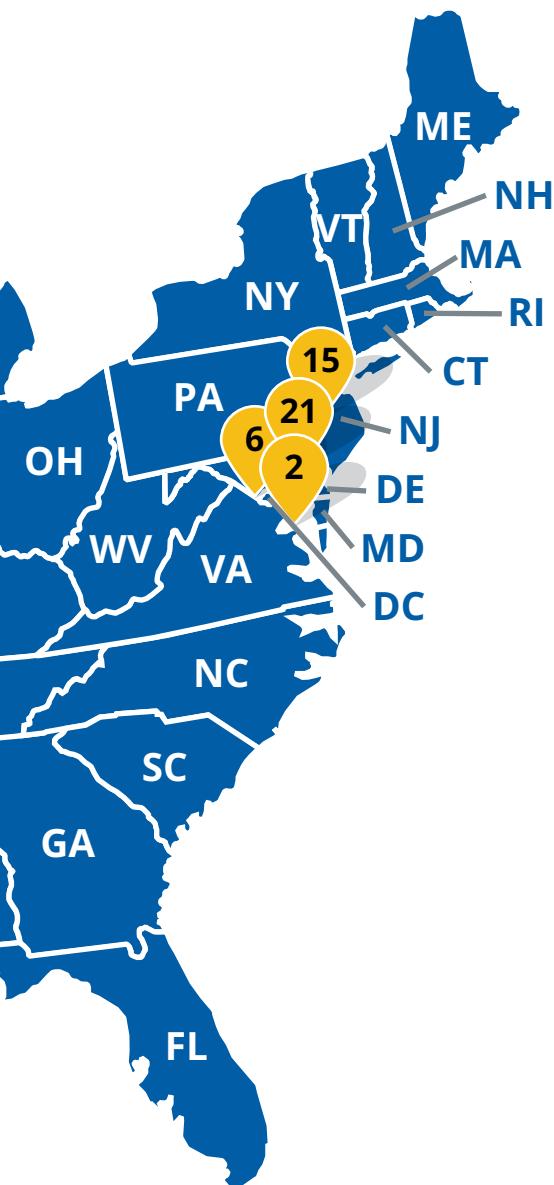


*And the shared membership of the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States

EXPERTISE IN MOTION

During fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025), WICHE staff shared their expertise and analyses with partners across the West and beyond — here are just a few of the places and people we visited. If you are interested in learning how one of our experts can speak to your organization or event, email info@wiche.edu.





1. **Aurora, CO** — Colorado Community College System AI Forum
2. **National Harbor, MD** — Council of College and Military Educators Annual Symposium
3. **Anchorage, AK** — Behavioral Health Oversight Council Annual Meeting *and* Annual National Association for Rural Mental Health Conference
4. **Gunnison, CO** — Western Colorado University Board Retreat
5. **Boulder, CO** — Japan State Authorization Research Delegation *and* SAN-U Implementation Workshop
6. **Washington, D.C.** — The Jed Foundation Youth Mental Health Policy Summit *and* American Council on Education National Meeting
7. **Milwaukee, WI** — National Conference of State Legislatures Nondegree Credentials State Policy Seminar
8. **Laramie, WY** — Laramie County Community College President's Advisory Board Meeting
9. **Albuquerque, NM** — Central New Mexico College Panel Discussion
10. **Denver, CO** — Adams State University Board Meeting *and* Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting
11. **Santa Fe, NM** — New Mexico Senate Education Committee Meeting
12. **Henderson, NV** — Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents Meeting
13. **Reno, NV** — Western Academic Leadership Forum *and* Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders Meeting
14. **San Antonio, TX** — National Federation of Municipal Analysts
15. **Philadelphia, PA** — National Conference of State Legislatures Budget Meeting

(Continued on next page)

16. Orem, UT — Utah System of Higher Education Prior Learning Assessment Summit

17. Honolulu, HI — HI-PIC Quarterly Training Committee Meeting *and* November 2024 WICHE Commission Meeting

18. Bismarck, ND — North Dakota Legislative Organization Session

19. Bozeman, MT — WICHE's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council Meeting

20. Boise, ID — OERwest Network Convening

21. Baltimore, MD — Lumina State Policy Retreat

22. Redondo Beach, CA — Technical Advisory Committee Meeting and Collaboration Conference

23. Olympia, WA — Washington Enrollment Convening (virtual)

24. Litchfield Park, AZ — Midwestern University Board of Trustees Retreat

25. Helena, MT — MDRC Rural Regional Roundtable

26. Madison, SD — WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities Site Visit

27. Grand Forks, ND — WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities Site Visit

28. Eugene, OR — National Association of State Head Injury Administrators Conference

29. San Juan, PR — American Association of Colleges and Universities Conference on Learning and Student Success

30. Park City, UT — May 2025 WICHE Commission Meeting

THANK YOU

PARTNERS

Academic Search
Achieving the Dream
Active Minds
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Psychiatric Institute
Anthology
Association of Chief Academic Officers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Beyond Campus
BibliU
Bismarck State College
Brigham Young University
Brown Book Software
California State University, Officer of the Chancellor
Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education
Center for Mental Health Implementation Science, UT-Austin
ClassLink
Community College of Aurora
CORA Learning
Council of Chairs of Training Committees, American Psychological Association
D2L
Digital Promise
EDUCAUSE
GEGI
Global Leadership Exchange
The Hardy Group

Healthy Minds Research Network
Higher Education Licensure Pros
Higher Learning Commission
Hispanic Educational Technology Services
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, UT-Austin
Honorlock
iDesign
Innovative Educators
Intentional Futures
JBS International
The Jed Foundation
LearningMate
Michigan State University
Midwestern Higher Education Compact
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
NASMHPD Research Institute
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements
National Rural Health Association
National Student Clearinghouse
New England Board of Higher Education
Online Learning Consortium
Pacific Behavioral Health Collaboration Council

Parchment
Phil Hill & Associates
Quality Education for Minorities
Resilient Futures
Risepoint
Southern Regional Education Board
Sophia Learning LLC
Straighterline
Truckee Meadows Community College
Tyton Partners
University of Alaska – Center for Alaska Native Health Research
University of Arizona
University of Florida
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of North Dakota – College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)
VISN 19 Rocky Mountain MIRECC

FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

Academic Search
Alaska Division of Behavioral Health
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Psychiatric Institute
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
Ascendium Education Group
Cambridge International
College Board
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration

Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
ed2go
ECMC Foundation
Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands – Department of Human Services
Federated States of Micronesia – Behavioral Health and Wellness
Gates Foundation
Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center
Hawai'i Department of Education
Hawai'i Department of Health
Hawai'i Department of Public Safety
Higher Education Equity Network
Hurix Digital
Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
Lakefield Veterinary Group
Lumina Foundation
MDRC
Mellon Foundation
Merck Animal Health
Mercy Care Arizona
Midwestern University College of Veterinary Medicine
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Disabilities Division
Montana Veterinary Medical Association
MWI Animal Health

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Institutes of Health – National Institute of Mental Health

National Institutes of Health – Native American Research Centers for Health

New Mexico Health Care Authority – Behavioral Health Services Division

North Dakota Division of Behavioral Health

Northern Navajo Medical Center – New Mexico

Oregon Health Authority

Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Republic of Palau – Division of Behavioral Health

Saipan (Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation)

Sanford Health North Dakota

State of Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health

State of Utah, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health

Southern Utah University

University of North Dakota, School of Medicine & Health Sciences

University of South Dakota, Department of Psychology

University of Wisconsin, Madison

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources Administration

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Washington State Health Care Authority

Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Wyoming Community College Commission

Wyoming Department of Health

WICHE COMMISSION SNAPSHOTS FY 2025



November 2024, Honolulu, Hawai'i



May 2025, Park City, Utah



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