



COMMISSION MEETING

May 18-19, 2026 | Seattle, Washington

AGENDA AND MEETING RESOURCES

A panoramic view of the Seattle skyline at dusk. The Space Needle is prominent on the left, and Mount Rainier is visible in the background under a purple and blue sky. The foreground shows green trees and a building with a red roof.

**Building Capacity for the Future:
Transforming Challenges Into Action for the West**

WICHE COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

Building Capacity for the Future: Transforming Challenges Into Action for the West

May 18-19, 2026 (May 17 – New Commissioner Orientation and Certifying Officers Meeting)
The Westin Seattle | 1900 5th Avenue, Seattle, Washington

Sunday, May 17, 2026

Noon <i>Puget Sound</i> <i>Lobby Level</i>	Optional Lunch for New Commissioners and WICHE Staff	
1:00 – 5:00 p.m. <i>St. Helens</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i>	Certifying Officers Meeting	
1:00 – 4:00 p.m. <i>Olympic</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i>	New Commissioner Orientation	
5:40 p.m. <i>Meet in Hotel Lobby</i> <i>(depart at 5:45 p.m.)</i>	Dinner for New Commissioners New Commissioners, WICHE Commission Officers, and the Senior Leadership Team are invited to dinner at Cutters Crabhouse.	
5:40 p.m. <i>Meet in Hotel Lobby</i>	Dinner for Certifying Officers Certifying Officers and the Programs and Services staff are invited to dinner at Place Pigalle.	

Monday, May 18, 2026

7:00 – 9:00 a.m. <i>Puget Sound</i> <i>Lobby Level</i>	Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests	
7:45 – 8:45 a.m. <i>St. Helens</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i>	Executive Committee Meeting (Open and Closed Sessions)	1-1

<p>9:00 – 9:15 a.m. <i>Cascade Ballroom</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair</p>	<p>2-1</p>
<p>9:15 – 10:30 a.m. <i>Cascade Ballroom</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Plenary Session I – Federal Policy Shifts: What Western States and the Pacific Islands Need to Know for 2026 and Beyond</p> <p>Facilitator Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emmanuel Guillory, Senior Director, Division of Government Relations, American Council on Education (ACE) • Jim Hermes, Associate Vice President, Government Relations, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 	<p>3-1</p>
<p>10:30 – 10:45 a.m.</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Connect with WICHE</p> <p>Commissioners are invited to join WICHE staff for informal table conversations featuring recent projects, publications, and emerging areas of work. These discussions offer an opportunity to learn more about current initiatives, ask questions, and share perspectives. Staff will be available in the Cascade Ballroom during breaks and before and after scheduled sessions.</p>	
<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.</i></p>		
<p>10:45 a.m. – Noon <i>St. Helens</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Roundtable 1 – Workforce Pell in Practice: Strategies for Implementation</p> <p>Facilitator Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p>	<p>4-1</p>
<p>10:45 a.m. – Noon <i>Olympic</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Roundtable 2 – Value of the Degree: Beyond Employment Outcomes</p> <p>Facilitator Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • José Cabrales, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) • Timothy Nadreau, Principal, Recon Insight Group • Louisa Woodhouse, Senior Associate, Policy and Advocacy, National College Attainment Network (NCAN) 	<p>4-1</p>

<p>Noon – 1:15 p.m. <i>Puget Sound</i> <i>Lobby Level</i></p>	<p>Networking Lunch</p>	
<p>1:15 – 2:30 p.m. <i>St. Helens</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Programs and Services Committee Meeting</p>	<p>5-1</p>
<p>1:15 – 2:30 p.m. <i>Olympic</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting</p>	<p>6-1</p>
<p>2:30 – 2:45 p.m.</p>	<p>Break</p>	
<p>2:45 – 4:00 p.m. <i>Cascade Ballroom</i> <i>Mezzanine Level</i></p>	<p>Plenary Session II – Navigating Healthcare Workforce Shortages: Competition, Capacity, and the Road Ahead</p> <p>Facilitator Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair, and Professor Emeritus and Visiting Professor of Nursing, University of New Mexico Health Sciences College of Nursing</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Boerner, Project Director, NEXus • Janessa Graves, Director, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, Idaho (WWAMI) Rural Health Research Center (RHRC) • Lilian Montoya, President and CEO, CHRISTUS St. Vincent Health System 	<p>7-1</p>
<p>4:00 – 4:15 p.m.</p>	<p>Commission Group Photo (Location Announced Onsite)</p>	
<p>5:15 – 8:30 p.m. <i>Meet in the Hotel Lobby to depart at 5:15 p.m. for the Seattle Center Monorail.</i></p>	<p>Reception and Dinner at the Space Needle</p> <p>Transportation to the Space Needle will be via the Seattle Center Monorail.</p> <p>The evening begins at the Space Needle’s observation deck, where guests can experience the rotating glass floor and take in panoramic, 360 degree views of Seattle and the surrounding region. After exploring the deck, the group will enjoy a private reception and dinner in the Puget Sound / Lake Union Room, featuring views of Lake Union and the Seattle skyline.</p>	<p>8-1</p>

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

7:00 – 8:30 a.m.

Puget Sound
Lobby Level

Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

Delegations will caucus during breakfast to discuss the Committee of the Whole – Action Items

The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions aimed at providing Commissioners with the opportunity to leverage various perspectives to explore relevant topics aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities.

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Vashon
One floor up from
Mezzanine Level

Roundtable 3 – Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Aligning Learning with the Future of Work 9-1

Facilitator

Commissioner John Carmichael (WA), President, The Evergreen State College

Panelist

- Colleen Kerr, Assistant General Counsel, AI Economy Institute, Microsoft AI for Good Lab
- Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV), Professor, Truckee Meadows Community College

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Olympic
Mezzanine Level

Roundtable 4 – Dual and Concurrent Enrollment: State Approaches and Takeaways 9-2

Facilitator

Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Panelists

- Commissioner JB Holston (CO), Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Commissioner Joseph Schaffer (WY), President, Laramie County Community College

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Break

10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Cascade Ballroom
Mezzanine Level

Committee of the Whole – Business Session 10-1

11:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Cascade Ballroom
Mezzanine Level

Closing Remarks

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, May 18, 2026

7:45 – 8:45 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 7:45 – 8:45 a.m. | *St. Helens, Mezzanine Level*

Committee Members

Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair

Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past 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)

Michael Meotti (WA)

Fred Baldwin (WY)

Agenda (Open)

 **Approval of March 31, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes** 1-2

Other Business

Agenda (Closed)

 **Review of the President's Performance in FY 2026 and Adoption of the FY 2027 Performance Objectives** 1-9

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the March 31, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Ann Millner (UT), Chair
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair
Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID), *proxy for Jennifer White*
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Mike Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Jennifer White (ID)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and Administration
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and Vice President, Digital Learning
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and the Commission
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA
Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President, Communications

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Laura Ewing called the roll and a quorum was confirmed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 26, 2026, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Millner requested corrections to the minutes of the February 26, 2026, Executive Committee meeting. There were no corrections requested. The minutes were approved.

Discussion Item

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE WICHE BYLAWS

During the February 26, 2026, Executive Committee meeting, amendments to the WICHE Bylaws were discussed to incorporate changes to the descriptions of the Commission committees. The Executive Committee requested that President Demarée Michelau prepare a redlined version of the Bylaws incorporating the proposed committee changes and send it to the Commission for review prior to the May 2026 meeting, at which the Commission would consider the proposal for approval. A redlined version was distributed to Commissioners on March 18, 2026, with the Call to the May 2026 Commission Meeting as required by the Bylaws. Chair Millner invited feedback on the proposed changes. Hearing none, she confirmed that the redlined version will move forward for a vote at the May 2026 Commission Meeting.

Discussion Item

FY 2027 WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT: REFRESHING WICHE'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

President Michelau outlined updated descriptions of WICHE's five strategic priorities for inclusion in the annual Workplan. Each May, the Commission approves the Workplan for the upcoming fiscal year, which details the strategic priorities and the organization's planned activities. At the May 2026 meeting, the Commission will vote on the FY 2027 Workplan, effective July 1, 2026. If approved, the Workplan will include revised strategic priority descriptions that reflect Commission feedback, recent listening sessions, and emerging regional needs.

Discussion Item

BUDGET UPDATE

Ashley Clark reported that the revenues and expenditures were generally tracking with the adopted FY 2026 budget. There were higher-than-expected interest earnings and, while some category-level variations remained, they did not affect the overall financial outlook. Staff were refining year-end forecasts and developing the preliminary FY 2027 budget, which was expected to be balanced when presented to the Commission in May 2026.

President Michelau gave a report on several new grants and contracts for the upcoming fiscal year:

- ▶ The Gates Foundation awarded two grants to support Every Learner Everywhere, including a \$2.7 million reinvestment grant focused on artificial intelligence and an anticipated grant of nearly \$5 million to lead the Courseware Beacon Implementation Program.

- ▶ The Jed Foundation and Lumina Foundation awarded WICHE \$150,000 to host a convening on campus behavioral health, which is expected to take place in June 2026 in Utah.
- ▶ Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) awarded WICHE approximately \$542,000 to further support and expand behavioral health initiatives conducted in partnership with AHCCCS.

President Michelau reported her intention to recommend a 3.5% salary pool for staff salary increases when the Commission considers the Action Item at the May 2026 Commission Meeting, as well as a 3% increase in WICHE annual dues.

Discussion Item

MAY 2026 COMMISSION MEETING UPDATE AND AGENDA REVIEW

Chair Millner provided remarks on the draft agenda for the May 2026 Commission Meeting and invited feedback from the committee. Members expressed appreciation for the inclusion of the artificial intelligence roundtable session. President Michelau thanked the Washington delegation for its contributions to the session's development. No additional feedback was offered.

Information Item

PROPOSED WICHE POLICY FOR INFORMATION REQUESTS PERTAINING TO STATE LEGISLATION

President Michelau gave an update on the proposed policy regarding information requests related to state legislation. The Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee and the Executive Committee have reviewed the draft of the updated policy several times, and staff have incorporated feedback from both committees. Commissioner feedback has continued to refine the draft, with committee members offering additional suggestions during each review. Further discussion is needed during the PAR Committee meeting in May 2026 before finalizing the proposal for approval.

During the committee discussion, a Commissioner recommended distinguishing between general information requests — such as data or policy inquiries — and requests related to WICHE's role in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement due to WICHE's formal regulatory role in the agreement. The Commissioner emphasized that regulatory bodies typically follow more structured and constrained processes when responding to inquiries that could relate to future regulatory actions or interpretations. As a result, the Commissioner recommended different approaches for responding to SARA-related requests, which may need to be more clearly defined than those for general information requests and would benefit from greater transparency.

President Michelau clarified a few details about the information request policy that is in development:

- ▶ A reminder that the proposed policy relates to information requests pertaining to state legislation.
- ▶ WICHE staff are working on a revised policy that will be presented to the PAR Committee and the Commission at the May 2026 meeting.

Action Item

APPROVAL TO PARTNER WITH THE NEVADA OFFICE OF WICHE TO LAUNCH THE NEVADA IN-STATE PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP) EXPANSION PILOT

Staff presented an action item proposing a partnership between WICHE and the Nevada Office of WICHE to launch an in-state PSEP expansion pilot program for Nevada residents in occupational therapy, physical therapy, and physician assistant programs. The pilot, planned for FY 2028 and 2029, would allow the state to provide financial assistance to support in-state students in these high-demand health fields and help address statewide workforce shortages and affordability concerns. The initiative would model the existing PSEP structure and apply to Nevada residents enrolled in programs at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). WICHE staff would evaluate the outcomes after each pilot is completed. The pilot aligns with WICHE's mission to expand educational access and strengthen the regional workforce.

During discussion, several Commissioners sought and received clarification on the structure of the pilot, its relationship to the existing PSEP model, eligibility parameters, and the rationale for limiting participation to Nevada residents enrolled in specific in-state programs.

Commissioner David Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE the partnership with the Nevada office of WICHE to launch the Nevada in-state PSEP expansion pilot in FY 2028 and 2029. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. The motion passed with one abstention.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF SUPPORT FOR ADVANCE CTE'S THE CONNECTED PATH: A SHARED VISION FOR OPPORTUNITY AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CTE (CTE CONNECTS)

Christina Sedney presented a proposal for WICHE to sign on as a supporter of "Career Technical Education (CTE) Without Limits 2026," the national vision developed by Advance CTE. Advance CTE periodically brings together states and stakeholders to develop strategic visions that strengthen alignment between education and workforce needs; WICHE previously supported the 2021 vision. Sedney noted that the 2026 vision emphasizes stronger connections across education sectors, employers, and the workforce.

All WICHE states and Guam participated in the 2021 vision and principle development project. Sedney confirmed that the 2026 vision project aligns with WICHE’s mission. Signing on as a supporter would involve a minimal commitment: adding WICHE’s name to the list of supporters, issuing a brief statement, and promoting the vision through social media. Sedney also highlighted the value of WICHE’s growing partnership with Advance CTE, particularly in areas related to short-term credentials, Workforce Pell, and Perkins funding.

A Commissioner observed that the vision work could possibly further address connections between secondary and postsecondary CTE and recommended passing that feedback along to Advance CTE.

Commissioner Fred Baldwin MOVED TO APPROVE signing on as a supporter of the CTE Without Limits 2026. Vice Chair Frankie Eliptico SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF ALASKA’S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT

Molly Hall-Martin presented the details of Alaska’s State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Alaska has eight participating institutions: four public, two private/not-for-profit, and two for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Alaska’s SARA institutions enrolled 1,218 distance education students, and 7,338 students located in Alaska were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA-member states/territories. There were no changes to Alaska’s authorizing statutes, nor were there changes to the agency that serves as the Alaska State Portal Entity (SPE). The state reported no SARA qualifying complaints during the renewal period. No institutions were placed on provisional status or denied renewal. No institutions are on heightened cash monitoring. No institutions underwent a change of ownership, and there were no closures. W-SARA staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) deemed Alaska to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

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

Action Item

APPROVAL OF HAWAII’S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT

Hall-Martin presented the details of Hawaii’s State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Hawaii has 16 participating institutions: 10 public, four private/

not-for-profit, and two for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (Fall 2024), Hawai'i's SARA institutions enrolled 2,023 distance education students, and 10,619 students located in Hawai'i were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. There were no changes to Hawai'i's authorizing statutes, nor were there any changes to the agency that serves as the Hawai'i State Portal Entity (SPE). The state reported no SARA qualifying complaints during the renewal period. No institutions were placed on provisional status or denied renewal. No institutions are on heightened cash monitoring. No institutions underwent a change of ownership, and there were no closures. W-SARA staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) deemed Hawai'i to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Commissioner Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE Hawai'i's SARA renewal application. Vice Chair Eliptico SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF NEVADA'S RENEWAL APPLICATION TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT

Hall-Martin presented the details of Nevada's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Nevada has 11 participating institutions: seven public, two private/not-for-profit, and two for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Nevada's SARA institutions enrolled 839 distance education students through SARA, and 25,137 students located in Nevada were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. There were no changes to Nevada's authorizing statutes, nor were there any changes to the agency that serves as the Nevada State Portal Entity (SPE). The state reported no SARA qualifying complaints during the renewal period. No institutions were placed on provisional status. There were no institutions on heightened cash monitoring. No institutions were denied renewal. No institutions underwent a change of ownership, and there were no closures. One institution was placed on provisional status due to a low Financial Responsibility Composite Score (FRCS). W-SARA staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) deemed Nevada to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

There was discussion about Las Vegas College and the FRCS during the renewal period. Hall-Martin explained that the institution initially received a 0.9 composite financial score during its renewal period, triggering a 90-day window to submit an updated score to remain eligible for SARA participation. The institution's revised documentation was delayed due to a U.S. Department of Education staffing reduction that created processing backlogs. Las Vegas College has since received an updated composite score of 1.9, confirming full compliance and the Nevada SPE has updated its records accordingly.

Commissioner Lokken MOVED TO APPROVE Nevada's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Baldwin SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with two abstentions.

Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

Adjournment

Chair Millner adjourned the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Review of the President’s Performance in FY 2026 and Adoption of the FY 2027 Performance Objectives

Proposed President FY 2027 Goals and Objectives

The following performance objectives for the WICHE President are proposed for FY 2027. They are intended to build upon the foundation of the president’s goals, objectives, and performance from FY 2026.

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

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1: REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Goal: Ensure WICHE is recognized as a trusted, responsive partner of the WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, strengthening alignment on regional priorities and confidence in WICHE’s value.

Objectives

1. Build on the themes already synthesized from Commissioner listening sessions, and continue to gather insights through ongoing stakeholder engagement, using a clear prioritization approach and informed judgment to identify where WICHE can make the greatest regional impact, including near-term and longer-term opportunities.
2. Conduct official visits or participate in WICHE-relevant engagements in at least six WICHE states, territories, and freely associated states, using insights gathered to inform WICHE priorities and follow-through.
3. Represent WICHE in national and regional higher education conversations to elevate the West’s priorities and strengthen WICHE’s influence, partnerships, and opportunities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2: PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND IMPACT

Goal: Ensure WICHE’s full portfolio remains relevant and forward-looking, demonstrating value to states and Pacific Island jurisdictions by strengthening Student Access Programs and higher education leadership development in support of student access and regional workforce needs.

Objectives

1. Conduct a review of WICHE networks and governance or advisory structures to ensure they are aligned with Commission governance responsibilities and authority, including clarity of purpose, scope, membership, and decision-making roles (e.g., the Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council and Behavioral Health Advisory Council).
2. Advance a philanthropic and partner engagement strategy by engaging at least three prospective or current partners and strengthening the conditions for investment in WICHE’s priorities.
3. Working with partners, position the State Higher Education Policy Center as a leading hub for higher education leadership development, strengthening WICHE’s role as a convener and collaborator for academic leaders and other key audiences (e.g., legislators, state higher education executive officers, and system leaders).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3: POLICY AND RESEARCH SUPPORT

Goal: Provide high-quality policy analysis, research, and technical assistance to WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, including timely monitoring and communication of federal developments as conditions rapidly evolve so that leaders can make well-informed decisions.

Objectives

1. Strengthen and sustain technical assistance capacity to meet priority state and interstate needs, particularly in higher education and behavioral health, by aligning expertise, products, and service models to commissioner priorities.
2. Serve as a convener for WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions on priority issues, creating opportunities for peer learning, shared problem-solving, and rapid information exchange as policy and operating conditions evolve.
3. Ensure strong governance and operational excellence for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) in the WICHE region, including effective implementation, management, oversight, and risk mitigation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4: INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Goal: Administer WICHE operations with strong stewardship to sustain organizational health, including a high-performing team, sound internal controls, and the capacity to deliver on WICHE's mission.

Objectives

1. Maintain a balanced budget for FY 2027 and strengthen long-term financial stewardship through prudent fiscal management, including a sustainable approach to modest merit-based salary increases.
2. Promote a high-performing, mission-driven culture by supporting staff engagement, clear communication, and professional development to sustain productivity and professionalism.
3. Advance operational excellence through continuous improvement that strengthens cross-team coordination, service standards, and internal systems, including attention to succession planning and documenting core processes to support continuity and resilience.
4. Prepare for and complete the annual financial audit with strong internal controls and timely financial reporting, resulting in no material weaknesses (or other significant audit issues).

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Monday, May 18, 2026

9:00 – 9:15 a.m.

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 9:00 – 9:15 a.m. | *Cascade Ballroom, Mezzanine Level*

Opening Remarks

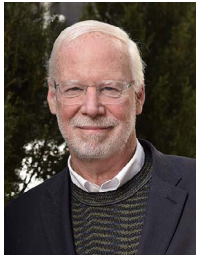
Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair
Demarée Michelau, President

Land Acknowledgment

Introduction of New Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

2-2

NEW COMMISSIONERS



JB Holston (CO), Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

JB Holston was appointed executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education by Gov. Jared Polis, assuming the role in January 2026. Holston is a business, civic, and higher education leader with more than 30 years of experience spanning entrepreneurship, public policy media, and

innovation.

Before joining the department, Holston served as dean of the Daniel Felix Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Denver, where he focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration. His career also includes senior leadership roles in the private sector, including executive positions at media and technology companies, as well as chief executive officer of the Greater Washington Partnership, a regional economic development organization.

In Colorado, Holston has been a key figure in the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem. He was the founding executive director of Blackstone Entrepreneurs Network and a co-founder of several civic initiatives, including the Colorado Media Project and the Colorado Mass Timber Coalition. His work has emphasized inclusive growth, innovation, and talent development.

Holston holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University.

Plenary Session I

Federal Policy Shifts: What Western States and the Pacific Islands Need to Know for 2026 and Beyond

Monday, May 18, 2026

9:15 – 10:30 a.m.

PLENARY SESSION I

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 9:15 – 10:30 a.m. | Cascade Ballroom, Mezzanine Level

Federal Policy Shifts: What Western States and the Pacific Islands Need to Know for 2026 and Beyond

Federal policy shifts in 2026 are reshaping not only higher education but also the broader set of federal programs and partnerships that Western states and the Pacific Islands rely on to build and sustain their workforce. The federal landscape is shifting rapidly, with implications for how states, systems, and institutions plan, budget, and serve learners.

This session will highlight key developments related to affordability and student aid (including updates affecting Pell and loan programs), accountability and accreditation, and the rollout of Workforce Pell, each of which will influence program design, financial aid strategy, and state oversight. The discussion will also touch on changes affecting research and innovation funding, public-institution finances, and international enrollment that may be particularly significant for public research institutions, rural campuses, and remote communities across the region.

In addition, attendees will receive an overview of how federal agencies are realigning priorities and responsibilities through structural changes and new interagency agreements. These shifts may alter how states and institutions coordinate with federal partners on program oversight, data exchange, workforce alignment, and institutional compliance, creating both operational challenges and opportunities for engagement.

This plenary session will provide Commissioners with an actionable briefing on federal higher education policy, drawing on perspectives from both four- and two-year institutions. It will focus on the changes most likely to affect Western states and the Pacific Island jurisdictions, spanning postsecondary systems, workforce development, rural and remote communities, and opportunities for state leadership during a period of federal transition.

FACILITATOR

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

PANELISTS

Emmanuel Guillory, Senior Director, Division of Government Relations, American Council on Education (ACE)

James Hermes, Associate Vice President, Government Relations, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair and 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, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, School

Security Task Force, and 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 the 2026 chair of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Education Commission of the States (ECS) member, ExcelsEd Policy Leaders Network member, and chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures (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 2002-12. Under Millner's leadership, Weber State University expanded into a multicampus 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.

Panelists



Emmanuel Guillory, Senior Director, Division of Government Relations, American Council on Education (ACE)

Emmanuel A. Guillory is the senior director of government relations at the American Council on Education (ACE) where he manages an extensive portfolio of legislative and regulatory issues as a primary government relations resource for the broader higher education community to the U.S. Congress, the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, and other agencies. Issues within his portfolio include the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), particularly Title IV programs, and the budget and appropriations process, among many others. Guillory previously served as the director of student and institutional aid policy at the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), the director for public policy and government affairs at United Negro College Fund, Inc. (UNCF), and a staff member in the House of Representatives, most recently with the Committee on Education and the Workforce. He is an accomplished policy expert, advocate, and lecturer, with numerous honors and speaking engagements to his name. Guillory earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Texas A&M University, a master's degree in college student personnel from Bowling Green State University, and a doctorate in higher education management from the University of Pennsylvania.



James Hermes, Associate Vice President, Government Relations, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

James Hermes is the associate vice president of government relations with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) where he has been since 1999. AACC is the premier national organization representing the interests of community colleges, counting over 80% of the nation's community colleges as its members. The legislative issues Hermes covers include workforce development and vocational education, higher education, technology policy, international education, and Veterans' education. Before joining AACC, he served as a legislative representative with People for the American Way. Hermes is a graduate of George Washington University Law School and Dartmouth College.

Roundtable Discussions Session I

Monday, May 18, 2026

10:45 a.m. – Noon

Roundtable 1

*Workforce Pell in Practice: Strategies
for Implementation*

Roundtable 2

*Value of the Degree: Beyond
Employment Outcomes*

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION I

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 10:45 a.m. – Noon

Roundtable 1 – Workforce Pell in Practice: Strategies for Implementation

(ACCESS & SUCCESS; WORKFORCE & SOCIETY) | *St. Helens, Mezzanine Level*

States and territories across the West are beginning to translate Workforce Pell from federal policy into operational reality. This roundtable offers Commissioners a hands-on opportunity to examine the initial steps states are taking, including authorizing programs, aligning funding, defining accountability expectations, sequencing implementation tasks, and communicating clearly with institutions and learners.

Participants will compare emerging timelines and decision points and explore how states and territories are addressing quality standards, data requirements, and coordination with existing state aid programs. Commissioners are encouraged to come prepared with a high-level understanding of their state's early implementation efforts. Designed as a facilitated, interactive discussion, this session will help Western leaders assess where their state and territory stands, surface shared challenges, and identify practical strategies to support institutions and systems as Workforce Pell moves toward implementation.

FACILITATOR

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Roundtable 2 – Value of the Degree: Beyond Employment Outcomes

(ACCESS & SUCCESS; WORKFORCE & SOCIETY; VALUE & ACCOUNTABILITY) |

Olympic, Mezzanine Level

In today's environment, Western states, territories, and institutions need clear, credible ways to communicate and demonstrate the value of postsecondary education and to shift the narrative from cost and controversy to outcomes and impact. Western higher education delivers value for learners, communities, and economies, but leaders need stronger, shared tools to make that value visible and compelling to the public and policymakers.

This roundtable will draw from state profiles created by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) and researched by Timothy Nadreau, Ph.D., which estimate the economic benefit of producing additional postsecondary graduates in each state. Using this work as a foundation, attendees will share ideas for how the profiles could be updated and tailored for the West, including what to refresh in the underlying data and assumptions, what additional context or indicators might strengthen the story, and how to present the information in ways that resonate across diverse Western communities.

The conversation will also feature insights from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), which advances multiple approaches to demonstrating the value of public higher education — including, for example, leveraging alumni data to highlight economic mobility, career satisfaction, and social impact. Designed as a problem-solving discussion, the session will help Commissioners identify practical options to strengthen value messaging and develop next-step ideas for updating the NCAN profiles to better support Western decision-making and communications.

FACILITATOR

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

PANELISTS

José Cabrales, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

Timothy Nadreau, Principal, Recon Insight Group

Louisa Woodhouse, Senior Associate, Policy and Advocacy, National College Attainment Network (NCAN)

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 1

FACILITATOR



Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

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

Roundtable 2

FACILITATOR



Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

Demarée K. Michelau is the President of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Located in Boulder, Colorado, WICHE was established through the Western Regional Education Compact and works to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of society's most pressing needs. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping the region leverage their technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy. As WICHE's President, Michelau serves as the chief executive officer of the organization and at the pleasure of the WICHE Commission. Prior to serving as WICHE's president, Michelau was WICHE's Vice President of the Policy Analysis and Research unit and oversaw externally funded projects. The author of numerous reports and policy briefs, she has experience in a variety of higher education policy issues, including those related to equity and attainment, governance, strategic planning, adult learners, transfer, accelerated learning options, affordability, and workforce. She currently serves on the board of directors for the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Previously, she held

positions with the National Conference of State Legislatures and with former Colorado Congressman David Skaggs. Michelau received her bachelor's degree in public law from Northern Illinois University and master's and doctoral degrees in political science from the University of Colorado Boulder.

PANELISTS



José Cabrales, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

José A. Cabrales is the vice president and chief operating officer at American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), where he oversees the operations of the office of the president, human resources, research, and membership services. He also serves as the secretary for the AASCU board of directors. In addition to his current role, Cabrales has previously overseen AASCU Consulting and served as the senior director of student success programs and operations, where he provided strategic vision, leadership, and support for developing and building a plan to launch a student success strategy.

Before joining AASCU, Cabrales was a senior associate for higher education practice at The Education Trust and a program manager for community engagement at *Excelencia* in Education. He brings over 20 years of professional experience in higher education, nonprofit, advocacy, and association management.



Timothy Nadreau, Principal, Recon Insight Group

Timothy Nadreau, Ph.D., is the principal of Recon Insight Group LLC. During the academic year, Nadreau serves as an assistant professor at the University of Idaho and an adjunct professor at Washington State University's IMPACT Center. He is the managing editor of *Washington Agribusiness: Status and Outlook*, where he co-authors the "Macroeconomic Outlook" article. He was an instructor and curriculum designer in NYU's School of Professional Sciences, led a team of consultants at Economic Modeling Specialists Int. (now Lightcast) where he conducted impact and investment analysis, provided expert witness testimony, and established quality control metrics for the company. Nadreau received a bachelor's degree in theoretical mathematics from the University of Idaho, as well as a master's degree in agricultural and applied economics, where he was awarded the Iddings fellowship for his work on optimal public investments. In 2018, he earned a doctorate from Washington State University, focusing on economic development strategies and improved impact and general equilibrium analyses. Nadreau consults on a range of regional economic policy initiatives. He has completed studies on everything from Native American wines to electricity transmission infrastructure to housing affordability studies. Human capital development remains his primary research focus.



Louisa Woodhouse, Senior Associate, Policy and Advocacy, National College Attainment Network (NCAN)

As a senior associate on the Policy and Advocacy team, Louisa Woodhouse supports the development and advancement of the National College Attainment Network's (NCAN) policy priorities through advocacy, research, and relationship-building. She collaborates with a national network of stakeholders to advocate for policies and funding that improve college affordability and promote postsecondary attainment, with a particular focus on strengthening state and federal investments in need-based aid. Prior to joining NCAN, Woodhouse was a college advisor in Boston, Massachusetts, and conducted education policy research at the University of Michigan Education Policy Initiative and the Poverty and Inequality Research Lab at Johns Hopkins University. Woodhouse holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Bates College and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Michigan.

Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Monday, May 18, 2026

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | *St. Helens, Mezzanine Level*

Committee Members

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Kate Siegel Shimko (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

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access Programs
Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator, Student Access Programs
Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning, and Development
Katherine Springsteen, Assistant Director of Student Access Programs
Olivia Tufo, Manager, Regional Collaborative Procurement Solutions

Action Items

 ACTION ITEM	Approval of the March 12, 2026, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes	5-4
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Professional Student Exchange Program Memorandum of Agreement	5-16
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Professional Student Exchange Program Support Fees for AY 2026-27 and AY 2027-28 Biennium	5-20
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Project “Productivity, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge: A Practical Approach to Technology Return on Investment (PEAK)”	5-50
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the FY 2027 Workplan Section Pertaining to the Programs and Services Unit	5-52

Information Items

Student Access Programs Update Malerie Barnes	5-11
Academic Partnerships Update Nicholas Fuselier	5-12
Cost-savings Partnerships Update Olivia Tufo	5-14

Discussion Items

Today’s higher education landscape demands thoughtful, yet timely responsiveness. PAS staff would like to discuss one or more of the topics below:

- ▶ *Alignment with Workforce Trends:* How might WICHE better align its programs and services with regional workforce trends? What data sources do we need to tap or develop?
- ▶ *Adjusting Student Access Programs Practices:* In what ways could we reimagine the long-held practice of not allowing academic programs listed in the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) to participate in the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) to serve workforce needs and student access better?

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- ▶ *Student Attrition between K-12 and Postsecondary*: What role could WICHE play in understanding student mobility and the effects of prior learning assessment (PLA) and credit for prior learning (CPL) on student decision-making, especially for Veteran and military-connected students and individuals who are caregivers to and surviving family members of Veterans?

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of March 12, 2026, Program and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
Terrence George (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID)
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)

Staff Present

Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access
Programs
Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice
President, Programs and Services
Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator
Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic
Partnerships, Learning, and Development
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director,
Operations and Program Implementation
Demarée Michelau, President
Onnika Hanson-White, Administrative
Assistant III

Committee Members Absent

Ellen Junn (CA)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Brent Sanford (ND)
Lisa Skari (OR)

Call to Order

Committee Chair Patricia Sullivan called the meeting to order. Kay Hulstrom called the roll, and it was established that a quorum was present.

Action Items

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 13, 2025, PROGRAM AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Terrence George MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes, and Commissioner Kate Siegel Shimko SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Information Items

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES UPDATE

Ray Burgman Gallegos updated the Commissioners on the upcoming annual meetings for the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance). The Forum is scheduled for April 1–3, 2026, at the University of New Mexico, while the Alliance will meet April 15–17, 2026, at Laramie County Community College in Wyoming.

Applications are open for summer 2026 for the Western Academic Leadership Academy, designed for titled leaders across the region. With a target size of approximately 20 participants, the core faculty expects a competitive selection process given the program’s intentionally small-cohort design, which prioritizes high-quality engagement.

The humanities grant-funded initiatives are nearing completion. The joint project involving the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) will conclude this summer; staff are currently synthesizing focus group data from all three compacts to provide a comprehensive analysis of the humanities faculty landscape across the regions. Additionally, the Mellon-funded WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities concludes on June 30, 2026, with the final report due to the Mellon Foundation by late September 2026.

The cost-savings initiatives, conducted in partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), continue to progress steadily. A key component of this work is the active community of practice, which convenes regional procurement officers to address shared challenges and identify opportunities for peer support. These ongoing discussions also help WICHE identify specific ways to support procurement professionals in their daily work.

Staff informed the Commissioners that the annual *By the Numbers* report detailing enrollment across Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) is nearing completion and will be published shortly.

Committee Chair Sullivan said the primary purpose of the committee meeting is to review PSEP support fees and the discussion is to prepare for the Programs and Services May 2026 meeting. Once approved, the proposed fee increase will move to the Committee of the Whole for to consider approval. Additionally, per this committee’s November 2025 request, the committee will discuss the PSEP Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) today to determine whether to bring it forward for a vote in May 2026.

The materials will include the PAS unit Workplan for FY 2027, along with a new proposal from Cost-saving Partnerships. The initiative, developed in partnership with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), is designed to help institutions evaluate the return on investment on technology procurement.

Discussion Items

DRAFT PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA)

Burgman Gallegos reported that in alignment with the recently passed policy, the PSEP Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been updated to require participating institutions to reaffirm their commitment every five years. The revised MOA has undergone a thorough internal review and legal counsel vetting to ensure compliance and institutional commitment.

Malerie Barnes provided an update on the revised PSEP Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Following the institutional eligibility policy approved in November 2025, all participating professional programs — both existing and new — will be required to sign an MOA upon entry and every five years thereafter. The new process replaces the less formal contracts previously used and aligns PSEP with the established MOA processes for WUE and WRGP.

Key updates to the MOA draft include:

- ▶ **Five-Year Recertification:** Establishing a consistent five-year signature cadence for all institutions.
- ▶ **Residency Requirements:** A new provision explicitly stating that institutions shall not assist students in establishing local residency. The requirement ensures that students remain eligible for PSEP funding, which is reserved strictly for residents of the sending state.
- ▶ **Payment Timeline:** Formalizing the January 15 annual support fee disbursement date. While this has long been standard practice, its inclusion in the MOA aims to prevent institutions from incorrectly assessing late fees to students.
- ▶ **Legal Review:** The document has been updated to use formal legal language and has been fully vetted by legal counsel.

Comments/Questions by Commissioners:

A Commissioner noted interest in any data on shifting demand for these programs. They hope that this clarification will streamline the processes, allowing the state to meet any increase in demand more effectively. Barnes responded that WICHE has analyzed enrollment trends and field-specific data, noting an increase in institutional interest. She believes this policy will help WICHE maintain ties with schools that have lower PSEP enrollment. Since these institutions may go years between placements, a mandatory five-year touchpoint ensures they remain up to date on policies. This consistency will ultimately lead to better program delivery and a more seamless student experience.

A Commissioner stated that historically, state Commissioners have played an active role in reviewing and prioritizing supported programs, particularly in allocating state funds. Does

WICHE foresee a renewed interest in this level of engagement? Given the shifting federal landscape and the Commission's focus on aligning funding with state workforce needs, should WICHE expect Commissioner feedback to shape program direction? WICHE President Demarée Michelau responded that while the PSEP assessment provided valuable insight into Western workforce needs, it also revealed that Student Access Programs (SAP) staff needed to review and update administrative processes. This process has also reignited a conversation about the field-expansion policy.

A Commissioner observed that following the PAS Committee's discussions on program gaps, it was clear that a structured review cycle is necessary to remain relevant. The committee needs to encourage a more integrated approach at the state level linking Commissioners and certifying officers with the legislative process. Legislators are increasingly asking technical questions regarding funding cycles and how to define need. Because state structures vary, WICHE should act proactively to ensure that even as leadership changes, there is a consistent, high-level conversation happening within each state about program alignment and effectiveness.

Burgman Gallegos said that SAP staff can take the lead on drafting a new review process. Since PSEP was reviewed four years ago, the timing may be right for another review of the program's processes. By engaging the certifying officers early, staff can ensure the process is both practical and well-coordinated from the start.

DRAFT PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM SUPPORT FEES FOR AY 2026-27 AND AY 2027-28 BIENNIUM

Recommendation #1

The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) enables states to sponsor students in high-demand healthcare fields not available at their own public institutions. By paying a per-student support fee, states ensure a pipeline of future practitioners, often with the expectation that these professionals will return home to practice. For the 2025-26 academic year (AY), 10 WICHE states and two Pacific Island territories invested over \$15.7 million to support 570 healthcare students across 134 programs. When determining the recommendations for support fees, several factors are considered, including higher education costs, tuition variation by field, and state budget and policy contexts. In addition, the impacts on students and states are considered. Historically, the support fee structure has varied for accelerated programs and occupational therapy.

Generally, SAP staff have reviewed the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA), which is calculated by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), to determine the support fee increase. SHEEO analyzes how higher education costs have changed year over year. Moving beyond the traditional reliance on HECA-only adjustments,

SAP staff performed a targeted analysis for the AY 2027–28 and AY 2028–29 biennium. The resulting recommendation is a 4.5% annual increase in support fees, limited to six high-need healthcare fields: occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, and podiatry. This shift ensures the fees are better able to cover the nonresident-resident tuition differential across all fields.

Barnes presented two distinct scenarios for the upcoming biennium. The first proposes an across-the-board increase of 3.89% annually, based strictly on the HECA rate. This approach reflects broad trends in higher education costs but does not account for specific field dynamics. The second scenario utilizes a tuition differential model, which measures the gap between resident and nonresident tuition — the primary target amount for the support fees. As illustrated in Table 3 on page 5-26, this differential is currently met or exceeded in fields like allopathic medicine, dentistry, physician assistant, and veterinary medicine. However, in other disciplines, the current support fee falls short of the differential, particularly in fields lacking public providers.

Barnes identified several critical considerations regarding this recommendation, specifically concerning private-sector providers. In fields such as podiatry, osteopathic medicine, and optometry — where only private institutions are available — staff cannot calculate a differential. However, recommending a 4.5% increase in these areas will ensure support levels do not erode. The survey responses from deans and directors suggested significant concern about shifts in graduate borrowing. Their feedback was that if support fees fail to keep pace with rising costs, student enrollment and completion rates could be adversely impacted. Recent findings also show that tuition at private schools is rising faster than at public schools. To protect the viability of these most critical healthcare fields — many of which are hosted by private institutions — the proposed 4.5% annual support fee increase is still recommended. This adjustment ensures that PSEP support keeps pace with actual market costs and helps mitigate the impact of evolving federal student loan policies on program enrollees.

Finally, staff must consider how increases in the support fee interact with the 20% institutional retention policy. Currently, for public schools, if a support fee exceeds the tuition differential, the institution can retain up to 20% of the surplus. In the well-funded fields, an increase does not necessarily result in a direct credit to the student's tuition bill. Staff chose to limit the 4.5% recommendation to specific fields to ensure PSEP isn't simply increasing institutional retention but is instead addressing genuine funding gaps where the money will have the most direct impact on student affordability.

From a fiscal perspective, opting for a targeted 4.5% increase in select fields — rather than a universal 3.85% adjustment — represents a regional savings of approximately \$878,000. Commissioners will receive detailed state-specific impact spreadsheets at the May

Commission meeting, where they can closely review the difference in savings. Furthermore, given some uncertainty around the future availability of the HECA index, SAP staff are proactively shifting toward a more strategic, field-specific recommendation model. Thus, the methodology will remain robust and data-driven, regardless of changes to external reporting tools.

Recommendation #2

The second recommendation is to eliminate the modified support fee structure for accelerated programs and adopt a standard rate across all tracks. Historically, accelerated students received higher annual support fees under the assumption that these programs were more costly to deliver. However, recent statistical analysis reveals no significant cost difference between accelerated and standard-length programs within the same sector. While mean costs appear higher for accelerated tracks, this is skewed by two factors: the higher baseline cost of private institutions (where all the accelerated programs are located) and specific high-cost outliers. By standardizing these rates, the significant budgeting volatility faced by states and certifying officers can be resolved. Currently, when a student unexpectedly selects an accelerated program, it can disrupt state funding allocations; a uniform rate will ensure predictable and manageable state budgets.

Recommendation #3

The third recommendation involves a dual-track modernization of the occupational therapy (OT) support fee structure. First, the staff proposes differentiating between Master's (MOT) and Doctoral (OTD) programs. Second, the recommendation is to transition from PSEP's legacy 2.66-year funding model to a standardized approach: a two-year maximum for MOT students and a three-year maximum for OTD students. The current model, which inflates the second-year payment to cover a partial third year, is largely obsolete. Of the 17 OT programs offered, only four still use the 2.5- to 2.66-year schedule. By standardizing these payments at the base rate for two to three years, respectively, the fiscal policy aligns with the actual 3-year OTD and 2-year MOT structures that now dominate the field.

Comments/Questions by Commissioners:

A Commissioner praised the analysis work by SAP staff. He asked about the specific strategy for pharmacy: Given that its median tuition differential is significantly lower than that of other programs, is the uniform 4.5% increase the most effective way to close that gap? He wanted to know if SAP staff considered a more aggressive or tiered adjustment to help pharmacy catch up more effectively. Barnes responded that a review of past agenda books confirms that pharmacy has historically been reported separately, with a significantly lower support fee. There was a deliberate policy choice made when pharmacy was no longer deemed a critical need field. However, market dynamics may have shifted since then, which

illustrates why a regular review cadence is so vital; if the pharmacy workforce is no longer in a state of surplus, that needs to be identified, and the funding levels adjusted to reflect current realities.

A Commissioner inquired whether a state legislature is providing the funding to offset the support fees. Barnes confirmed that assumption, but added that some institutions voluntarily exceed the standard requirements to provide students with greater financial benefits. For example, the University of Utah has implemented a policy to grant all PSEP students in-state tuition rates, regardless of the specific support fee amount. In these instances, the state still contributes the full support fee, but the institution's policy provides an additional tuition discount, resulting in a significantly lower net cost for the student. The Commissioner commented that much like the 150% tuition cap in WUE, the goal is to encourage deeper discounting where possible. Ultimately, the state legislature invests in this program with a clear intent: to provide citizens access to high-demand fields unavailable at home, with the expectation that they return to practice in-state. Maintaining this focus on state sensitivity to investment is crucial; it enables certifying officers and Commissioners to communicate the program's value proposition to lawmakers accurately.

The Commissioner also inquired about what distinguishes the scope of practice between a doctorate and a master's degree in occupational therapy. Barnes noted that while she is unsure about the differences, feedback from certifying officers and partner institutions suggests a significant rise in post-professional or mid-career doctoral programs. The trend may be driven by a growing number of practitioners who find that a MOT eventually limits their career advancement or specialized practice goals, leading them to return later in their careers for an OTD.

Committee Chair Sullivan asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Joseph Schaffer MOVED TO ADJOURN the meeting. Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED. The motion was approved.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Student Access Programs Update

WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE (WUE)

For academic year (AY) 2025-26, approximately 49,125 students in the West saved \$642 million in tuition costs at 171 participating institutions. On average, WUE students have saved \$13,060 this academic year. Since November 2025, two new institutions have joined WUE: Lake Washington Institute of Technology in Washington state and California State University, Fullerton. Student Access Programs (SAP) staff have received four additional inquiries from institutions about participating in the program.

Staff have increased outreach by presenting at the Colorado Council for High School and College Relations in December 2025 and the Rocky Mountain Association for College Admissions Counseling in April 2026. These two groups are professional associations for college admissions professionals and high school guidance counselors.

WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)

For AY 2025-26, WRGP has helped 2,276 graduate students across 67 institutions in the West save almost \$46 million. On average, WRGP students have saved \$15,179 this academic year. One new institution, Western Washington University, has joined WRGP, and another has inquired about joining WRGP in the future.

PROFESSIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PSEP)

For AY 2025-26, 10 states and two territories in the region supported 570 future healthcare professionals at 134 accredited programs in 10 healthcare fields. The total state investment (and student savings) totaled \$15.7 million.

The SAP team received 10 PSEP inquiries in recent months: one from an osteopathic medicine program, six from occupational therapy programs, and three from a physician assistant program. New providers will be onboarded this summer upon signing the newly developed PSEP memorandum of agreement (MOA), if approved by Commissioners. Upon signing, they will be eligible to accept students for future terms. Of note, a small number of inquiries have been from proprietary institutions.

One institution inquired whether WICHE may consider allowing institutions to participate in both WRGP and PSEP in the same field. Currently, fields may either be offered under WRGP or PSEP, but not both. Given changes to graduate student borrowing, institutional concerns about shifts in student enrollment behavior, and ongoing healthcare workforce shortages, staff were interested in researching this proposal further, as it may allow students to pursue high-demand healthcare fields at a greater discount.

The University of Northern Colorado is opening a new College of Osteopathic Medicine, the first public program in the region, and SAP staff reached out to the inaugural dean and associate dean of admissions to begin discussions about PSEP participation should it become fully accredited sometime around 2030.

CERTIFYING OFFICERS

Over the last calendar year, SAP staff have held quarterly calls with certifying officers across the region. These calls serve as a space to discuss policy and practice issues related to PSEP, professional healthcare workforce development, and professional healthcare education in the West.

VETERINARY MEDICINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council (VMAC), composed of deans and admissions representatives from participating Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programs in the West, along with state and association representatives, gathers annually to discuss issues related to veterinary medicine admissions, education, student success, and practice. The VMAC annual meeting will be held in Laramie, Wyoming, on May 27-29, 2026.

Academic Partnerships Update

THE ALLIANCE AND THE FORUM

The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) are two membership networks facilitated by WICHE that offer support, collaboration, and networking opportunities for senior academic leaders at colleges and universities across the West. Every year, the Alliance and Forum hold respective annual meetings to discuss current issues and trends of interest to academic leaders in the West. The Alliance Annual Meeting took place from April 15-17, 2026, at Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and the theme was “Leading the Resilient Community College.” The Forum Annual Meeting took place from April 1-3, 2026, at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the theme was “Facing Complexity, Finding Solutions.”

The Alliance has 76 members, including 68 institutions and eight related systems. The Forum has 61 members, including 50 institutions and 11 related systems. The Forum and Alliance will have begun their membership renewal cycle and continue to engage members throughout the year. For example, in partnership with the Policy Analysis and Research unit, staff have initiated a monthly policy call series for college and university chief academic officers (CAOs), exclusively for Forum and Alliance members to discuss emerging federal and state policy changes and their implications for their campus communities.

WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

In 2026, WICHE graduated its 10th cohort of the Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy). Nineteen aspiring academic leaders were selected for the 2025-26 Academy, and this cohort had its final session and a formal graduation ceremony at the 2026 Forum Annual Meeting. Since the Academy's inception, 158 participants from Alliance and Forum member institutions have gathered in Boulder, Colorado, to kick off a year of professional development, which includes in-person meetings, webinars, and faculty mentoring.

WICHE ACADEMY FOR LEADERS IN THE HUMANITIES

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 in Boulder, Colorado. Each fellow meets monthly with an on-campus mentor, participates in quarterly group sessions led by an external advisor, and gains leadership experience 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 another year of programming for the second cohort through April 2026. The first cohort of fellows graduated during the 2025 Academic Partnerships Joint Annual Meeting. The second cohort of fellows graduated during the 2026 Forum Annual Meeting. As a result of this work and learning about the needs of leaders in the humanities, WICHE staff launched an exploratory humanities deans' community of practice in March 2026. Staff are discussing with Mellon the possibility of continuing the faculty development program. The final report for the grant is due in September 2026.

TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFER SUCCESS

Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success, an anonymously funded project administered by WICHE from 2024-26, pairs a four-year university or university system with a two-year college or technical school to co-invest in a technology solution to improve outcomes for transfer students. WICHE has supported 13 institutions in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming in piloting six technology solutions over a year of implementation and an academic year of data tracking. These project partners will deliver a final report in June 2026, and these findings will provide the basis for a series of four public-facing briefs published by WICHE in fall 2026.

JOINT COMPACT FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

Staff are collaborating with the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three regional education compacts, on a project to educate and inform parties interested in faculty demographics. Funded by

a grant from the Mellon Foundation, deliverables include a landscape analysis of faculty demographics and a data dashboard.

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; and online on several occasions. These meetings resulted in the clarification of project goals, the development of a research protocol for the focus group interviews, and the creation of 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 12-month extension from Mellon, which was approved. Focus groups for WICHE-region stakeholders were conducted and completed during the fall 2025. Staff from WICHE, NEBHE, and SREB will analyze data from all focus groups to prepare deliverables for the Mellon Foundation by November 2026.

Cost-savings Partnerships Update

MHECARE STUDENT HEALTH SOLUTIONS

The Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC) offers student health solutions for postsecondary institutions in the WICHE region, including fully insured school-sponsored health plans through UnitedHealthCare Student Resources (UHCSR). Campuses can leverage MHEC's contract with peace of mind, knowing that MHEC has conducted its due diligence through a comprehensive, extensive request-for-proposal process. UHCSR offers injury and sickness plans for domestic and international students, as well as emergency medical travel services, vision and dental plans, and insurance for risk groups such as study abroad and special summer programs.

MHEC TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS

WICHE and MHEC partner to bring significant cost savings — over \$9 million in FY 2025 — to educational and governmental entities across the West. This broad audience includes postsecondary institutions, K-12, local and state governments, and related nonprofits. MHEC's cooperative agreements offer a robust platform for WICHE-region institutions to access competitively solicited contracts, ensuring both quality and cost-effectiveness. By participating in this cooperative purchasing framework, institutions can harness collective buying power, resulting in significant cost savings and efficiency gains.

To better understand the regional needs of higher education procurement professionals in the WICHE region, staff have solicited participation in a community of practice focused on procurement and cost savings. The group convenes quarterly via videoconference calls for shared learning and collaborative opportunities.

WICHE GROUP PROPERTY INSURANCE

WICHE continues to serve as the main point of contact, or regional entity, for two insurance programs for former MHEC Master Property Program (MPP) participating institutions. There is a group property insurance program for five independent institutions. Their collective value enabled them to secure a policy with lower property insurance premiums. WICHE also offers fine arts and terrorism insurance to the five previously mentioned institutions, one large research institution, and a state higher education system.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Professional Student Exchange Program Memorandum of Agreement

Summary

Following the approval of the Professional Student Exchange (PSEP) Institutional Eligibility Policy at the November 2025 Commission Meeting, staff were tasked with developing a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between WICHE and participating PSEP professional programs. In compliance with the Institutional Eligibility Policy, the new MOA shall be signed by current participating institutions upon approval and every five years thereafter. New institutions shall sign upon entry into the PSEP program and every five years thereafter.

Context and Changes

In the past, participating institutions entered into an agreement with WICHE via a “PSEP Contract” that was signed upon entry but was not renewed thereafter. The newly developed PSEP MOA was built with the PSEP contract as a baseline, but a few key changes have been made.

CADENCE OF RENEWAL

The PSEP MOA will be renewed every five years for each participating professional program. This renewal cadence will help participating programs stay in closer contact with staff and will serve as a regular reminder of the terms of PSEP participation. As institutional participation in PSEP has grown, some programs enroll students less frequently. Programs may go several years without enrolling a PSEP student. Lapses in enrollment can result in reduced familiarity with WICHE policies related to PSEP over time, compounded by staffing changes at participating programs. This regular renewal will serve as a natural time for institutions to be reminded of the terms of their participation and policies that protect participating students and states.

STUDENT DOMICILE RESTRICTIONS

The proposed PSEP MOA includes a clause specifically prohibiting professional programs from encouraging or assisting students in establishing domicile in the state of the institution. Students selected for a PSEP award must be residents of the state that covers their support fee; establishing residency in a new state violates their contract with the sending state. Students who establish residency will lose PSEP funding and may owe their state funds, depending on their understanding with the sending state. This clause was included in response to students establishing residency outside of their sending state and subsequently losing funding. Including this clause should create an additional checkpoint to prevent students from intentionally or unintentionally violating their contracts with sending states.

SUPPORT FEE DISBURSEMENT DATE

The proposed PSEP MOA includes a clause stating that the annual support fee is sent from WICHE to participating professional programs only once a year, on January 15. The clause prohibits programs from assessing a late fee to the student owing to this payment cadence and requires that they credit the student a pro-rated amount for terms prior to the disbursement of the support fee. This clause will serve as an additional layer of protection for PSEP students.

Action Requested

Vote to recommend that the Committee of the Whole approve the Professional Student Exchange Program Memorandum of Agreement and be signed by all current and new professional programs, effective immediately, and every five years thereafter, in accordance with policy.

Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This Memorandum of Agreement (this "Agreement") is entered into effective as of _____, 202__ (the "Effective Date") for the academic years 202__ through 20__ [*five year window*] between the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education ("WICHE") and _____ [*name of institution*] (the "Institution") for the _____ [*name of health program at the institution*] professional health program (the "Program"), through which the Institution and its Program agree to participate in the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program ("PSEP") in its specified health profession field of _____ [*name of field*] (the "Field").

1. PSEP is administered in accordance with the Professional Student Exchange Program Administrative Manual. The Administrative Manual is available for consultation at <https://www.wiche.edu/resources/professional-student-exchange-program-psep-administrative-manual/>.
2. The following states/territories support PSEP students studying in the Field: [delete jurisdictions not supporting the Field: Alaska; Arizona; Colorado; Hawai'i; Montana; Nevada; New Mexico; North Dakota; Utah; Wyoming; Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; Guam]. Continued support of PSEP students studying in the Field is subject to continued appropriations by the specific state or territory. There is no guarantee that these states/territories will continue to appropriate resources to support PSEP students in the Field. Additionally, there is no guarantee that PSEP students will

seek to enroll in the Program. Finally, states and territories in the WICHE region who do not currently support students in the Field may choose to do so in the future.

3. In the event the Institution assesses different tuition rates for the Program for resident students as compared to nonresident students, the Institution and the Program agree not to encourage and/or assist its participating PSEP students with establishing residency/domicile in the Institution's state for tuition classification purposes while such PSEP student is enrolled in the Program and receiving support through PSEP. PSEP is funded by states in the WICHE region with the intent for such states to support their residents with obtaining a degree in a specific professional healthcare field through an out-of-state institution and program. Establishing residency in a different state may cause a PSEP student to no longer be eligible to participate in PSEP with the respective institution and program.
4. Each PSEP student enrolled in the Program will receive the benefit of the annual support fee for their Field as approved by the WICHE Commission (the "Support Fee"). The Support Fee rates are set by the WICHE Commission and are adjusted every other year at the May WICHE Commission meeting of even years. Current and near future Support Fee rates and program length, by Field, can be found at <https://www.wiche.edu/tuition-savings/psep/whats-a-psep-award-worth/>.
5. Support Fees for each PSEP student enrolled in the Program are disbursed directly to the Program and are not sent to the student. Support Fees are disbursed once annually on January 15 of the academic year. The Program shall credit the PSEP student's account with a prorated portion of the Support Fee for any term commenced prior to receipt of the Support Fee payment in accordance with the Administrative Manual. The Program shall not assess any late fees to the PSEP student account related to the timing of receipt of the Support Fee for such student.
6. Effective as of the Effective Date, certified WICHE PSEP applicants enrolling in the Program will have full eligibility to be considered for Support Fees through PSEP. However, support for PSEP students admitted to the Program at the Institution is not guaranteed and is subject to state budget appropriations.
7. WICHE or the Institution may terminate this Agreement and the Institution's and the Program's participation in PSEP at any time upon one year's advance written notice. PSEP students enrolled in the Program at the time of such termination shall be allowed to continue to participate in PSEP through such Institution and Program until the earlier of their graduation from the Program or the end of the maximum number of PSEP funding years for the Field as specified by the WICHE Commission.
8. The Institution hereby represents, warrants, and confirms as of the Effective Date that the Institution (i) is fully accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and (ii) is authorized to operate by its own state or territorial governing

body. The Institution agrees that if there is a change in its authorization status, it will immediately report the change to WICHE. Institutions must report any change in accreditation status to WICHE within 10 business days.

9. The Institution and the Program hereby represent, warrant, and confirm as of the Effective Date that the Program (i) is fully accredited by a professional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, (ii) has graduated at least one class, and (iii) is free of accrediting body actions or concerns at the time of the Effective Date. The Institution and the Program agree that if there is a change in the Program’s accreditation status or if a notice of concern or action is received regarding an issue that may impact the Program’s accreditation status, the Institution will notify WICHE within 10 business days. If the change in accreditation status involves a loss of the rights and privileges accorded to graduates of the Program, the funding of new PSEP students under the Program will be suspended, pending restoration of full accreditation.

FOR: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

By: _____

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Ph.D., *Vice President, Programs and Services*

Date: _____

By: _____

Malerie Barnes, Ph.D., *Director, Student Access Programs*

Date: _____

FOR: [Name of Institution] and [Name of Program]

By: _____

*[Institution Rep Name],
[Institution Rep Title]*

Date: _____

By: _____

*[Program Rep Name],
[Program Rep Title]*

Date: _____

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the Professional Student Exchange Program Support Fees and Structure for the AY 2027-28 and AY 2028-29 Biennium

Summary

The Commission sets the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) support fees for a biennium, or every two years. The PSEP support fee refers to the amount appropriated by the student's home state/territory to reduce the student's tuition for professional healthcare education.

- ▶ Staff evaluate several factors (e.g., higher education costs, tuition variance by field and program, and state budget and policy contexts) when recommending support fee levels.
- ▶ The support fee varies by PSEP field, but the amount is standard for each profession across institutions.
- ▶ Historically, the support fee structure has varied for accelerated programs and for occupational therapy, with higher payments to accommodate modified timelines to graduation.
- ▶ Summary of staff recommendations

Staff recommend a 4.5% increase for the fields of occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, and podiatry. Staff recommend that support fee amounts remain at the AY 2026-27 rate for the fields of dentistry, allopathic medicine, physician assistant, and veterinary medicine. Additionally, staff recommend that support fee structures for accelerated programs and occupational therapy be adjusted to align with the standard support fee structure for that field.

Table 1. Proposed Support Fees for AY 2026-27 and AY 2027-28 (FY 2027 and FY 2028 Biennium)

Field	Set: AY 2026-27	Standard: AY 2027-28 HECA 3.89%	Standard: AY 2028-29 HECA 3.89%	*Proposed: AY 2027-28 Selected Fields	*Proposed: AY 2028-29 Selected Fields
Allopathic Medicine*	\$38,875	\$40,387.24	\$41,958.30	\$38,875.00	\$38,875.00
Dentistry*	\$32,550	\$33,816.20	\$35,131.64	\$32,550.00	\$32,550.00
Occupational Therapy	\$17,025	\$17,687.27	\$18,375.31	\$17,791.13	\$18,591.73
Optometry	\$22,400	\$23,271.36	\$24,176.62	\$23,408.00	\$24,461.36

Field	Set: AY 2026–27	Standard: AY 2027–28 HECA 3.89%	Standard: AY 2028–29 HECA 3.89%	*Proposed: AY 2027–28 Selected Fields	*Proposed: AY 2028–29 Selected Fields
Osteopathic Medicine	\$27,875	\$28,959.34	\$30,085.86	\$29,129.38	\$30,440.20
Pharmacy	\$9,925	\$10,311.08	\$10,712.18	\$10,371.63	\$10,838.35
Physical Therapy	\$18,750	\$19,479.38	\$20,237.12	\$19,593.75	\$20,475.47
Physician Assistant*	\$22,225	\$23,089.55	\$23,987.74	\$22,225.00	\$22,225.00
Podiatry	\$19,325	\$20,076.74	\$20,857.73	\$20,194.63	\$21,103.38
Veterinary Medicine*	\$38,550	\$40,049.60	\$41,607.52	\$38,550.00	\$38,550.00

* No increase this biennium in selected fields

Relationship to WICHE’s Mission

Ensuring that the West has access to professional education in order to meet workforce needs of the West has been central to WICHE’s mission, as outlined in the Western Regional Education Compact (the foundational document that led to the establishment of WICHE by Western governors in 1953).

In the academic year (AY) 2025-26, 570 students participated in the 10 healthcare professional degree programs offered through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), and their home states and territories invested a total of \$15.7 million to reduce their tuition.

PSEP helps WICHE states and territories to:

- ▶ Develop a professional healthcare workforce
- ▶ Provide students with affordable access to a wide range of professional programs that otherwise may not be available in some states/territories
- ▶ Offer students tuition assistance for healthcare programs located out of state when a public program is not available within their home state/territory

- ▶ Enhance the quality and prestige of participating programs by attracting qualified students from around the West
- ▶ Avoid the costs of establishing new professional programs and schools
- ▶ Minimize the administrative burden associated with directly supporting students at institutions across the West; WICHE staff assume critical tasks such as invoicing, payments, and tracking student academic progress
- ▶ Stay informed of best practices and policies related to professional healthcare funding, admissions, and workforce issues

Recommended Action #1

Staff propose increasing the support fee for the next biennium by 4.5% each year, applicable only to the fields of occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, and podiatry. This is slightly higher than the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA) index, which indicated an average increase of 3.89%. Staff are recommending a higher increase for these fields in exchange for no increase to the fields of dentistry, allopathic medicine, physician assistant, and veterinary medicine. Table 1 shows what the support fee amounts would be with a 3.89% across-the-board increase for the biennium as well as the field-specific 4.5% increase across the biennium.

NONRESIDENT/RESIDENT TUITION DIFFERENTIAL

WICHE's consideration of the PSEP support fee considers many (sometimes competing) needs: increasing student access to professional healthcare programs, addressing state workforce needs, incentivizing institutions to participate in PSEP, giving additional consideration to PSEP applicants, and not overburdening state budgets. At their core, however, the PSEP support fees were intended to bridge the gap between resident and nonresident tuition costs, enabling students in states and territories without programs in their intended field of study to receive vital healthcare training and education without assuming the burden of higher nonresident tuition and fees. This difference between resident and nonresident tuition is called the "tuition differential." Though many fields rely on private institutions to help meet workforce needs, the core of PSEP remains aimed at making public, nonresident education more affordable for students in the region.

With this in mind, staff analyzed the support fee differently this year. Rather than assessing the percentage of nonresident tuition covered by the support fee, staff calculated the average percentage of the tuition differential covered by the support fee in each field.

Table 2. Percent of Differential Summary

Field	AY 2025-26 Approved Support Fee	Average % Of Differential Covered	Median % of Differential Covered	*Proposed: AY 2027-28 - Selected Fields	*Proposed: AY 2028-29 - Selected Fields
Allopathic Medicine	\$37,250	194.64%	166.53%	\$38,875.00	\$38,875.00
Dentistry	\$31,200	130.49%	109.24%	\$32,550.00	\$32,550.00
Occupational Therapy	\$16,300	85%	82%	\$17,791.13	\$18,591.73
Optometry	\$21,475	No public providers	No public providers	\$23,408.00	\$24,461.36
Osteopathic Medicine	\$26,725	No public providers	No public providers	\$29,129.38	\$30,440.20
Pharmacy	\$9,525	20.80%	20.30%	\$10,371.63	\$10,838.35
Physical Therapy	\$17,975	95%	89%	\$19,593.75	\$20,475.47
Physician Assistant	\$21,275	112%	100%	\$22,225.00	\$22,225.00
Podiatry	\$18,525	No public providers	No public providers	\$20,194.63	\$21,103.38
Veterinary Medicine	\$36,950	122%	119%	\$38,550.00	\$38,550.00

As is shown in Table 2 (and in more detail in Tables 4 to 13 on pages 5-32 to 5-47), the percentage of the differential that is covered by each field’s support fee varies widely. In allopathic medicine, dentistry, physician assistant, and veterinary medicine, the support fee, on average, meets or exceeds the tuition differential. In other fields, the support fee either covers less than the full differential on average or applies to fields with only private institutions. This approach would allow fields where the differential is not currently being met to “catch up” to fields where it is being met and/or exceeded.

A NOTE ON PRIVATE PROVIDERS

In Table 2 on page 5-23, the fields of optometry, osteopathic medicine, and podiatry currently have no public institutions serving as PSEP providers. Staff recommend increases in these fields, even though there is no differential to base the support fee on. Private institutions in these fields are a critical component of workforce development. For optometry, there is only one public program in the region (University of California, Berkeley Herbert Wertheim School of Optometry and Vision Science, which is not a PSEP-participating institution). Similarly, there are no fully accredited public osteopathic medicine providers in the region (the University of Northern Colorado's School of Osteopathic Medicine will welcome their first class this year but will not be fully accredited until a cohort graduates in four years). The same is true for podiatry; there are no public institutions offering this program in the West.

Support fees for these programs may not be tailored for a tuition differential, but they still provide critical access for students. Private institutions are, on average, more expensive than public institutions. When support fees significantly lag behind other fields (e.g., osteopathic medicine relative to allopathic medicine), it creates a barrier to student access that is necessary for states and communities in the region to thrive. Staff recommend raising the support fee by 4.5% in these fields as well, so that support does not lag behind other PSEP fields.

INSTITUTIONAL INCENTIVES AND STUDENT ACCESS

While increasing support fees beyond the differential may provide a greater benefit to students, this is complicated by the 20% maximum incentive given to PSEP-participating institutions. At public institutions, where the support fee exceeds the differential, the institution may retain up to 20% of the total support fee, provided that the entire differential is covered first. Anything remaining is applied to the student's bill. An increase in the support fee in areas where the differential is met or exceeded, therefore, does not necessarily go directly to students; it may increase the amount that goes back to institutions. While WICHE's partnership with PSEP-participating institutions is extremely valuable (particularly in fields like veterinary medicine, where students are considered for admission from a special pool of candidates), increasing the incentive is not a top priority.

STATE BUDGETS

Tables 14 and 15 on pages 5-48 and 5-49 model the impact of this recommendation relative to a 3.85% across-the-board increase. The selective 4.5% increase scenario will result in a projected budget increase of approximately \$527,253 across the biennium and across all states and fields. The across-the-board increase would result in an increase of approximately \$1,314,881, reflecting savings for states and territories of approximately \$878,628. While WICHE's goal for PSEP (and all the tuition savings programs) is to increase

student access, the state budget contexts were considered in making this recommendation. Staff are sensitive to state budget cuts across the region and hope that this solution may allow states and territories to continue funding PSEP students or support additional students/fields.

ACTION REQUESTED

Vote to approve an increase in the support fee for the next biennium of 4.5% each year for the fields of occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, and podiatry only.

Recommended Action #2

Staff propose eliminating the modified support fee structure for accelerated programs and applying the standard rate for students enrolled in accelerated programs, effective for students entering their programs in AY 2027-28. Currently enrolled students would be held harmless until graduation or discontinuation.

Heretofore, the practice has been to apply an increased support fee for students enrolled in accelerated programs. For example:

- ▶ The approved support fee for dentistry for AY 2025-26 is \$31,200.
- ▶ The standard program length for dentistry is four years, so students in the standard length program received \$31,200 for AY 2025-26.
- ▶ The accelerated program length for dentistry is three years, so students in accelerated programs received \$41,600 (calculated as $(\$31,200 \times 4)/3$) for AY 2025-26.

This structure gives students the full financial benefit of a PSEP award, but over a shorter period, with the assumption that accelerated programs are more costly per year than traditional programs. Accelerated PSEP programs are supported for dentistry, physical therapy, and pharmacy, with new accelerated occupational therapy doctoral (OTD) programs emerging, as well.

CERTIFYING OFFICERS AND STATE BUDGETS

The modified support fee structure for accelerated programs has created an administrative burden for certifying officers and a financial strain for state budgets. States tentatively decide on the number of PSEP slots per field in late fall/early winter and request state funds based on the number of slots and the support fee amount by field. When those funds are requested, neither WICHE nor the state yet knows which students will be selected or which PSEP institutions students will select. If a PSEP student selects an accelerated program instead of a standard program, the amount budgeted is insufficient to fulfill student support agreements for that year. This makes financial planning challenging for states and territories.

ANALYSIS OF AVERAGE COST AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR

In light of feedback from the certifying officers, staff analyzed the average annual cost of tuition for accelerated programs relative to that of standard-length programs. It is important to note that all accelerated programs participating in PSEP are private. For that reason, it is critical not to simply compare the mean cost of education at accelerated programs against all standard programs; private programs, on average, are more expensive than public programs, so a comparison without accounting for sector would make it appear that accelerated programs are significantly more expensive than standard-length programs.

Table 3. Accelerated Cost Analysis

N = Number, SD = Standard deviation

	Dentistry	Pharmacy	Physical Therapy †
Private, Accelerated	\$134,254 (N=2, SD=\$31,329)	\$73,820** (N= 4, SD = \$12,399)	\$75,213 (N=1)
Private, Standard	\$109,517** (N=7, SD=\$19,682)	\$59,520** (N=3, SD =\$14,745)	\$52,353 (N=16 , SD=\$13,393)
Private, All	\$115,014** (N=9, SD=\$23,069)	\$67,69** (N=7, SD = \$14,414)	\$53,697 (N=17, SD=\$13,332)
Public (Nonresident)	\$97,750 (N=8, SD= \$5,604)	\$48,597 (N=13, SD=\$12,629)	\$52,000 (N=12, SD = \$9,292)

* Statistically significant when compared to private-standard

** Statistically significant when compared to public

† No statistical analysis conducted; only one sample

Staff analysis found no statistically significant difference in the cost between private-accelerated and private-standard programs. There is a significant difference between institutional sectors, not between program types. More detailed, institutional-level data can be found in Tables 4 to 13 on pages 5-32 to 5-47. While the mean tuition rates of accelerated programs appear higher when not viewed through the lens of statistical difference, the means are strongly affected by a single outlier in each case — the most expensive program, across all three fields, is the University of the Pacific in California. Other private, accelerated program costs are in line with standard-length private programs.

With the understanding that accelerated programs do not cost more than standard-length programs within the same institutional sector, adjusted support fees ultimately provide more net annual support to students in accelerated programs than in standard-length programs, while increasing the administrative and financial burden on states.

STAFFING IMPACT

If approved, the impact of administering this change on staff will be minimal. Staff will update the support fee amounts in Salesforce as usual and will need to apply special fee structures to the accounts of students enrolled in accelerated programs. There are 25 PSEP students enrolled in accelerated programs.

ACTION REQUESTED

Vote to cease supporting accelerated programs at a higher rate and instead issue the standard support fee per field across program structures, effective for students entering in AY 2027-28 and beyond.

Recommended Action #3

Staff recommend that the support fee structure for occupational therapy (OT) be changed in two ways, effective for new students entering in AY 2027-28 and beyond:

- ▶ Differentiate between a Master's in Occupational Therapy (MOT) and a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD)
- ▶ Eliminate the Year Two overpayment amount that is currently given to all OT students to account for a 2.66-year MOT program length and instead fund MOT students at the standard rate for up to two years and OTD students at the standard rate for up to three years.

Enrolled students shall be held harmless and funded in accordance with the structure.

CONTEXT AND HISTORY

The standard program length for an MOT program has historically been 2.66 years. Because students would typically graduate before the disbursement of support fees on January 15, WICHE facilitated a payment to Year Two OT students of approximately 1.66x the standard support fee amount to offset their tuition for the time enrolled but not covered by the standard support fee payment schedule. At the time that this support fee payment was made, most participating institutions offered MOT programs, and most were structured in this way. For AY 2025-26, an OT student in Year One received \$16,300, whereas an OT student in Year Two received \$27,058 ($\$16,300 \times 1.66$).

A CHANGING OT EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The offerings for OT among PSEP institutions have changed significantly in recent years. Of the 17 participating OT programs:

- ▶ Six exclusively offer OTD programs.
- ▶ Seven offer both MOT and OTD programs.
- ▶ Four exclusively offer MOT programs.

Additionally, of the available MOT programs, only four continue to use the program structure of 2.5 years or more; many have shifted toward two- to 2 ¼- WICHE staff have received recent inquiries from three new institutions, all of which offer OTD programs exclusively. Given the shift in available programs and their structures, 2.66-year funding model is no longer aligned with the region's programmatic offerings.

A NOTE ON ACCELERATED OR LONG PROGRAMS

In keeping with the proposed changes to accelerated program support fees, WICHE staff recommend that students who select programs with longer or shorter times to graduation are only funded up to two or three years for MOT or OTD respectively, and only for as long as they are enrolled (e.g., students enrolled in accelerated 2.5 year OTD programs will only receive 2.5 years' worth of support fees, not three years condensed into 2.5 years). Similarly, students who select longer programs will not receive greater support fee amounts.

STAFFING IMPACT

The proposed changes, if approved by Commissioners, will have a moderate impact on staffing. Because current students will be held harmless, all current Year One students will need special fee structures placed on their accounts. Furthermore, staff will need to work to implement a funding-by-graduation-date model in Salesforce, which may require contracted work from Bross Group, WICHE's web partner.

ACTION REQUESTED

Vote to approve a new occupational therapy support fee structure, wherein MOT students are supported for up to two years, and OTD students are supported for up to three years.

Feedback from Certifying Officers

The certifying officers met with the Student Access Programs team on February 17, 2026, to provide feedback on the proposed changes. Certifying officers largely supported the proposed recommendations and expressed that the changes regarding occupational therapy and accelerated programs were sensible and would simplify budgeting.

One certifying officer expressed concern that fields with only private PSEP-participating institutions are included in the recommended 4.5% increase (as opposed to the 3.89% indicated by HECA), and anticipated questions as to why those fields have proposed increases of that size even though there is no tuition differential on which to base the change. Barnes responded that private programs are the only option in these fields for students pursuing those degrees, and that support for these fields should not lag behind other fields.

Initially, staff recommended that changes for accelerated programs and occupational therapy take effect in AY 2026-27, while the changes to support fee amounts would take effect with the new biennium in AY 2027-28, as usual. Two certifying officers expressed that this would create budgeting issues for their states, and that although the overall cost would be lower for states, they would prefer that all changes take effect in the next biennium. Staff have changed the recommendation accordingly.

Feedback from Program Deans and Directors

A total of 21 program deans and directors submitted responses to a SAP survey to solicit their opinions on the proposed changes to support fees for the next biennium. Every PSEP field was represented, except podiatry.

RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSED SELECT PROGRAM SUPPORT FEE INCREASE

Most respondents (80%) reported that the proposed change amounts “felt about right,” whereas 15% reported that the proposed amounts were too little, and 5% were unsure. When asked whether there was a concern about the proposed changes only for programs where the resident/nonresident differential is not being met on average, most respondents reported no concern. Of the 13 respondents who submitted comments for this section of the survey, three reported some concern, in particular, for dental students regarding anticipated changes to graduate and professional student borrowing.

One respondent expressed concern for physician assistant students owing to the reclassification of physician assistants as nonprofessional. An additional nine comments were made in an optional open-ended comment section. Two respondents expressed further concern about anticipated changes to graduate and professional student borrowing, with one noting that PSEP can make a big difference for students funding their healthcare education. Two respondents noted that they appreciated the effort to fund fields more evenly, and that this represents a “meaningful step in the right direction.” One respondent representing an Allopathic Medical and Physician Assistant program shared that they support the proposal, given stable tuition and adequate funding for these fields at their institution. One final respondent expressed concern about the low pharmacy support fee relative to program cost.

RESPONSES TO PROPOSED CHANGES TO ACCELERATED PROGRAM SUPPORT FEES

When asked if there were concerns about the proposed changes to the support fee structure for students in accelerated programs, respondents overwhelmingly expressed support. Several respondents noted that the proposed change felt fair, and one respondent expressed that the proposed change may encourage students to more thoroughly explore their options to find the best chance of success. One respondent expressed that they did not support the proposed change, citing that accelerated programs are well-suited to address workforce shortages and the higher support fee incentivizes students to enroll.

RESPONSES TO PROPOSED CHANGES TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SUPPORT FEES

All responses to the proposed changes to the occupational therapy support fee structure were neutral or positive, with respondents expressing that the proposed changes were appropriate given the different program structures.

Feedback from Programs and Services Committee

During the Programs and Services (PAS) Committee meeting on March 12, 2026, staff presented the recommended changes to support fees to committee members. One Commissioner inquired about pharmacy as an outlier, noting that the support fee is much lower and does not come close to covering the tuition differential. The Commissioner wondered whether staff should consider a different increase amount to get the pharmacy support fee more in line with others. Staff responded that, historically, pharmacy has been reported separately from the other fields, and that, in the past, pharmacy was not a critical area of workforce need, so the support fee was adjusted accordingly. Staff wondered whether this has changed and suggested that regularly reviewing PSEP fields and their alignment with state workforce needs may help staff determine whether support fee amounts remain appropriate.

Another Commissioner asked whether support fees are provided entirely by the state/state legislatures, or if institutions ever contribute to the amount. Staff responded that while states do provide the full support fee amount for each student, participating institutions can administer PSEP so that students receive additional tuition savings. Staff shared that the University of Utah has implemented a university-wide policy under which PSEP students receive the resident tuition rate across all fields, regardless of the support fee amount. PSEP students who enroll at the University of Utah receive a deeper discount owing to this policy. The Commissioner wondered how WICHE might work to incentivize more institutions to do the same.

The Commissioner also asked what differentiates the scope of practice for an OTD degree from that of an MOT degree, wondering whether the differences were sufficient to warrant different funding structures. Staff responded that, though they do not know the details of the difference in practice, they learned from certifying officers and participating institutions that there was a third program structure — a mid-career OTD — that more students are turning to because their MOT degrees do not allow them to practice as they wish. Staff gather from that feedback that the differences in practice are significant.

Action Requested

Vote to approve all recommended changes to support fees for the next biennium, AY 2027-28 and AY 2028-29.

PSEP Support Fee Analysis tables begin on next page.

Table 4. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Dentistry

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$31,200 • AY 2026-27 \$32,550

Supporting states: Alaska, Arizona, CNMI, Hawai'i, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 48 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 76 • TOTAL COMBINED: 124

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
U.C. Los Angeles	5	\$91,610	\$79,365
U.C. San Francisco	1	\$93,215	\$80,970
U. Colorado Denver, Anschutz	15	\$90,721	\$64,434
Oregon Health & Science U.	4	\$96,381	\$65,117
U. of Utah †	11	\$102,191	\$56,461
U. Washington	4	\$99,284	\$73,584
U. Missouri, Kansas City (OOR)	5	\$103,199	\$53,631
U. Nebraska (OOR)	3	\$105,402	\$56,101
Average		\$97,750	\$66,208
Median		\$97,833	\$64,776

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
A.T. Still U., Mesa	11	\$112,322	27.8%	\$79,772
Midwestern U.	28	\$116,481	26.8%	\$83,931
Loma Linda U.	1	\$109,356	28.5%	\$76,806
U. of the Pacific *	4	\$156,407	24.9%	\$117,407
U. Southern California	1	\$144,790	21.5%	\$112,240
Western U. Health Sciences	2	\$108,866	28.7%	\$76,316
Roseman U. of Health Sciences*	10	\$112,100	34.8%	\$79,550
Creighton U. (OOR)	19	\$92,156	33.9%	\$59,606
Marquette U. (OOR)	0	\$82,650	37.7%	\$50,100
Average		\$115,014	29.4%	\$81,748
Median		\$112,100	28.5%	\$79,550

OOR = Not located in a WICHE state; out-of-region.

† University of Utah offers resident tuition to PSEP students, resulting in a bigger tuition savings than is reflected here.

* U. of the Pacific and Roseman operate three-year accelerated programs; student receives four years of support over a three-year period, thus a higher rate of \$41,600 in AY 2025–26.

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$12,245	255%	\$6,240	\$97,850
	\$12,245	255%	\$6,240	\$99,455
	\$26,287	119%	\$4,913	\$95,634
	\$31,264	100%	\$0	\$96,381
	\$45,730	68%	\$0	\$102,191
	\$25,700	121%	\$5,500	\$104,784
	\$49,568	63%	\$0	\$103,199
	\$49,301	63%	\$0	\$105,402
	\$31,543	130%		\$100,612
	\$28,776	109%		\$100,823

Table 5. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Allopathic Medicine

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$37,250 • AY 2026-27 \$38,875

Supporting states: CNMI, Guam, Montana, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 37 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 4 • TOTAL COMBINED: 41

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
U. Arizona/Tucson	1	\$62,767	\$43,114
U. Arizona /ASU Phoenix	0	\$61,571	\$42,040
U.C. Davis	0	\$63,023	\$49,546
U.C. Irvine	0	\$63,023	\$50,778
U.C. Los Angeles	0	\$65,007	\$52,762
U.C. San Diego	0	\$58,482	\$46,237
U.C., San Francisco	0	\$68,162	\$55,917
U. Colorado Denver, Anschutz	6	\$73,811	\$47,856
U. Hawai'i	1	\$76,920	\$42,264
U. Nevada, Reno	0	\$70,064	\$41,361
U. New Mexico	1	\$54,161	\$24,767
U. North Dakota	4	\$68,439	\$36,122
Oregon Health & Science U.	10	\$80,776	\$54,468
U. Utah †	14	\$92,232	\$49,504
Average		\$68,460	\$45,481
Median		\$66,585	\$47,047

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
Loma Linda U.	4	\$73,855	50.4%	\$34,980
Mayo Clinic Arizona	0	\$67,900	54.9%	\$29,025
U. Southern California	0	\$79,191	47.0%	\$40,316
Average		\$73,649	50.8%	\$34,774

† University of Utah offers resident tuition to PSEP students, resulting in a bigger tuition savings than is reflected here.

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$19,653	190%	\$7,450	\$70,217
	\$19,531	191%	\$7,450	\$69,021
	\$13,477	276%	\$7,450	\$70,473
	\$12,245	304%	\$7,450	\$70,473
	\$12,245	304%	\$7,450	\$72,457
	\$12,245	304%	\$7,450	\$65,932
	\$12,245	304%	\$7,450	\$75,612
	\$25,955	144%	\$7,450	\$81,261
	\$34,656	107%	\$2,594	\$79,514
	\$28,703	130%	\$7,450	\$77,514
	\$29,394	127%	\$7,450	\$61,611
	\$32,317	115%	\$4,933	\$73,372
	\$26,308	142%	\$7,450	\$88,226
	\$42,728	87%	\$0	\$92,232
	\$22,979	195%	\$6,391	\$74,851
	\$22,804	167%	\$7,450	\$72,915

Table 6. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Occupational Therapy

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$16,300 • AY 2026-27 \$17,025

Supporting states: Alaska, CNMI, Guam, Hawai'i, Montana, Nevada, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 4 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 15 • TOTAL COMBINED: 19

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
Northern Arizona U.	0	\$54,359	\$34,489
Idaho State U.	0	\$52,072	\$ 25,609
U. New Mexico	0	\$37,396	\$21,409
U. North Dakota	0	\$38,401	\$27,050
U. South Dakota	1	\$39,253	\$20,399
U. of Utah †	3	\$68,572	\$37,319
Eastern Washington U.	0	\$44,478	\$22,647
U. Washington	0	\$47,012	\$27,004
Average		\$47,693	\$26,991
Median		\$45,745	\$26,307

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
A. T. Still U.	1	\$41,948	\$25,648	38.9%
Midwestern U.	1	\$55,384	\$39,084	29.4%
Loma Linda U. (phasing out)*	0			
Samuel Merritt U.	1	\$63,212	\$46,912	25.8%
University of Mary-Billings	4	\$35,627	\$19,327	45.8%
U. So. California	1	\$99,904	\$83,604	16.3%
Touro U., Nevada (phasing out)	4	\$46,288	\$29,988	35.2%
Pacific U.	2	\$45,182	\$28,882	36.1%
U. Puget Sound	1	\$67,744	\$51,444	24.1%
Average		\$56,911	\$40,611	31.4%
Median		\$50,836	\$34,536	32.3%

† University of Utah offers resident tuition to PSEP students, resulting in a bigger tuition savings than is reflected here.

* Did not submit tuition numbers for this field

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$19,870	82%	\$0	\$54,359
	\$ 26,463	62%	\$0	\$52,072
	\$15,987	102%	\$313	\$37,709
	\$11,351	144%	\$3,260	\$41,661
	\$18,854	86%	\$0	\$39,253
	\$31,253	52%	\$0	\$68,572
	\$21,831	75%	\$0	\$44,478
	\$20,008	81%	\$0	\$47,012
	\$20,702	85%	\$447	\$48,140
	\$19,939	82%	\$0	\$45,745

Table 7. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Optometry

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$21,475 • AY 2026-27 \$22,400

Supporting states: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawai'i, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming

TOTAL PRIVATE: 105

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
Midwestern U.	54	\$58,660	\$37,185	36.61%
Marshall B. Ketchum University	11	\$61,175	\$39,700	35.1%
Western U. Health Sciences	2	\$55,626	\$34,151	38.6%
Pacific U.	36	\$59,868	\$38,393	35.9%
Out-of-region schools	2			
Average		\$58,832	\$37,357	36.5%
Median		\$59,264	\$37,789	36.2%

Table 8. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Osteopathic Medicine

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$26,725 • AY 2026-27 \$27,875

Supporting states: Arizona, CNMI, Guam, Montana, and Wyoming

TOTAL PRIVATE: 63

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
A.T. Still U., Mesa	5	\$71,430	\$44,705	37.4%
Midwestern U.	29	\$86,617	\$59,892	30.9%
Touro U., California	0	\$74,825	\$48,100	35.7%
Western U. Health Sciences	7	\$72,165	\$45,440	37.0%
Rocky Vista University	8	\$73,020	\$46,295	36.6%
Touro U., Nevada	2	\$77,163	\$50,438	34.6%
Touro U., Montana	1	\$69,500	\$42,775	38.5%
Pacific Northwest U. of Health Sciences	11	\$67,763	\$41,038	39.4%
Average		\$74,060	\$47,335	36.3%
Median		\$72,593	\$45,868	36.8%

PSEP Support Fee Analysis tables continue on next page.

Table 9. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Pharmacy

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$9,525 • AY 2026-27 \$9,925

Supporting states: Alaska, CNMI, Guam, and Nevada

TOTAL PUBLIC: 2 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 11 • TOTAL COMBINED: 13

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
U. Arizona	0	\$52,260	\$32,428
U.C. San Francisco	0	\$79,027	\$66,782
U. Colorado Denver, Anschutz	0	\$41,569	\$32,774
U. Hawai'i, Hilo	0	\$46,994	\$30,050
Idaho State U.	0	\$50,482	\$25,084
U. Montana	0	\$42,920	\$17,796
U. New Mexico	0	\$46,880	\$23,639
North Dakota State U.	0	\$36,807	\$25,187
Oregon State U.	1	\$52,653	\$33,213
U of Utah	0	\$65,083	\$34,640
U. Washington	1	\$51,474	\$37,830
Washington State U.	0	\$31,694	\$27,314
U. Wyoming	0	\$33,915	\$23,511
Average		\$48,597	\$31,558
Median		\$46,994	\$30,050

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
Midwestern U.*	0	\$76,113		
U. of the Pacific*	0	\$90,384		
U. Southern California	0	\$72,645		
Western U. Health Sciences	1	\$62,351		
Regis University	0	\$43,565		
Roseman University*	10	\$65,760		
Pacific University*	0	\$63,021		
Average		\$67,691	\$56,352	17.2%
Median		\$65,760	\$53,060	16.7%

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee
	\$19,832	29%
	\$12,245	14%
	\$8,795	29%
	\$16,944	32%
	\$25,398	38%
	\$25,124	54%
	\$23,241	40%
	\$11,620	38%
	\$19,440	29%
	\$30,443	27%
	\$13,644	25%
	\$4,380	35%
	\$10,404	41%
	\$17,039	33%
	\$16,944	32%

Table 10. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Physical Therapy

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$17,975 • AY 2026-27 \$18,750

Supporting states: Alaska, CNMI, Guam, Hawai'i, Nevada, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 20 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 31 • TOTAL COMBINED: 51

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
Ca. State U. Fresno	0	\$50,398	\$31,558
U.C. San Fran/San Fran State U.	0	\$55,184	\$42,939
U. Colorado Denver, Anschutz	1	\$65,438	\$32,226
Idaho State U.	0	\$59,202	\$25,166
U. Montana	3	\$49,187	\$27,712
U. Nevada Las Vegas	2	\$55,242	\$36,300
U. New Mexico	0	\$42,387	\$27,607
U. North Dakota	1	\$38,181	\$26,830
U. South Dakota	1	\$44,897	\$22,578
U. Utah †	8	\$61,458	\$31,835
Eastern Washington U.	0	\$39,775	\$24,148
U. Washington	4	\$62,648	\$39,884
Average		\$52,000	\$30,732
Median		\$52,791	\$29,635

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
A. T. Still U.	1	\$43,038	\$25,063	41.8%
Midwestern U.	2	\$48,490	\$30,515	37.1%
Chapman U.	0	\$56,631	\$38,656	31.7%
Loma Linda U.	1	\$45,430	\$27,455	39.6%
Mt. St. Mary's U.	0	\$58,685	\$40,710	30.6%
Samuel Merritt U.	0	\$79,393	\$61,418	22.6%
U. of St. Augustine (San Marcos, CA)	0	\$55,036	\$37,061	32.7%
U. Southern California	0	\$86,125	\$68,150	20.9%
U. of the Pacific*	1	\$75,213	\$48,251	35.8%
Western U. Health Sciences	0	\$51,816	\$33,841	34.7%
Regis University	5	\$51,168	\$33,193	35.1%

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$18,840	95%	\$0	\$50,398
	\$12,245	147%	\$3,595	\$58,779
	\$33,212	54%	\$0	\$65,438
	\$34,036	53%	\$0	\$59,202
	\$21,475	84%	\$0	\$49,187
	\$18,942	95%	\$0	\$55,242
	\$14,780	122%	\$3,195	\$45,582
	\$11,351	158%	\$3,595	\$41,776
	\$22,319	81%	\$0	\$44,897
	\$29,623	61%	\$0	\$61,458
	\$15,627	115%	\$2,348	\$42,123
	\$22,764	79%	\$0	\$62,648
	\$21,268	95%	\$1,061	\$53,061
	\$20,209	89%	\$0	\$52,820

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
University of Mary - Bismarck	6	\$34,395	\$16,420	52.3%
George Fox U.	1	\$43,710	\$25,735	41.1%
Pacific U.	3	\$45,576	\$27,601	39.4%
Touro U. - Nevada	1	\$41,010	\$23,035	43.8%
Rocky Mtn. U. of Health Professions	9	\$47,700	\$29,725	37.7%
U. Puget Sound	1	\$49,440	\$31,465	36.4%
Average		\$53,697	\$35,194	36.1%
Median		\$49,440	\$31,465	36.4%

† University of Utah offers resident tuition to PSEP students, resulting in a bigger tuition savings than is reflected here.

* A two-year accelerated program; student receives three years of support over a two-year period, thus a higher rate of \$26,962 per year in AY 2025-26.

Table 11. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Physician Assistant

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$21,275 • AY 2026-27 \$22,225

Supporting states: Alaska, CNMI, Nevada, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 6 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 12 • TOTAL COMBINED: 18

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
Red Rocks Comm. College	0	\$61,337	\$47,992
U. Colorado Denver, Anschutz	0	\$54,047	\$25,163
Idaho State U.	2	\$80,035	\$50,533
U. North Dakota	0	\$42,333	\$30,312
Oregon Health & Science U.*	0	\$51,210	\$51,210
U. Utah †	1	\$62,000	\$40,444
U. Washington *	3	\$49,228	\$49,228
Average		\$57,170	\$42,126
Median		\$54,047	\$47,992

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
A. T. Still U.	1	\$58,537	\$37,262	36.3%
Midwestern U.	2	\$71,666	\$50,391	29.7%
Loma Linda U.	0	\$64,542	\$43,267	33.0%
Marshall B. Ketchum	0	\$51,156	\$29,881	41.6%
Samuel Merritt College	0	\$83,615	\$62,340	25.4%
Touro U. - California	0	\$46,924	\$25,649	45.3%
U. Southern California	0	\$85,909	\$64,634	24.8%
Western U. Health Sciences	0	\$57,626	\$36,351	36.9%
Idaho State U/ College of Idaho	0	\$80,594	\$59,319	26.4%
Touro U., Nevada	7	\$56,905	\$35,630	37.4%
Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions	1	\$57,909	\$36,634	36.7%
Pacific U.	1	\$70,797	\$49,522	30.1%
Average		\$65,515	\$44,240	33.6%
Median		\$61,540	\$40,265	34.7%

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$13,345	159%	\$4,255	\$65,592
	\$28,884	74%	\$0	\$54,047
	\$29,502	72%	\$0	\$80,035
	\$12,021	177%	\$4,255	\$46,588
	\$0	100%	\$0	\$51,210
	\$21,556	99%	\$0	\$62,000
	\$0	100%	\$0	\$49,228
	\$15,044	112%	\$1,216	\$58,386
	\$13,345	100%	\$0	\$54,047

† University of Utah offers resident tuition to PSEP students, resulting in a bigger tuition savings than is reflected here.

* OHSU and U. WASH tuition is the same for residents and nonresidents; support fee is credited and the student pays the balance.

Table 12. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Podiatry

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$18,525 • AY 2026-27 \$19,325
 Supporting states: Alaska, Arizona, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming

TOTAL PRIVATE: 11

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
Midwestern U.	9	\$57,786	\$39,261	32.1%
Samuel Merritt U. (Calif. Sch. of Pod. Med.)	0	\$47,098	\$28,573	39.3%
Western University of Health Sciences	2	\$50,887	\$32,362	36.4%
Average		\$51,924	\$33,399	35.9%

Table 13. Support Fee Analysis AY 2025-26: Veterinary Medicine

Approved Support Fees: AY 2025-26 \$36,950 • AY 2026-27 \$38,550
 Supporting states: CNMI, Guam, Montana, and Wyoming

TOTAL PUBLIC: 108 • TOTAL PRIVATE: 17 • TOTAL COMBINED: 125

Public Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	AY 2025-26 Nonresident Tuition & Fees	AY 2025-26 Resident Tuition & Fees
Colorado State U.	48	\$67,791	\$42,477
Oregon State U.	17	\$66,436	\$35,287
Washington State U.	43	\$68,070	\$31,292
Average		\$67,432	\$67,432

Private Institutions	Number of WICHE Students Enrolled	Full Private Tuition & Fees	Percentage of Full Private Tuition & Fees Covered by Support Fee	Tuition & Fees by WICHE Student
Midwestern University (Glendale)	17	\$77,631	\$40,681	47.6%
Average		\$77,631	\$40,681	47.6%

	Nonresident/ Resident Tuition Differential	Percentage of Resident/ Nonresident Differential Covered by Support Fee	Incentive to Program Capped at 20% of Support Fee (per student)	Total Revenue Received by Program (per Student)
	\$25,314	146%	\$7,390	\$75,181
	\$31,149	119%	\$5,801	\$72,237
	\$36,778	100%	\$172	\$68,242
	\$31,080	122%	\$4,454	\$71,887

Table 14. HECA Scenario Estimated Fiscal Impact of the PSEP Support Fees by State/Territory: AY 2027-28 and AY 2028-29 Summaries

State/ Territory	Number of Students	Approved Fees	HECA Scenario	HECA Scenario Projected Increase Over Prior AY	HECA Scenario	HECA Scenario Projected Increase Over Prior AY
				AY 2027-28	AY 2028-29	AY 2028-29
Alaska	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Arizona	134	\$4,083,000	\$4,241,829	\$158,829	\$4,406,836	\$165,007
Colorado	17	\$380,800	\$395,613	\$14,813	\$411,002	\$15,389
CNMI	1	\$38,550	\$40,050	\$1,500	\$41,608	\$1,558
Guam	4	\$57,650	\$59,893	\$2,243	\$62,222	\$2,330
Hawai'i	48	\$1,346,025	\$1,398,385	\$52,360	\$1,452,783	\$54,397
Montana	90	\$3,029,425	\$3,147,270	\$117,845	\$3,269,698	\$122,429
Nevada	38	\$733,075	\$761,592	\$28,517	\$791,218	\$29,626
New Mexico	68	\$2,400,800	\$2,494,191	\$93,391	\$2,591,215	\$97,024
North Dakota	43	\$1,202,200	\$1,248,966	\$46,766	\$1,297,550	\$48,585
Utah	28	\$599,525	\$622,847	\$23,322	\$647,075	\$24,229
Wyoming	99	\$2,707,275	\$2,812,588	\$105,313	\$2,921,998	\$109,410
TOTAL	570	\$16,578,325	\$17,223,222	\$644,897	\$17,893,205	\$669,983

Note: The HECA scenario is NOT recommended, and is included for comparison purposes only.

Table 15. Estimated Fiscal Impact of Standard PSEP Support Fees by State/Territory: AY 2027-28 and AY 2028-29 State/Territory Summaries — Specified Fields

State/ Territory	Number of Students	Approved Fees	Specified Fields Proposed Fees	Specified Fields Projected Increase Over Prior AY	Specified Fields Proposed Fees	Specified Fields Projected Increase Over Prior AY
	AY 2025-26	AY 2026-27	AY 2027-28	AY 2027-28	AY 2028-29	AY 2028-29
Alaska	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Arizona	134	\$4,083,000	\$4,157,068	\$74,068	\$4,234,469	\$77,401
Colorado	17	\$380,800	\$397,936	\$17,136	\$415,843	\$17,907
CNMI	1	\$38,550	\$38,550	\$0	\$38,550	\$0
Guam	4	\$57,650	\$60,244	\$2,594	\$62,955	\$2,711
Hawai'i	48	\$1,346,025	\$1,368,857	\$22,832	\$1,392,716	\$23,859
Montana	90	\$3,029,425	\$3,055,122	\$25,697	\$3,081,976	\$26,854
Nevada	38	\$733,075	\$747,123	\$14,048	\$761,803	\$14,680
New Mexico	68	\$2,400,800	\$2,404,832	\$4,032	\$2,409,045	\$4,213
North Dakota	43	\$1,202,200	\$1,225,384	\$23,184	\$1,249,611	\$24,227
Utah	28	\$599,525	\$626,504	\$26,979	\$654,696	\$28,193
Wyoming	99	\$2,707,275	\$2,754,531	\$47,256	\$2,803,913	\$49,382
TOTAL	570	\$16,578,325	\$16,836,150	\$257,825	\$17,105,578	\$269,427

Note: The numbers presented are estimates; each state/territory must verify its own numbers to account for fee variations at institutions where its students are enrolled; fees for accelerated programs are higher. The projected increases are in some instances slightly more or less than the proposed 4.5% increase because support fees were rounded. The number of students supported in each field also affects the total percentage increase.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the Project “Productivity, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge: A Practical Approach to Technology Return on Investment (PEAK)”

Summary

The Programs and Services’ project, Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success, subgrants funds to institutions of higher education in the West to implement technology solutions and analyze the impact on student transfer outcomes on identified pathways. An identified pain point across the projects was the hidden implementation, interoperability, and maintenance costs associated with commercially available technology solutions for institutions of higher education. WICHE intends to partner with the National Association of Collegiate and Business Officers (NACUBO) to produce a toolkit that will equip higher education institutions with protocols and methodologies for identifying hidden costs, measuring impact, and strengthening cross-institutional relationships to improve outcomes before, during, and after the procurement process.

The work stems from the recognition that enrollment and fiscal pressures demand streamlined, strategic financial decision-making at institutions of higher education.

Background

Procurement decision-making often occurs across the institution in silos and in the hands of individuals with varying levels of expertise in technology systems. The full cost of implementing new tools may be unclear until well after contracts have been signed. Procurement officers often turn to consortia for cost savings through jointly negotiated contracts and saved time and staff labor; however, institutions often grant purchasing permission to various stakeholders including but not limited to chief technology officers (CTOs), chief information officers (CIOs), chief academic officers (CAOs), provosts, and deans and faculty who may hold purchasing power within their departments. These stakeholders have varying levels of understanding of strategic needs, ad hoc solutions already in place, or purchasing occurring across the institution.

Procurement processes are not always transparent, and not every stakeholder with purchasing power is engaged in strategic budgetary and operational discussions. Stakeholders often rely on vendors to assess the potential value and impact of implementing a technology solution, and challenges with interoperability, customization, and implementation and maintenance aren’t always understood or communicated by third-party vendors. Because technology solutions produced by different companies are not often interoperable, gaps between parallel technology solutions are often ad hoc or manual, adding considerable hidden costs in labor, time, and efficiency.

While staff have identified specific areas of concern to target, the primary approach for this effort will be to serve as the convener. Because of the Programs and Services unit's multiple communities of practice in cost savings and procurement, technology and transfer, chief academic officers through the Western Academic Leadership Forum and Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, and humanities deans, there exists a deep roster of potential participants. While the specifics of the project may evolve based on participating partners, evolving policy and regulations, and expert guidance, the high-level, envisioned approach would be as follows:

- ▶ Establishing a network of experts. This phase would include meeting with and discussing ideas with leaders in education technology, strategic finance, and procurement to clarify areas of high impact and need.
- ▶ Solicit participation in a community of practice by cross-functional teams from institutions across the West.
- ▶ Developing a customizable toolkit including planning prompts and strategic frameworks to support cross-functional collaboration, resource alignment, and data-informed decision-making.
- ▶ Distribution, implementation, and next steps. The work would conclude with a substantial distribution plan, focusing on implementing recommendations where possible and identifying specific areas for further work.

Staff Fiscal Impact

The Cost-savings Partnerships is a revenue-producing area of work that includes Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) competitively awarded contracts for technology and student health insurance, as well as the WICHE Group Property Insurance program. These contracts leverage the benefits and potential volume of the region's purchasing power while saving institutions and other entities time and money by simplifying the procurement process. This proposed new work has a naturally aligned focus on operational efficiency, procurement challenges, and cost savings; therefore, it would be funded through an existing budget line for contracts and joint procurement.

This project would have fiscal and staffing impacts that would draw from unit funds. The initial estimate assumes that substantial and equivalent effort from NACUBO requires approximately 0.65 FTE over 24 months and a budget of \$479,709.

Action Requested

Staff request that the PAS Committee recommend that the Committee of the Whole approve this project and add it under the New Directions category of the PAS unit section of the Workplan.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the FY 2027 Workplan Section Pertaining to the Programs and Services Unit



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
Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)	W/S, V/A	Western	0.2 and consultants	Forum and Alliance members
Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) • 2027 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.4	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 50 institutions, 11 systems
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) • 2027 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.4	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 68 institutions, eight systems
Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	1.25	All WICHE states, CNMI, and Guam fund and/or enroll students through PSEP's 134 cooperating programs
Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.1	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 67 participating institutions
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.1	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 171 participating institutions
MHEC Technology Contracts	A/F, V/A	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.1	21 vendors offering hardware, software, printers and peripherals, data and networking, security services, and other technology services

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
MHECare Student Health Solutions	A/F, A/S	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.1	Two vendors offering student health and wellness insurance and services
WICHE Group Property Insurance	A/F	WICHE	0.1	Marsh and former MHEC MPP participating institutions and systems
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.15	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, Policy Analysis and Research unit

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, the establishment of academic objectives and priorities, and the cultivation of the essential skills of chief academic officers.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM (FORUM)** brings together WICHE region chief academic officers and senior academic leaders from four-year institutions, related 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 support from annual meeting sponsors.

The **WESTERN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC LEADERS (ALLIANCE)** brings together chief academic officers and senior academic leaders at community colleges and technical schools, related systems, and state coordinating and governing boards 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 healthcare professional programs across the region in 10 healthcare fields. Participating states and territories in the West appropriate funds to support their residents in these academic programs.

The **WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)** allows WICHE-region residents to pay reduced out-of-state tuition rates for over 2,200 master’s degrees, graduate certificates, and doctoral programs at participating public universities. 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 students hundreds of millions in tuition annually. Over 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.

MHEC TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS enables institutions to purchase hardware, software, and technology services through competitively bid cooperative purchasing agreements. Several contracts are available to K-12 districts; state, county, local governments; and education-related nonprofits. Hundreds of institutions and other entities in the WICHE region benefit from aggregated volume purchases that lower product costs and save money and time. This program is offered in partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC).

MHECARE STUDENT HEALTH SOLUTIONS offers savings through various health insurance options to students and their dependents who cannot obtain insurance from elsewhere. This program, implemented in partnership with MHEC, offers student health insurance and wellness services provided by UnitedHealthcare Student Resources and the HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, Inc.

The **WICHE GROUP PROPERTY INSURANCE** is exclusively available to institutions that formerly participated in the MHEC's Master Property Program (MPP). WICHE's sponsorship ensures these institutions can maintain campus property insurance.

Policy Analysis and Research unit staff provide support to the region through regular **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. The primary convening is a bimonthly call among state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) that fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues and helps support an institutionally focused call in collaboration with the Programs and Services unit.

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	0.1 12/24 – 11/26	Policy Analysis and Research unit, NEBHE, SREB
Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success	A/S, I	U.S.	Anonymous \$435,000 grant	0.25 2/24 – 10/26	13 institutions in 5 states
WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities	A/S, W/S	Western	Mellon Foundation \$1.5 million grant	0.5 (7/26 – 9/26 to complete reporting) 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 the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three other higher education regional compacts, on a project to educate and inform interested parties about 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 creating a data dashboard to provide the findings to the funder. The project concludes in fall 2026.

TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFER SUCCESS: An anonymous funder approved moving grant funds originally slated to support the technology infrastructure of the Interstate Passport® program to a new initiative called Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success. Since spring 2024, six projects involving 13 institutions across five states have been participating in a community of practice to support the implementation of

technology solutions that help students transfer credit between 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 build a new professional network with the fellows appointed at other institutions.

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.	TBD	TBD	Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, higher education organizations
No Holding Back – Tools for Assessing 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 unit

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 considering 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 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 strengthening NASNTIs' 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: In 2023, the Programs and Services (PAS) and Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) units collaborated with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) to provide institutions in the West with tools to (re)evaluate their administrative hold policies to improve student success and better use their data in policy formation. Staff have been collaboratively socializing the toolkit through presentations at national conferences with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). We will continue distributing these resources and seek new partners interested in the continued application of the tools and exploring policy implications.

Potential Future Projects

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

ALLIANCE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program would identify, develop, and prepare aspiring leaders for career advancement and success in progressively more complex administrative roles at community, junior, and technical colleges across the West. The curriculum for this program would emphasize coordination among academic affairs, student affairs, and enrollment management, as is common in higher education.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR EMERGING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY EXPERTS: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program, conducted in partnership with the PAR unit, would be designed specifically for those who work in higher education policymaking, policy analysis, and policy implementation settings. This program would serve to enhance the knowledge, skills, and capacity of emerging higher education policy experts.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR FACULTY ACROSS DISCIPLINES: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program would be designed specifically for tenured faculty across academic disciplines (e.g., arts and humanities, STEM, social sciences, and business and development) who have administrative aspirations. The curriculum would be designed to develop and prepare future college and university leaders to assume senior-level roles on campuses across the West.

DUAL MISSION INSTITUTION NETWORK AND CONVENING: Dual mission institutions are a unique and emergent institutional type that is present throughout the West. Representing a new model for higher education, dual mission institutions offer a range of bachelor's degrees, career-focused associate degrees, and workforce training programs. Their commitment to access, innovative credentialing practices, and strong industry partnerships allows them to meet the needs of their regions directly. This project would build on the work of the American Council on Education (ACE) and serve as a networking and learning space for senior academic leaders at dual mission institutions in the WICHE region.

PSEP ADMINISTRATION TIMELINE REDESIGN: To serve students, states, and institutions well, the administration of the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) seeks to balance the timelines of state legislatures and budget committees with the needs of student applicants and the institutions that they apply to. Working with a consultant, the Student Access Programs (SAP) team would review the current administrative process to learn more about how and when applicants are selected and notified, and how those selections are communicated to institutions and states. After this initial assessment, the team will determine the best way to redesign and implement a new timeline, if necessary.

PSEP TRANSPARENCY PROJECT: PSEP students do not have comparable tuition and contact information as students interested in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) and the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP). The SAP team, along with consultants, would like to evaluate which information is most important to PSEP students when selecting an academic program. The team, with technology support, would design new program pages that will function similarly to the WUE and WRGP online tuition savings finder pages. These pages would include tuition costs and relevant details on how the support fee is administered within the program, as well as important contact information and highlights of the program offerings. These pages would be updated annually by the professional programs to ensure up-to-date information for prospective and current students.

WUE AND WRGP INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER ENGAGEMENT: Institutional partners are integral to the continuation and expansion of WUE, WRGP, and PSEP, and engagement activities with these institutional partners may take many forms. The goal is not only to engage more with participating institutions but also to learn more about those institutions that appear to be a good fit for Student Access Programs that are not yet participating.

Exploration will begin with enrollment management leaders who use WICHE's tuition savings programs as a tool in their enrollment strategy to determine whether the team will need additional support from a consultant.

A NETWORK FOR CYBERSECURITY RESOURCE SHARING: Cybersecurity costs have steadily increased over the last decade, with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) introducing new risks and threats to institutional cybersecurity. This landscape introduces an increasingly unbalanced higher education infrastructure in which more highly resourced institutions in highly populated areas can maintain stronger cybersecurity and staffing, whereas less resourced institutions, especially those in rural and remote areas, face staffing shortages and lower operational budgets and are simply less equipped to respond to the expanding cybersecurity enterprise needs. Higher education faces unique and heightened risks due to the diversity of stakeholders and the need to manage sensitive student data. This project will partner with technical, nontechnical, and cybersecurity professionals at institutions of all sizes in the WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions to support sharing resources, promising practices, and sound policies.

A TOOLKIT TO ASSESS THE RETURN ON TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION: Building on work done through Cost-savings Partnerships and the Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiatives, staff propose developing a toolkit to help equip higher education institutions with a protocol and methodology to identify hidden costs, measure impact, and strengthen relationships across institutions to improve outcomes before, during, and after the procurement process. This project will partner with community colleges and universities in WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions to develop a clear understanding of all stakeholders involved in the procurement, implementation, and maintenance of technology systems at institutions of higher education. To accomplish this goal, WICHE proposes partnering with trusted experts, such as the National Association of Collegiate and University Business Officers (NACUBO), EDUCAUSE, and/or WCET, that have engaged in community-based problem solving on other issues around technology and strategic finance. The project will require forming cross-functional teams at institutions across the West to develop and test the toolkit and offer institutional perspectives.

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Monday, May 18, 2026

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | *Olympic, Mezzanine Level*

Committee Members

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

VACANT (AK)

Chad Sampson (AZ)

Robert Shireman (CA)

JB Holston (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

Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

STAFF

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research




Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives

Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA

Lisa Kirchherr, Administrative Assistant III

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

Action Items

 ACTION ITEM	Approval of November 13, 2025, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes	6-3
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the FY 2027 Workplan Section pertaining to the Policy Analysis and Research Unit	6-12
 ACTION ITEM	Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve WICHE's Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State* Legislation	6-25

Discussion Items

2026 Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting	6-29
WICHE Efforts Related to the Value of Higher Education in the West	

Information Items

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) Policy Modification Process Update	6-30
Tuition and Fees, Appropriations, and Financial Aid in the West, AY 2025-26: Trends and Implications	
Update on Unit Staffing	

Other Business

Adjournment

ACTION ITEM

Approval of November 13, 2025, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair
Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

Robert Shireman (CA)
Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
Wendy Hensel (HI)
Clayton Christian (MT), *proxy for Llew Jones*
Kyle Davison (ND), *proxy for Danita Bye*
Bill Soules (NM)
Michael Dembrow (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)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Danita Bye (ND)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)

Other Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ben Cannon (OR)

Staff Present

Kate Baca, Policy Analyst
Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA
Sophia Harris, Research Analyst
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA

Call to Order

Committee Chair Nathan Lukkes called the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee Meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. Patrick Lane called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Action Items

APPROVAL OF MAY 5, 2025, POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee Chair Lukkes proceeded with the review and approval of the May 5, 2025, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting minutes and called for a motion. Commissioner

Bill Soules MOVED TO APPROVE. Commissioner Frankie Eliptico SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO APPROVE WICHE'S POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO INFORMATION REQUESTS PERTAINING TO STATE* LEGISLATION

Committee Chair Lukkes introduced the item and asked Lane to describe the proposed policy. Lane described the policy proposal that would govern how staff handle information requests related to pending legislation. Information requests come to WICHE from a variety of stakeholders and that recent requests have involved state legislation related to state authorization and participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). He shared that WICHE's approach was to treat these information requests as confidential, while aiming to fulfill WICHE's responsibilities to its states in support of sound public policy. He noted that some Commissioners have raised concerns that this confidential approach can create issues with certain legislative topics.

As a result, Lane shared that staff were proposing to continue responding to information requests by presenting unbiased information, research, and analysis when staff have the relevant background and expertise. However, he noted the major change would be that when an information request is related to existing state legislation, staff would share the response to the information request, but not include the identity of the requestor, with the Commissioners and the state higher education executive officer (SHEEO) from that state. Based on requests from Commissioners, staff would also share with relevant state legislative committee chairs, vice chairs, and ranking members. He added that Commissioners could engage in dialogue with staff about the requests once fulfilled.

Commissioner Robert Shireman asked whether Commissioners would be consulted by staff before responses were prepared and sent to the requestor. Lane confirmed that, as written in the proposed approach, Commissioners would be consulted after staff complete the responses. Commissioner Shireman suggested that, although it was likely inappropriate to consult Commissioners and SHEEOs on every response, there may be cases where Commissioners have expertise and staff would benefit from their insights before responding. Lane emphasized that staff welcomed detailed feedback on the proposal. Commissioner Gerry Pollet expressed appreciation for the proposal and noted that he and Commissioner Mike Meotti worked with staff on the proposed policy, in part, because of the potential for difficulties if Commissioners are unaware of analyses and responses provided by staff. Commissioner Shireman recommended that the policy does not preclude consulting with Commissioners who have relevant expertise prior to completing an analysis for a requestor.

* **Note:** For this action item, the term "state" refers to states, territories, and freely associated states.

Chair Barbara Damron raised the issue of situations in which legislators or other requestors have a legitimate reason to request confidentiality as part of the legislative process. Committee Chair Lukkes noted three separate issues: knowledge of the request coming in; Commissioners contributing or having input to add to the response; and with whom the response is shared. He asked the committee whether Commissioners should be notified of the information request when it is received by staff, and which stakeholders can submit information requests fulfilled by staff. Lane responded that staff would respond to any legitimate state stakeholder, including governmental and non-governmental individuals. Lane noted that the potential needs for confidentiality shaped staff's existing approach, mirroring how other organizations respond to such requests, but the proposed approach would end the possibility of that confidentiality.

Commissioner Mike Smith voiced support for the proposal and for providing staff discretion to consult with Commissioners when preparing responses. He noted that providing flexibility that allows confidentiality may be warranted as many state legislative processes have similar approaches. He also wanted to ensure staff could maintain their independence in preparing responses. Commissioner Geoffrey Landward asked a question about whether staff notify Commissioners when appearing at legislative hearings. Lane and President Demarée Michelau responded that notification is an existing practice.

Commissioner Michael Dembrow requested clarification on the terms used in the proposal, specifically the meanings of "analysis" and "information," and noted that greater specificity would be useful. Commissioner Soules asked about the next steps following policy approval. Lane responded that staff was working on how to collect and disseminate WICHE policies. President Michelau added that there has not been a formal approach or handbook of approved policies and that currently staff refer to the approved action items and minutes from previous agenda books. WICHE is looking at how to use new tools to collect and make available all of these types of Commission-approved policies.

Commissioner Shireman reiterated the description by Committee Chair Lukkes of the three separate phases involved in the issue: the knowledge of a question, the shaping of the response, and the sharing of the response. Language in the proposal related to Commissioners sharing legal opinions would seem to be relevant for shaping responses. He further requested clarification about whether the step of sharing was limited to legal opinions. Lane explained the step of Commissioners sharing legal opinions was developed based on feedback from Commissioners and could include other relevant information. President Michelau clarified that, as written, the component of the proposed policy about dialogue between Commissioners and staff was intended to allow for conversation about the analysis and/or relevant legal opinions. Commissioner Shireman requested that an adjustment be made to ensure the policy does not prohibit staff from consulting with Commissioners before responding to an information request.

Commissioner Kyle Davison asked if the proposal was in response to a particular incident. Lane shared that it is primarily related to inquiries about SARA and that staff previously used an approach that emphasized the requestor's confidentiality.

Committee Chair Lukkes asked Lane if staff recommended that the proposal move forward or if changes were warranted. Lane said staff could revise the proposal with several suggested changes from the committee and present it to the Commission later. Commissioner Pollet suggested adding a sentence stating that staff were not precluded from consulting Commissioners to assist in developing a response. Commissioner Pollet MOVED TO APPROVE the policy with the clarifying language. Commissioner Shireman SECONDED the motion. During the discussion of the motion, Commissioner Dembrow said additional work was needed to include the other feedback from the committee in the proposal and, absent a need to approve it immediately, it would be worth taking time to incorporate all the feedback from the committee before approving the policy.

Commissioner Shireman also noted that part of the policy related to SARA may be unnecessary. Committee Chair Lukkes asked staff if there was an urgent need to pass the motion, Lane indicated that there was none. Commissioner Pollet agreed with the approach of having staff update the proposed policy and WITHDREW the motion. Commissioner Clayton Christian suggested revising the proposal with the recommendations and moving it through the Executive Committee for approval. Chair Damron agreed. Committee Chair Lukkes asked Commissioner Christian to clarify if this was a motion for staff to revise the proposal based on the feedback, circulate the new language to the PAR Committee, and, assuming the PAR Committee supports the language, present it to the Executive Committee for approval. Commissioner Christian confirmed and MOVED TO APPROVE this suggestion. Commissioner Dembrow SECONDED the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Items

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Lane reported that the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting in Seattle, Washington, in September 2025 had the greatest number of LAC members in attendance to date and summarized meeting topics. Lane reported that 32% of attendees completed the post-meeting survey and all respondents agreed that the meeting was worth their time and anticipated using information from the meeting in their upcoming legislative work. Lane thanked Christina Sedney for leading the meeting and Melissa Sanders for logistical support. Lane noted that, given the expected federal changes, there were areas for follow-up in the coming months. Lastly, Lane shared that the 2026 LAC meeting is expected to take place on September 14-15, 2026, in Bozeman, Montana.

Committee Chair Lukkes indicated that Commissioner Pollet was in attendance and may want to share his experience. Commissioner Pollet shared that LAC members greatly appreciated the meeting and that attendees he spoke with noted how useful it was and that they were taking away information they had not learned elsewhere. He shared examples of how the meeting had informed Washington's legislative efforts on behavioral health.

Commissioner Shireman brought up the issue of California not being represented on the LAC and not having attendees at the meeting. The California delegation has made efforts to increase participation but asked whether PAR staff had ideas to expand participation to include legislative staff as a potential opportunity for engagement by California.

Lane responded that scheduling can be an issue and noted that this year's LAC meeting took place during the final week of the California legislative session. He said that there has been some discussion about adjusting the meeting dates to better accommodate California but recognized that this could then affect attendance by other states. He added there has been some discussion about the inclusion of legislative staff at the meeting but noted that the intent of the LAC and the LAC meetings is about legislators. Lane shared legislative staff have attended in the past but did not participate in the meeting in the same capacity as legislators. Lane concluded by stating that one opportunity for better participation from California would be to make intentional trips to Sacramento to meet with legislators and legislative staff.

Commissioner Shireman said that he recognized that these meetings were not meant to be just legislative staff in attendance, but that it might be necessary for participation from California to include a narrow space for staff participation. He added that some legislative staff in California have long served on relevant committees and would be excellent participants in the meetings.

Lane informed the committee that a follow-up will be forthcoming regarding LAC appointments. He added that while appointments are made by the Commissioner serving on the Executive Committee, in practice, Commissioners confer with their delegation to make LAC appointments.

Lane noted that the session on Montana's degree completion initiative led by Joe Thiel from the Montana University System was of particular interest and that the presentation sparked a rich discussion on funding policy interventions.

Commissioner Smith asked how often reappointments are made to the LAC and when they are done. Lane responded that the appointment is two years and that each state has a different schedule. Commissioner Landward asked whether there was a limit on how many reappointments an individual can receive. Lane responded that there was no limit set by WICHE, but some states may have internal limits.

Commissioner Davison added that the key for the North Dakota delegation was consistent attendance and strong engagement, and that he appreciated the flexibility in the appointment process. Committee Chair Lukkes said he thought the committee's comments were great for nonpartisan, fact-based discussions.

SHORT-TERM CREDENTIALS

Lane shared that funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts allowed WICHE to complete a modest project on short-term credentials. This was part of a broader project on the unit's Workplan titled, "A Hole in State Policy." With support from Pew, Sedney completed a white paper focused on state approaches to short-term credentials. He added that part of the purpose of the work was to assist Pew with developing an internal strategy. WICHE's initial work included a landscape scan of Western and national activity, and Pew concluded it was useful and opted to move forward and engage more heavily in this area. He added that Pew would like to continue partnering with WICHE on this topic. Lane said that the initial thoughts on the next phase of the work would be a cohort approach, where a group of states convenes and identifies promising approaches related to state investment, data, consumer protection, value, and how to develop pathways for stackable credentials.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH WORKPLAN

Lane reminded Commissioners that each committee approves its Workplan in May of each year. Lane walked the committee through the Workplan and said feedback in the past indicated that the most important item on the Workplan is the project-related to postsecondary value. That work was moving forward in a few different ways, including the potential continuation of work with ECMC Foundation.

VALUE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Lane informed the committee that the goal was to bring together a working group of interested Commissioners to further discuss what work should be done on the broad question of value in higher education. The volunteers included Committee Chair Lukkes, Commissioners Tom Begich, Ellen Junn, Jim Chavez, Joe Schaffer, and Pollet. Others would be welcome to join.

He noted that the work with ECMC Foundation was a good start to evolve into a larger initiative. He also shared that there are opportunities within this work to identify how to embed the discussion of the value of higher education into existing work, such as Tuition and Fees in the West report, and work related to short-term credentials. He added that the goal of the working group was to enhance the economic, social, and civic value of postsecondary education in the West, which may require addressing core issues in higher education rather than simply promoting its benefits. He committed to emailing the committee on the topic and encouraged interested Commissioners to contact him to participate.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

Lane introduced Kate Baca to the committee to present the discussion item on open educational resources (OER). She provided background on OER and briefly described WICHE's ongoing research with a study of student outcomes at 14 institutions with over 70,000 students.

The preliminary results of the research showed students who access OER are more likely to complete degrees or transfer to a four-year institution but were also more likely to take longer to complete their degree. She said WICHE has potential explanations but will continue to research this issue. She noted that students using OER were also more likely to have a GPA above 3.0, though the effect was slightly less pronounced than the increase in completion odds.

Commissioner Landward asked a clarifying question, and Baca confirmed that students who took courses using no cost or low cost materials (NCLC) were 2.7 times more likely to complete or transfer.

Committee Chair Lukkes asked how the analysis can decipher between causation and correlation. Baca noted that the findings do not establish a direct cause, but the association was highly statistically significant.

Commissioner Landward asked if the analysis allowed for details by institution and whether institutions that have broadly adopted OER are impacting the results. Baca responded that the analysis indicated it was probable and that there was variation institution by institution. There are zero-cost degree pathways for students with no textbook costs but were not as common as having specific faculty who can use OER materials in their courses. She noted that while many institutions employ a zero textbook cost (ZTC) model, often using OER, only one of the 14 institutions was formally marking OER. This suggests clear benefits associated with no-cost or low-cost materials, though it remains unclear whether those outcomes are attributable specifically to OER. Further research will explore this distinction.

Commissioner Landward then inquired if the findings would be made available. Baca confirmed that the complete analysis would be released after each individual institution received detailed reports on its student outcomes.

Lane shared with the committee that there was a pilot study by WICHE a few years ago with a single institution. He noted that WICHE's research environment enables this type of research, and that WICHE can facilitate the sharing of student-level data and bring in quantitative researchers. He added that, at this point, the analysis was correlational, but the results were consistent with what one would expect if OER use benefits students. The biggest concern would be if this research showed the opposite results. Lane shared that staff would consider incorporating more qualitative research into the work.

Commissioner Dembrow asked whether WICHE facilitated states working together on OER. Baca responded that WICHE facilitates an OER Network and hosts an annual in-person convening.

Commissioner Dembrow asked how information about OER gets out to faculty members who might be interested, and Baca said that dissemination occurs primarily through word of mouth, but it depends on the state context. Lane noted that the goal was to help states scale the use and adoption of OER and shared that one of the grant deliverables was a guidebook to build the case for OER implementation with different stakeholders. In the next year this work will include a focus on supporting the scaling and implementation of OER in the Pacific and connections to value. He concluded that it was clear from WICHE's work that some states have more OER-related infrastructure than others.

Information Items

SARA POLICY MODIFICATION PROCESS

Molly Hall-Martin provided an update on the SARA Policy Modification Process (PMP). She provided background information about the process and shared that 32 proposals were submitted in 2025 and were reviewed by the Regional Steering Committees (RSCs). Nine proposals were approved by all four RSCs and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) board, including ones related to teach-out plans, ensuring institutions were evaluated on up-to-date financial information, clarifications on offerings on military installations, non-Title IV institutions, changes to provisional status, a change to complaint procedures, and changes to the initial application review process. W-SARA RSC submitted three proposals, but none were approved by all four RSCs.

Commissioner Ben Cannon thanked Hall-Martin for the updates and asked where the policy proposals were made available. Hall-Martin directed the committee members to the SARA policy online portal, where the text of the individual proposals, amendments, voting record, and rationales for the “not approved” votes can be viewed. Commissioner Shireman noted that there have been noticeable improvements in the process, and he appreciated the work that has been done.

Lane noted that W-SARA's proposal, which would allow states in very limited circumstances to enforce their own education-specific consumer protection laws, did not receive approval from any of the other regions. Lane noted that W-SARA also led the teach-out provision work in conjunction with the other regions, and the proposal passed. Commissioner Pollett asked about the proposals on which W-SARA was the sole “no” vote, and if there was a common theme. Lane responded that one proposal that was objected to was from NC-SARA for non-substantive changes to the SARA Policy Manual. Part of the proposal would have deleted the preamble, and W-SARA had proposed editing it to add more information

on consumer protection. The W-SARA RSC concluded that the changes were substantive and rejected the proposed amendment. Hall-Martin reported that the W-SARA RSC was the only “no” vote on several process related proposals that would have removed process language from policy. She added that the RSC thought this would reduce transparency. There was also a proposal to change the requirement that the PMP be an annual process that was built into another proposal, but the RSC felt it needed to be voted on separately. Other proposals rejected by W-SARA included one that would have changed the renewal process, leading to less frequent reviews of participating states, and another related to developing and amending guidance.

TUITION AND FEES IN THE WEST: ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-26 DETAILED DATA TABLES

Lane introduced Sophia Harris who shared the findings from the most recent *Tuition and Fees* report. WICHE’s survey showed resident undergraduate tuition and fees at four-year institutions increased an average of 4.2% compared to AY 2024-25. When adjusting for inflation, average tuition and fees in the region increased by just under 1%. Average tuition and fees have increased 0.6% over a 15-year period after adjusting for inflation. She then reported that in-district fees at public two-year institutions, excluding California, increased by an average of 3.3% compared to AY 2024-25. When adjusting for inflation, average tuition and fees increased at 0.1%; when including California tuition and fees for in-district at two-year institutions, they increased at 2% compared to last year. Lane shared that the report will be published and available to the public after the November 2025 Commission Meeting and that it is noteworthy that it is the first tuition and fees increase regionally in several years.

WICHE’S POSITIONS ON FEDERAL POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY

Lane reported that WICHE’s positions on federal postsecondary education policy are available in the November 2025 agenda book and that the positions are adopted through the PAR Committee and then sent to the Committee of the Whole for approval.

Adjournment

Committee Chair Lukkes closed the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve the FY 2027 Workplan Section Pertaining to the Policy Analysis and Research Unit

Note: The full Workplan section for the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) unit begins on page 6-14. Staff are providing the information below to note several important updates for Commissioners.

The following projects have been added to the Workplan since the May 2025 Commission Meeting:

- ▶ **Textbook Price Transparency:** This project was approved under the President's authority over projects with a budget under \$50,000. WICHE was approached by a funder, Michelson 20MM Foundation, with an interest in open educational resources (OER) and asked to carry out a landscape scan of state policies on the transparency of course materials.
- ▶ **Supporting State Opportunity Index Participation in the West:** This project was approved under the President's authority over projects with a budget under \$50,000. WICHE was approached by Strada Education Foundation to support its efforts to secure greater Western participation in the State Opportunity Index. Several Western states have not had sufficient survey participation to meet statistical requirements for inclusion in this effort.

The following previously approved projects have been reassigned to new sections as a result of receiving funding:

- ▶ **The Hole in State Policy – Short-term Credentials:** A version of this project was approved by the PAR Committee in 2021. The version that received funding from Pew Charitable Trusts is slightly broader than what was originally approved, with a focus on all providers of short-term credentials and support for state implementation of Workforce Pell. The original project focused on private credential providers that fell into a gap in state oversight, as they were neither degrees nor workforce training programs. The funded effort will engage Western states in identifying potential approaches to regulation and/or investment. The name of the project has also been slightly adjusted.
- ▶ **Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus:** This project was originally conceived of and approved as a regional convening. In partnership with the Jed Foundation, which has received funding to support this work, WICHE will collaborate with the three other regional education compacts (New England Board of Higher Education, Midwest Higher Education Compact, and Southern Education Regional Board) at a national meeting to identify promising approaches, as well as gaps and areas for growth, in supporting state policy and practice on behavioral health in postsecondary education.

Additional project and funding notes:

- ▶ **Increasing Access, Affordability, and Equity Using OER: A National Consortium:** This project is expected to conclude early in FY 2027, but staff have received indications from the funder that additional resources will be available to continue this work.
- ▶ **Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership:** This effort has been extended through December 2027. The additional funding to support this continuation will be provided by the Office of the Governor.



WICHE
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

WORKPLAN

FY 2027



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, Programs and Services unit
<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	2.45	NC-SARA, W-SARA, 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 discussions 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 regular **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. The primary convening is a bimonthly call among state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) that fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues and helps support an institutionally focused call in collaboration with the Programs and Services (PAS) unit.

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 jurisdiction's postsecondary contexts and data. The PAR 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 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 2027, WICHE will continue to identify webinar opportunities that will be of interest and use to the region.

The **WICHE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCALITY 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, V/A	U.S.	\$553,000	0.95 10/24 – 10/26	Hewlett Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	\$131,896	0.75 7/27 – 12/27	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	0.3 01/24 – 06/27	College Board, Lumina Foundation
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	0.25 9/24 – 8/29	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	0.6 1/25 – 8/26	ECMC Foundation
The Hole in State Policy: Short-term Credentials	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	WICHE region	\$598,000	0.65 5/26 – 12/28	Pew Charitable Trusts
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	National	\$150,000	0.25 1/26 – 8/26	Jed Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Trellis Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE Behavioral Health Program
Textbook Price Transparency	A/F, A/S, V/A	WICHE region	\$25,000	0.1 2/26 – 5/27	Michelson 20MM Foundation

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 New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) — focused on scaling the successful adoption of high-quality open educational resources (OER) to improve student outcomes, increase equity,

and improve affordability. Staff have received indications that this work is likely to receive additional funding.

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. WICHE also works closely with the Wyoming governor's office and the Wyoming Business Alliance 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, regional, and national forecasts of high school graduates. During FY 2027, staff will continue sharing lessons from the work and developing supplements, including analyses of projections for the Pacific region and assessing projections for male and female graduates.

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 those 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 through FY 2029.

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 a major concern in ensuring value in higher education, as non-completers are likely to receive 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. Staff received an extension through August 2026 to continue dissemination efforts.

THE HOLE IN STATE POLICY: SHORT TERM CREDENTIALS: WICHE previously completed a portion of the broad project envisioned here (and approved by the Commission) through convening key stakeholders and authoring a white paper on state approaches to short-term credentials. Building on that effort, WICHE expects to receive a 2.5-year grant from Pew Charitable Trusts to convene cohorts of states to examine key policy and data questions related to short-term credentials, including approaches to consumer protection, support for implementing Workforce Pell programs, and addressing private providers.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS:

The PAR unit is partnering with the Jed Foundation (JED) to host a national convening focused on state approaches to improving behavioral health in postsecondary education. JED has secured funding to support the convening in late FY 2026. WICHE continues to provide strategic direction and collaborate closely with JED in planning the meeting. Together with the other regional compacts, WICHE expects to use the meeting to outline additional future efforts to support this work in the West. This convening will accomplish some, though not all, of the project’s scope previously approved by the Commission.

TEXTBOOK PRICE TRANSPARENCY: With funding from Michelson 20MM Foundation, WICHE is conducting a landscape scan of legislation and policy in the West related to textbook price transparency. The project complements WICHE’s existing funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, focused on scaling the adoption of open educational resources (OER).

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
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

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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
National Task Force for College Closures	A/F, A/S, V/A		U.S.	\$750,000	1.5 18 months	MHEC, NEBHE, SHEEO, SREB
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I, W/S		Western	In-kind	.05 7/24–6/25	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 support opportunity. The project will also seek to partner with WICHE states, 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.

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 various stakeholders, with a focus on where that value does not meet 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 different 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.

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.

DUAL CREDIT POLICY AND RESEARCH: Dual credit is ubiquitous across the region. As it has spread, interest in better understanding the long-term impact, identifying the ways it can be improved, and how different funding approaches affect implementation and student success. The PAR unit will continue to identify opportunities to engage in this work in ways that benefit the West, including projects that would improve the overall data ecosystem, evaluate different policy approaches to dual credit, and examine different state approaches to serving students.

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 WICHE region to learn about successful strategies around access and success, accountability, finance, workforce, and innovation.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2026:

COLORADO POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS INITIATIVE PLANNING GRANT: WICHE served as the fiscal agent for Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative, which laid the foundation for an approach that would connect Colorado's opportunity seekers with high-quality education, training, and career opportunities. This four-month planning grant mapped out a statewide coalition that would aim to ultimately bridge the gap in messaging and advocacy between K-12 education and employers by leveraging strategic partnerships with postsecondary providers.

SUPPORTING STATE OPPORTUNITY INDEX PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST: This was a brief project approved by WICHE's President under her authority over projects under \$50,000. Through this work, WICHE worked with states and institutions in the West to increase participation in Strada Education Foundation's State Opportunity Index. This national survey had not previously secured sufficient participation in several Western states to report on key indicators of student success and state policy outcomes. The work began in March 2026 and was expected to be completed by the conclusion of FY 2026.

ACTION ITEM

WICHE Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State* Legislation

Summary

Through an iterative process involving the Executive and Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committees, WICHE has been working towards adopting a new internal policy for responding to requests for information, analysis, and research — termed “Information Requests” internally — that specifically relate to state legislation. Since the November 2025 Commission Meeting, during which the PAR Committee provided extensive feedback, both the Executive Committee and the PAR Committee have further considered the approach and provided feedback that materially revised the approach presented in November 2025 and moved the policy toward greater disclosure.

WICHE regularly serves as a source of unbiased data and information in response to a range of higher education questions from various state stakeholders. Past requests have focused on any number of topics, including summaries of state policies related to accelerated bachelor’s degrees, employee compensation approaches, research on dual credit, questions about state governance approaches, analysis of funding formulas, interpretations of policy related to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) requirements, and more. Serving as an unbiased source of data and information to education stakeholders throughout the region is central to WICHE’s mission and supports the development and implementation of sound public policy.

Recognizing the deliberative nature of this type of work, WICHE’s practice has been to provide responses to the requestor and share analyses only when requested by other state education stakeholders and to redact the name of the original requestor when sharing. Stemming from a response related to questions about how a bill would impact a state’s compliance with SARA requirements, some Commissioners have expressed interest in altering WICHE’s approach for Information Requests specifically related to legislation.

With this new policy, staff are aiming to accomplish the following goals:

- ▶ Provide clarity and certainty for staff and Commissioners about how Information Requests related to legislation are handled.
- ▶ Maintain the ability of state stakeholders to seek WICHE’s expert and unbiased analysis without compromising WICHE’s neutrality or hindering the willingness of state stakeholders to call on WICHE.
- ▶ Recognize that WICHE’s role within SARA differs from its other areas of work.

* Throughout this action item, the term “state” refers to states, territories, and freely associated states.

Staff have received substantial feedback in an iterative fashion from Commissioners. This updated version is intended to incorporate the varied feedback received from Commissioners and would implement a bifurcated approach to Information Requests. Staff recommend that the PAR Committee adopt the policy below that distinguishes between Information Requests related to legislation involving SARA (broad, proactive disclosure) and all other legislation-related Information Requests (disclosure only when requested, with identities redacted). Staff believe that this represents a reasonable middle ground approach between views advocating for complete disclosure and those concerned with maintaining some ability for requestors to receive deliberative analysis without broad disclosure.

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.

Background

Consistent with longstanding practice, staff will, if requested, provide unbiased information and analysis to state higher education and policy stakeholders about our programs or other areas in which staff have expertise. WICHE uses the term "Information Requests" for these types of questions and understands them to include any request for information, research, analysis, or policy interpretation.

Occasionally, these requests pertain to legislation under consideration, and sometimes that legislation involves questions about whether certain proposals are compliant with SARA policy. Because WICHE has a formal role of determining state compliance with SARA policy, the proposed approach treats these types of requests differently. For Information Requests related to legislation related to SARA compliance, staff will broadly disclose the requestor, the request, and the response. Other Information Requests will continue to be handled as WICHE has historically, with the response being shared beyond the requestor only when staff are asked to do so. When these requests are shared, the requestor's identity will be redacted.

Description

Compared to the version presented at the November 2025 Commission Meeting, this version:

- ▶ Clarifies what staff mean by "Information Requests."
- ▶ Establishes a bifurcated approach for requests related to SARA policy and all other requests related to legislation.
- ▶ Clarifies that staff must share SARA-related Information Requests and consult with Commissioners prior to finalizing the response.

- ▶ For SARA-related requests, clarifies that staff must disclose the identity of the requestor.
- ▶ Ensures that Commissioners may share any relevant information with staff that can inform the preparation of a response to an Information Request related to SARA policy.
- ▶ Ensures that staff will notify requestors of the details of the policy when receiving a request.

Additionally, at the 2025 November Commission Meeting some members of the PAR Committee suggested including provisions — consistent with current practice — that would allow requestors to pursue an Information Request confidentially. Under the bifurcated approach, requests unrelated to SARA policy will continue to be handled confidentially (though the response may be shared if WICHE is asked for it).

The following is a proposed policy to guide staff when responding to Information Requests — which are requests from a stakeholder in a state for detailed information, analysis, or research — that pertain to state legislation:

- ▶ When requested, staff are expected to provide information, analysis, and research to state higher education and policy stakeholders about our programs or other areas in which staff have expertise. Additionally, staff are encouraged to offer testimony, participate in public work sessions, and/or offer a formal response to committee or legislator requests. Staff will notify Commissioners of any accepted invitations to testify or participate in hearings.
- ▶ Because of WICHE’s formal role within the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), requests related to legislation that could affect state compliance with SARA policy are treated differently from requests on other topics.
- ▶ For Information Requests related to legislation that does not impact SARA compliance, staff will provide responses to the requestor and only share the response when asked by other stakeholders. When sharing the response, staff will redact the identity of the requestor. This approach is consistent with WICHE’s practice for responding to Information Requests unrelated to legislation.
- ▶ For Information Requests related to legislation impacting SARA compliance, staff will use the following approach:
 - The Information Request and other relevant materials will be shared with Commissioners and staff will request any additional viewpoints, data, or other information from Commissioners that may be relevant before presenting a final analysis to the requestor.
 - Other experts and stakeholders may be consulted to inform responses.
 - Responses will be shared with the Commissioners of the relevant state and the state higher education executive officer (SHEEO).

- Upon request, staff will share the analysis with the chairs, vice chairs, and ranking minority members of the relevant legislative committees.
 - The requestor's identity will not be redacted in any shared documents if they work for a public entity. For other requestors, the identity will be redacted only if such a redaction would be allowable under that state's laws related to public records or freedom of information requirements.
- ▶ When receiving an Information Request, staff will inform requestors of this policy in advance of preparing a response.

Staff Fiscal Impact

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

Action Requested

Staff request that the PAR Committee approve a recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to adopt the proposed policy for responding to Information Requests related to state legislation.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2026 Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting

The 2026 Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting will take place in Bozeman, Montana, on September 14 and 15. Potential topics include the following:

- ▶ Continued exploration of accreditation, state authorization, and federal oversight (the regulatory “triad”)
- ▶ Updates on federal policy and the intersection with state postsecondary and workforce development approaches
 - Workforce Pell
 - Accreditation
 - Impacts on research
- ▶ Postsecondary education funding models, including performance funding, responding to institutional budget challenges
- ▶ Continued examination of the value of higher education across different dimensions, including areas for improvement
- ▶ Dual enrollment funding approaches, “guardrails,” and research
- ▶ Connections between K-12, higher ed, and workforce (including a dual enrollment element)
- ▶ Athletics, athletic funding, and state legislative perspectives
- ▶ Examining employer alignment (and misalignment)
- ▶ Successful state approaches to improving mental health services and outcomes in postsecondary education
- ▶ Generative artificial intelligence (AI), state policy, and impacts on postsecondary education and future employment

INFORMATION ITEM

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Policy Modification Process Update

The WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA) has submitted and been involved in developing numerous policy modification proposals for the 2026 cycle. The following is a summary of those proposals:

PMP26-0808: 2.5.k – Education Specific Laws in Certain Instances

This proposal is a revised version of a proposal submitted in the 2025 cycle and would allow for the application of education-specific consumer protection laws on out-of-state institutions in certain limited instances.

PMP26-0809: 3.1.d – Reasons for Denial

This proposal would align institutional eligibility requirements with institutional loss of eligibility options, which are out of alignment following the approval and adoption of an earlier proposal. As it stands, a State Portal Entity (SPE) may remove an institution for the reasons listed in the proposal, but cannot deny them initial participation for those same reasons; as a result, the SPE has to admit the institution and then remove them.

PMP26-0810: 3.1.f – Institutional Mobility and Location

The proposal is intended to address the problem of increasing frequency where institutions are conducting questionable relocations for the purpose of SARA participation. It would allow SPEs — as well as the regional education compacts when location questions rise to that level — to consider a broader range of evidence to determine an institution's location.

PMP26-0811: 3.2.a Provisional Status – Noncompliance – Student Outcomes

This proposal would add a new reason for provisional status based on an institution's noncompliance with student outcomes requirements from an institutional accreditor or from a state or federal agency.

PMP26-0812: 3.2.a Provisional Status – Noncompliance – Triad

This proposal would add a new reason for provisional status based on an institution's noncompliance with any requirements from a partner in the regulatory triad, including a written notice or warning from an institutional accreditor or from a state or federal agency.

PMP26-0813: New 3.1.d – Eligibility Requirements

This proposal would prohibit participation by an institution whose owner or CEO was previously involved in a precipitous closure or was found to have engaged in fraud or any felony related to the administration of an institution.

PMP26-0814: New 3.4 – Host State Provisional Status

This proposal would allow a student's home state to place an out-of-state institution on provisional status within that state. Such action would be permitted only for the reasons for provisional status listed in the Policy Manual.

PMP26-0835: 5.3 – Field Trips and Seasonal Residential Activity

Proposal intended to address concerns raised by both state regulators and institutions about SARA coverage for multiday field trips. This is a particular challenge for Western states due to their geography and popular field trip destinations.

Plenary Session II

Navigating Healthcare Workforce Shortages:
Competition, Capacity, and the Road Ahead

Monday, May 18, 2026

2:45 – 4:00 p.m.

PLENARY SESSION II

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 2:45 – 4:00 p.m. | *Cascade Ballroom, Mezzanine Level*

Navigating Healthcare Workforce Shortages: Competition, Capacity, and the Road Ahead

Western states and the Pacific islands are actively building new approaches to strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline. Yet too often, states find themselves recruiting from one another for the same limited pool of clinicians, effectively shifting workers across borders rather than growing the overall supply. This plenary session focuses on identifying regional solutions that expand training capacity, reduce zero-sum competition, and support clinicians in practicing where they are most needed.

The session will open with a brief snapshot of state-level workforce projections (including, where possible, data for the Pacific islands) to ground the conversation in priority occupations and geographies. Panelists will then highlight promising approaches already underway that could inform shared, scalable solutions. A key focus will be on practical ways to increase clinical training capacity, especially preceptor and clinical placement slots. Panelists will surface approaches states and systems are using to expand placements, followed by Commissioner discussion of what might be adaptable across states and whether WICHE could facilitate multi-state coordination.

The session will touch on upcoming federal student loan policy changes (effective July 1, 2026) and potential implications for health profession programs and student affordability across the region. This financing context may also intersect with broader questions about where regional coordination is most useful. Building on these considerations, Commissioners will discuss where information-sharing or convening support from WICHE might be beneficial.

FACILITATOR

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair, Professor Emeritus and Visiting Professor of Nursing, University of New Mexico Health Sciences College of Nursing

PANELISTS

Anne Boerner, Project Director, NEXus

Janessa Graves, Director, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, Idaho (WWAMI) Rural Health Research Center (RHRC)

Lillian Montoya, President and CEO, CHRISTUS St. Vincent Health System

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Facilitator



Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair, and Professor Emeritus and Visiting Professor of Nursing, University of New Mexico Health Sciences College of Nursing

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM) is the Commission Immediate Past Chair, and Professor Emeritus and Visiting Professor of Nursing, University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences College of Nursing. Prior to that, she served as the chief government relations officer for UNM. She was also New Mexico's cabinet secretary of higher education for four years.

On the national level, Damron has been a National Academy of Medicine/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Congressional Fellow in the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP); an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow in the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions; a Congressional Fellow for Senator Lamar Alexander; Commissioner and 2025 Chair of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE); Commissioner of the Education Commission of the States; and sits on the Board of Directors of Complete College America.

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

Damron received a bachelor of science in nursing from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, a master of science in nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Panelists



Anne Boerner, Project Director, NEXus

Anne Boerner is the project director of NEXus (The Nursing Education Exchange) at the Western Institute of Nursing (WIN) where she leads the strategic planning, implementation, and administration of the online doctoral-level course exchange consortium. She has been with NEXus since 2018 and has 30 years of administrative experience in higher education.

Boerner has focused on graduate programs for over 15 years and has served on the administration of several higher education consortia. With a strong foundation in higher education administration, enrollment services, and consortium management, Boerner previously held leadership roles at the Oregon College of Art and Craft, the Corcoran College of Art + Design, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Her expertise lies at the intersection of student-centered services, financial planning, and academic partnerships. She is an active voice in academic collaboration, with recent presentations at WIN, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and the Midwest Nursing Research Society regarding the impact of online course sharing on academic environments. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland and is pursuing her MBA at Southern Oregon University.



Janessa Graves, Director, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, Idaho (WWAMI) Rural Health Research Center (RHRC)

Janessa M. Graves, PhD, MPH, is an associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Washington (UW) School of Medicine and director of the WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, Idaho) Rural Health Research Center. She also holds appointments at the UW

School of Public Health and Washington State University College of Nursing.

Graves is a nationally recognized health services researcher whose work draws on large-scale claims data and community-engaged methods to examine how workforce shortages shape care access and health outcomes in rural communities. Her research has informed state and federal policy discussions on Medicare reimbursement reform for mental health providers, peer support specialist workforce development, and rural healthcare spending. She has authored over 100 peer-reviewed publications, and her work has been covered by the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, NPR, and The Today Show. She serves on the boards of the Washington Rural Health Association and the Washington Poison Center, as well as on the editorial boards of several journals in the field. Graves earned her master of public health and doctorate from the UW School of Public Health, completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, and holds a bachelor's degree from Columbia University. She was a 2021-22 National Rural Health Association Fellow and lives with her family in rural northeastern Washington.



Lillian Montoya, President and CEO, CHRISTUS St. Vincent Health System

Lillian Montoya serves as president and CEO of CHRISTUS St. Vincent Health System, a regional market of CHRISTUS Health, providing comprehensive acute care to a seven-county area and is the largest private employer in north central New Mexico. She led an organizational and cultural transformation positioning the organization to earn a Best Place to Work recognition for six consecutive years, to earn among the highest associate engagement scores in CHRISTUS Health and successive recognition as a National Leapfrog Safety Grade of “A” hospital, and to become a part of the Mayo Clinic Care Network of hospitals for its commitment to quality, safety, associate engagement, and patient experience. Montoya also serves as a bank division board member for New Mexico Bank & Trust, and on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Economic Council. She is a board member and former chair of the New Mexico Hospital Association and the American Hospital Association Regional Policy Board Region 8. She is also a board member of the Santa Fe Opera. Previously, Montoya served in multiple senior leadership positions, including chief operating officer, chief administrative officer, and vice president of public affairs, marketing, communications, and advocacy, and served as the deputy director of the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education, leading New Mexico student financial aid policies and programs. She received a bachelor’s degree and an MBA from the University of New Mexico.

With more than 30 years of extensive experience in helping corporate, government and nonprofit leaders navigate strategic and organizational challenges, Montoya has demonstrated proven results in developing and implementing programs that make communities better places to live, work, and thrive.

Reception and Dinner

Monday, May 18, 2026

5:15 p.m.

RECEPTION AND DINNER

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 | 5:15 – 8:30 p.m. | *Meet in the Hotel Lobby*

Event Overview

Guests will enjoy a memorable evening experience at one of Seattle’s most iconic landmarks: the Space Needle. This event combines breathtaking views, regional history, and an elegant reception and dinner setting high above the city.

HOTEL DEPARTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

The group will gather in the hotel main lobby and depart promptly at 5:15 p.m. From the hotel, we will walk one block to Westlake Center, where we will board the Seattle Center Monorail for our journey to the Space Needle.

Details regarding monorail passes will be provided during the meeting. **Please note that monorail service concludes at 9:00 p.m.**, and departure from the Seattle Center campus area should be planned accordingly.

OBSERVATION DECK EXPERIENCE

Upon arrival at Seattle Center, guests will first ascend to the Space Needle Rotating Observation Deck, located more than 500 feet above the ground. This exclusive time allows attendees to take in the sweeping panoramic views that define the Pacific Northwest.

From the deck, views to see include:

- ▶ Downtown Seattle and Elliott Bay
- ▶ Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains to the west
- ▶ Mount Rainier to the south (weather permitting)
- ▶ Lake Union, Lake Washington, and the Cascade Range to the east

This immersive viewing experience offers a spectacular introduction to the region’s natural beauty and urban landscape.

Reception and Dinner

Following the observation deck visit, the group will move to the Puget Sound/Lake Union Room, where a hosted reception and dinner will be held. This private event space features expansive windows and an atmosphere ideal for conversation, networking, and enjoying the city’s skyline as the evening settles in.

The evening program at the Space Needle will conclude at 8:30 p.m., allowing ample time to return via the monorail before service ends.

Historical Significance of the Space Needle

The Space Needle is the most recognized symbol of Seattle and one of the most distinctive structures in the United States. Conceived as a visionary statement of innovation and optimism, the Space Needle was built for the 1962 Century 21 Exposition, commonly known as the Seattle World's Fair.

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

At the height of America's Space Age optimism, the World's Fair focused on themes of science, technology, and the future. The Space Needle was designed to capture this forward-looking vision. Standing 605 feet tall, it was inspired by the then futuristic concepts of space travel and modern engineering, evoking the image of a flying saucer perched atop a tower.

Designed by Edward E. Carlson, John Graham Jr., and Victor Steinbrueck, the structure was engineered to withstand powerful earthquakes and winds — an important consideration in the Pacific Northwest. When it opened, it was the tallest structure west of the Mississippi River.

ENDURING CULTURAL ICON

Since 1962, the Space Needle has become inseparable from Seattle's identity. It represents the region's long standing commitment to innovation, exploration, and design excellence — values that continue to shape the Pacific Northwest today.

Over the decades, the Space Needle has undergone thoughtful renovations to preserve its legacy while enhancing the visitor experience. Modern upgrades now feature floor-to-ceiling glass, improved seismic safety, and rotating glass floors that allow guests to see the city below in an entirely new way, blending historic architecture with modern technology.

History of the Seattle Center Monorail

The Seattle Center Monorail is both a functional transit system and a cherished piece of Seattle history. Like the Space Needle, it was constructed for the 1962 World's Fair as a demonstration of futuristic urban transportation. It opened in the same year as the Space Needle, and was designed to showcase a fast, clean, and efficient way to move people through a growing city. It connects Westlake Center in downtown Seattle with the Seattle Center campus, covering the distance in about two minutes.

At the time of its debut, the monorail represented bold thinking about the future of public transportation. Seattle's monorail endured the test of time and is an enjoyable experience for all ages.

A LIVING LANDMARK

Today, the monorail remains fully operational and widely used by residents and visitors alike. It stands as one of the few surviving monorail systems from the World's Fair era and serves both practical and nostalgic purposes. The monorail provides a practical means of transportation while reflecting an important period in Seattle's development

A DISTINCTLY SEATTLE EXPERIENCE

Together, the monorail ride and the Space Needle experience will offer a unique experience that reflects Seattle's history, character, and regional landscape — scenes recognizable to fans of *Frasier* and to visitors alike. From panoramic views of the Pacific Northwest to dining above the city itself, this reception and dinner will celebrate not only the occasion but also the spirit of the region that hosts it.

Overview of the Seattle Center Campus (Near the Space Needle)

The Seattle Center campus is a 74-acre arts, culture, and entertainment district that includes some of the city's most iconic museums and public spaces. The campus offers a full day's worth of museums, dining, and cultural experiences, all within a compact, walkable area easily accessible via the Seattle Center Monorail. It is an ideal area close to the hotel for meeting attendees to explore before or after the Commission Meeting, with everything located within a short walk. wonderfulmuseums.com

MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

▶ Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP)

A striking, architecturally bold museum inspired by Jimi Hendrix, featuring exhibits on music icons, sci-fi, fantasy, and pop culture. Visitors can explore artifacts from artists like Bo Diddley and Bob Dylan and immerse themselves in interactive galleries. mopop.org

▶ Chihuly Garden and Glass

An indoor-outdoor museum showcasing Dale Chihuly's world famous, large-scale glass sculptures. The galleries and glasshouse offer vivid, colorful installations that are among Seattle's most photographed sights. chihulygardenandglass.com

▶ Pacific Science Center

A hands-on science museum with rotating exhibits, a tropical butterfly house, laser shows, and IMAX theaters. It is an engaging stop for adults and families alike. pacificsciencecenter.org

▶ Seattle Children's Museum

Designed for children 10 and under, this museum offers hands on cultural and educational exhibits — ideal for attendees traveling with family. seattlechildrensmuseum.org

▶ **Seattle Center Campus**

In addition to the Space Needle, the broader campus includes theaters, public art, fountains and green spaces. seattlecenter.com

ARMORY FOOD & EVENT HALL (SEATTLE CENTER FOOD COURT)

The Seattle Center Armory Food & Event Hall is the main dining hub on campus, offering a wide variety of local and international food options — from artisan sandwiches and tacos to Mediterranean dishes, pizza, seafood, and ice cream. It is lively, family friendly, and conveniently located for quick meals between activities. The Armory is open daily and provides ample seating for breakfast, lunch and dinner. seattlecenter.com/explore/food-and-drink

ADDITIONAL NEARBY SPACES AND EXPERIENCES

▶ **Science Center Outdoor Water Area**

An outdoor extension of the Pacific Science Center with interactive water features — fun for families and a pleasant outdoor stop.

▶ **Holocaust Center for Humanity**

A small but powerful museum offering exhibits and educational materials focused on Holocaust history and human rights. holocaustcenterseattle.org

Popular Locations to Visit in Downtown Seattle

SEATTLE WATERFRONT AND PIER DISTRICT

The Seattle Waterfront and Pier District offer one of the most scenic and relaxing areas to explore in the city, stretching along Elliott Bay with sweeping views of the Olympic Mountains, ferries gliding across the water, and a lively mix of shops, restaurants, and attractions. Visitors can stroll the piers, enjoy fresh seafood, browse local boutiques, or simply take in the sights and sounds of the maritime atmosphere. Key highlights of the area include Pier 57, home to the Seattle Great Wheel and Miner’s Landing; Pier 59, where the Seattle Aquarium showcases marine life of the Pacific Northwest; and the revitalized Waterfront Park, which provides wide walking paths, seating areas, and public art. It’s an easy place to spend an hour or an afternoon, with plenty of spots to grab a coffee, enjoy a meal, or watch the sunset.

From The Westin Seattle, the waterfront is a pleasant 10–15 minute walk. The simplest route is to head south on 5th Avenue, then turn right on Pine Street and continue downhill toward the water. Pine Street leads directly to Pier 62/63 and the central waterfront area, placing you right in the middle of the piers and attractions. The walk is downhill on the way there and slightly uphill returning, but it is manageable and well traveled. Once you arrive,

the entire waterfront is easy to navigate on foot, making it an ideal option for attendees with a bit of free time before or after the meeting.

RECOMMENDED STOPS ALONG THE SEATTLE WATERFRONT

- ▶ **Pier 62/63 – Waterfront Park**
A beautifully redeveloped public space with wide walking paths, seating areas, and views of Elliott Bay. It is a perfect first stop when arriving from Pine Street.
- ▶ **Seattle Aquarium (Pier 59)**
A popular attraction featuring Pacific Northwest marine life, including otters, seals, and immersive underwater exhibits.
- ▶ **Miner’s Landing & The Seattle Great Wheel (Pier 57)**
A lively pier with shops, casual dining, and the iconic Great Wheel. The Ferris wheel offers sweeping views of the bay and skyline — especially stunning at sunset.
- ▶ **Pike Place Market (just above the Waterfront)**
A short walk uphill from the piers, this historic market is filled with local vendors, fresh seafood, flowers, crafts, and small eateries. It is one of Seattle’s most beloved landmarks. If you want to catch a large fish tossed to you, this is the place to visit!
- ▶ **Olympic Sculpture Park (north end of the Waterfront)**
An outdoor extension of the Seattle Art Museum featuring large-scale sculptures, waterfront paths, and green space.

A COFFEE LOVER’S WALKING ROUTE (STARTING AT PIKE PLACE MARKET)

- ▶ **Original Starbucks – 1912 Pike Place**
Begin at the historic first store. The original Starbucks, located at 1912 Pike Place, is a beloved stop for visitors exploring Pike Place Market. Opened in 1971, this small storefront was the company’s first location and still features its vintage brown “Starbucks Coffee, Tea, Spices” logo and historic interior details. While it now serves handcrafted beverages, the shop maintains its early character and continues to offer whole bean coffee, making it a fun, nostalgic stop for coffee enthusiasts. Because it is a popular landmark, there is often a line — but the atmosphere and sense of history make it worth the visit.
- ▶ **Storyville Coffee – Pike Place Market (upper level)**
Just steps away inside the Market, Storyville offers a warm, quiet café with excellent espresso, pastries, and views overlooking the Market. A great place to sit and relax.
- ▶ **Ghost Alley Espresso (under the market sign)**
Tucked beneath the iconic Public Market Center sign, this tiny espresso bar is known for creative drinks and local charm. It is a quick and fun stop.

▶ **Local Color Art & Espresso (across from the Market)**

Part art gallery, part café, this spot offers locally roasted coffee in a colorful, creative space. A nice place to browse and sip.

▶ **Anchorhead Coffee – 3rd & Pike (short walk up the hill)**

A modern Seattle favorite known for inventive drinks like the “Honey Bunches of Oats Latte” and excellent cold brew. A great final stop if you want something unique.

BEYOND THE SKYLINE: A FERRY ADVENTURE AND AN EXCEPTIONAL DINING EXPERIENCE

▶ **The Seattle-Bainbridge Island Ferry**

The Seattle–Bainbridge Island ferry is one of the most scenic and affordable experiences in the city. Departing from Pier 52, the ferry crosses Elliott Bay in about 35 minutes, offering panoramic views of the skyline, mountains, and harbor. It is a favorite for both locals and visitors.

The ferry is very affordable. Passengers walking on pay only a modest fare, and the return trip to Seattle is free for foot passengers. Once on Bainbridge Island, you can explore the charming town of Winslow, filled with cafés for breakfast, lunch or dinner, boutiques, tasting rooms, and waterfront paths, all within walking distance of the ferry terminal.

▶ **Ivar’s Salmon House**

Ivar’s Salmon House is a beloved Seattle landmark located on the north shore of Lake Union, known for its alder smoked seafood, Northwest Native–inspired architecture, and beautiful, sweeping waterfront views. Founded by Seattle restaurateur and local icon Ivar Haglund, the restaurant reflects his legacy of hospitality and maritime charm. The dining experience includes the beauty of the traditional longhouse-style woodwork, historic tribal art, and an open-pit alder-smoke barbecue where salmon is cooked in the traditional Northwest style. Dining here feels like stepping into a piece of Seattle’s cultural and culinary history.

From The Westin Seattle, Ivar’s Salmon House is about a 15-minute drive, depending on traffic. Because it’s not easily walkable from downtown, attendees will need to take a rideshare or taxi to reach the restaurant. The short trip is well worth it: the lakeside setting offers beautiful views of boats, seaplanes, and the city skyline, making it an ideal spot for a memorable lunch or dinner before or after meeting activities.

Roundtable Discussions Session II

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Roundtable 3

*Artificial Intelligence in Higher
Education: Aligning Learning with the
Future of Work*

Roundtable 4

*Dual and Concurrent Enrollment: State
Approaches and Takeaways*

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SESSION II

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 | 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Roundtable 3 – Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Aligning Learning with the Future of Work

(ACCESS & SUCCESS; WORKFORCE & SOCIETY) | *Vashon, One floor up from Mezzanine Level*

Artificial intelligence is reshaping job roles across the West, heightening the need for AI literacy, durable skills (e.g., problem-solving, data reasoning, communication), and clear institutional policies for safe, effective use.

This roundtable focuses on aligning higher education with employer demand, including the skills and behaviors needed in a human-AI workplace, how to embed them across programs, and the governance required to guide responsible deployment, including in rural and remote settings.

This session will focus on ways Western states, territories, and institutions can strengthen AI-workforce alignment: defining competencies with employers, supporting faculty and staff development for AI-enabled instruction and services, establishing guardrails and course-level expectations, and signaling value to learners through credentials and outcomes tracking. The discussion aims to surface actionable steps for Commissioners to strengthen institutional readiness and support graduates' preparation for AI-enabled work.

FACILITATOR

Commissioner John Carmichael (WA), President, The Evergreen State College

PANELISTS

Colleen Kerr, Assistant General Counsel, AI Economy Institute, Microsoft AI for Good Lab
Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV), Professor, Truckee Meadows Community College

Roundtable 4 – Dual and Concurrent Enrollment: State Approaches and Takeaways

(ACCESS & SUCCESS; AFFORDABILITY & FINANCE) | *Olympic, Mezzanine Level*

Building on the November Commission meeting's review of the national research on dual and concurrent enrollment, this roundtable shifts the focus to state policy and practice. Commissioners will share concrete examples of how their states and territories structure dual and concurrent enrollment, including funding models, program design, transfer guarantees, quality assurance, and state-level expectations for institutions and districts.

Roundtable participants will discuss how different Western states approach funding (such as tuition-free models, shared-cost arrangements, district reimbursements, and state appropriations), quality standards, and coordination between K-12 and higher education. The session will also explore how declining K-12 enrollments are already affecting dual and concurrent enrollment pipelines and what this means for institutional enrollments, budgets, and regional program capacity. Commissioners will consider how states are preparing for these shifts and what strategies may help sustain access and participation as cohorts shrink. The session is designed as a collaborative, state-to-state exchange focused on actionable takeaways. Commissioners will leave with a clearer sense of how different Western states approach these programs and concrete ideas they can adapt or explore at home.

FACILITATOR

Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

PANELISTS

Commissioner JB Holston (CO), Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Commissioner Joseph Schaffer (WY), President, Laramie County Community College

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Roundtable 3

FACILITATOR



Commissioner John Carmichael (WA), President, The Evergreen State College

John Carmichael was appointed the seventh president of The Evergreen State College in Washington in 2021. Carmichael earned a doctorate in education and human resource studies from Colorado State University and holds a bachelor of arts and master of public administration from Evergreen. In 28 years at Evergreen, he has served in a variety of roles, including chief of staff, secretary to the Board of Trustees, and vice president for finance and operations. Over the past year, Carmichael has discussed artificial intelligence (AI) with alumni working in AI, donors, and employers. Earlier this year, he charged the college's first AI governance committee.



Colleen Kerr, Assistant General Counsel, AI Economy Institute, Microsoft AI for Good Lab

Colleen Kerr is assistant general counsel at Microsoft, where she leads Microsoft's AI Economy Institute (AIEI), part of Microsoft's AI for Good Lab. In this role, she helps guide Microsoft's efforts to understand and shape the economic, workforce, and societal impacts of artificial intelligence, with a focus on ensuring that communities, institutions, and industries can adapt to generative AI in ways that expand opportunity and strengthen economic resilience. AIEI's work spans issues including education and skills, the future of work, and regional innovation, grounded in understanding how AI diffuses across sectors and geographies.

Prior to joining the AI for Good Lab, Kerr served as Microsoft's senior director for government affairs for Washington state and British Columbia, leading Microsoft's Cascadia government affairs program. She joined Microsoft from Washington State University, where she spent more than a decade as vice president and chief legislative officer, leading external affairs and government relations. Earlier in her career, she held senior legislative and policy roles in Washington state government, including as deputy chief of staff for the Washington State Senate Democratic Caucus and as chief of staff to the Senate Majority Leader.



Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV), Professor, Truckee Meadows Community College

Fred Lokken is dean of WebCollege and a tenured professor of political science at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. He served as chair of the Nevada Distance Education Directors Group for seven years and has been a board member of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) since 2003. He also served as chair elect, chair, and past chair of the ITC. Lokken also serves as chair of the Coalition of Affiliated Councils (COAC) of the AACC. He has been a member of the WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies National Academic Integrity Task force for the past two years. He received a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, a master’s degree in political science from Washington State University, and completed coursework in political science toward a doctorate from the University of British Columbia.

Roundtable 4

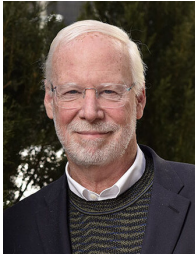
FACILITATOR



Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Colleen Falkenstern serves as the director of evidence and strategic initiatives in the Policy Analysis and Research unit at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). In her role, she leads the unit’s work on a range of postsecondary education data and research initiatives and the development of data resources to support better informed decision-making in the West. These resources include WICHE’s annual collection of tuition and fees data and WICHE’s quadrennial projections of high school graduates, *Knocking at the College Door*. In her time at WICHE, she has worked on projects supporting Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs), addressing healthcare workforce issues, improving alignment between higher education and workforce, and postsecondary completion. She received a bachelor’s degree in marketing and management from the University of South Carolina and a master’s degree in higher education from the University of Denver.

PANELISTS



Commissioner JB Holston (CO), Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

JB Holston was appointed executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education by Gov. Jared Polis, assuming the role in January 2026. Holston is a business, civic, and higher education leader with more than 30 years of experience spanning entrepreneurship, public policy media, and innovation.

Before joining the department, Holston served as dean of the Daniel Felix Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Denver, where he focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration. His career also includes senior leadership roles in the private sector, including executive positions at media and technology companies, as well as chief executive officer of the Greater Washington Partnership, a regional economic development organization.

In Colorado, Holston has been a key figure in the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem. He was the founding executive director of Blackstone Entrepreneurs Network and a co-founder of several civic initiatives, including the Colorado Media Project and the Colorado Mass Timber Coalition. His work has emphasized inclusive growth, innovation, and talent development.

Holston holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University.



Commissioner Joseph Schaffer (WY), President, Laramie County Community College

Joseph Schaffer is the president of Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he has led significant institutional growth and transformation. During his tenure, the college has completed nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in facilities improvements, celebrated multiple record-setting graduating classes, and increased graduation rates by more than 100%. A first-generation college student whose life was changed by an associate's degree, he has dedicated his career to strengthening the mission and impact of open access teaching institutions in rural and Western states. Schaffer has more than 25 years of experience in higher education and has served as a college CEO for the past 17 years, previously leading Great Falls College-Montana State University. He is active nationally in higher education policy and leadership, having served as chair of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Community Colleges and in leadership roles with numerous national organizations focused on student success, rural colleges, and higher education redesign and innovation.

He currently serves on several regional and national boards, including the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and the Education Commission of the States. Schaffer frequently speaks and writes on leadership, change, rural higher education, and the future, with a particular focus on how institutions can adapt to better serve students, communities, and regional economies.

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Tuesday, May 19, 2026
10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – BUSINESS SESSION

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 | 10:00 – 11:15 a.m. | *Cascade Ballroom, Mezzanine Level*

Agenda

Call to Order

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

 **Approval of the November 14, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes** 10-3

Report of the Chair and Report of the President 10-15

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair
President Demarée Michelau

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee November 2025 to May 2026 10-29

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Report on the President's Evaluation

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Commissioner Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Programs and Services Committee

Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

 **Approval of the Professional Student Exchange Program Support Fees for the AY 2027-28 and AY 2028-29 Biennium** 5-20

Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Committee









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

Report of the WCET Executive Council

Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV)

 **Approval and Adoption of Proposed Amendments to the WICHE Bylaws** 10-37

 **Approval of Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) Operating Guidelines** 10-50

	Approval of the FY 2027 Salary and Benefit Recommendations	10-55
	Approval of FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget – General and Non-General Fund Budgets	10-57
	Approval of Dedicated Reserve Levels for Non-General Fund Activities	10-65
	Approval of Annual Dues for FY 2028 and FY 2029 Biennium	10-70
	Acceptance of the FY 2025 Single Audit Reports	10-76
	Approval of the FY 2027 Workplan	10-90
	Approval of the Conflict of Interest Policy for the WICHE Commission	10-135
	Affirmation of Codes of Ethics for the WICHE Commission, President, and Staff	10-138

INFORMATION ITEM

Contract Signatory Authority and Delegation Under WICHE Bylaws	10-142
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Other Business

Adjourn Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Meeting Evaluation

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/May2026CommMtg>



Thank you for your feedback!

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the November 14, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Todd Haynie (AZ)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
Terrence George (HI)
David Lassner (HI)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Bill Soules (NM)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Michael Dembrow (OR)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Nathan Lukkes (SD)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Ashley Wenger-Slaba (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)
Patricia Jones Horton (UT)
John Carmichael (WA)
Gerry Pollet (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)
Mike Smith (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Sean Parnell (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Angie Paccione (CO)
Wendy Hensel (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID)
Jennifer White (ID)
Llew Jones (MT)
Patricia Charlton (NV)
Cathy Dinauer (NV)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
Danita Bye (ND)
Brent Sanford (ND)
Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Staff Present

Kate Baca, Policy Analyst
Malerie Barnes, Director, Student Access Programs
Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and Administration
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Digital Learning
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and the Commission
Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development
Joseph Garcia, Senior Graphic Designer
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA
Todd Helvig, Director of Education and Training, Behavioral Health Program

Tonya Horn, Director of Program Evaluation and Research, Behavioral Health Program
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, President
Linc Neisheim, Chief Technology Officer
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA

Jeanette Porter, Senior Administrative Coordinator
Megan Raymond, Senior Director, Membership and Programs, WCET
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President, Communications

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Laura Ewing reported to Chair Damron that the Committee of the Whole had a quorum.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 6, 2025, 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 November 2025 agenda book. Chair Damron gave an additional overview of her leadership work. She provided an update on key activities and accomplishments since the May 2025 Commission Meeting in Park City, Utah.

- ▶ She supported WICHE's Psychology Internship Consortia, including helping establish placements at Los Alamos National Laboratory and attending internship graduations in New Mexico and Guam.
- ▶ She worked with Guam's leadership and the University of New Mexico to expand behavioral health training opportunities for the Pacific Island jurisdictions.
- ▶ She participated in the 30th anniversary meeting of the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) in Seattle, Washington, where legislators from 12 states and Guam engaged in productive higher education discussions.
- ▶ She served on a panel at the WCET annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, that highlighted WICHE's leadership in digital learning.
- ▶ She oversaw the Executive Committee's work between meetings, including an executive compensation study, committee appointments, and planning for the May 2025 and November 2025 Commission Meetings.
- ▶ She noted that it had been an honor to serve as Chair and that she worked to represent all Commissioners with integrity throughout her term.

Report of the President

The Report of the President was included in the November 2025 agenda book. President Demarée Michelau thanked staff and the Colorado delegation for their contributions to the planning and execution of the November 2025 Commission Meeting. President Michelau presented a brief report highlighting organizational updates and priorities since May 2025. Key points included:

- ▶ WICHE has prepared for upcoming state legislative sessions, which are expected to be challenging; staff are focused on clearly communicating WICHE's value to its states.
- ▶ Ongoing travel supported partner engagement and learning about state level work, including planned visits to Arizona and Wyoming.
- ▶ Arizona is in the continued process of a required sunset review of WICHE as a state agency; a comprehensive legislative response had been submitted ahead of the deadline, and WICHE was working with the Arizona Board of Regents and Commissioners in anticipation of future hearings. Commissioners and partners in Arizona and other states have provided strong guidance and letters of support, which have been instrumental in the process.
- ▶ Strategic investments continue in philanthropic partnerships, including ongoing conversations with foundations and efforts to re-engage a federal fundraising strategy. The strategy development is a collaboration with the other regional compacts.
- ▶ Staff are working with the Executive Committee to align the structure, policies, and practices of the Behavioral Health Oversight Council with its current advisory role; a proposal is expected to come before the Commission by May 2026.
- ▶ She reaffirmed WICHE's commitment to supporting states, territories, and freely associated states and to working collaboratively with Commissioners to serve the region effectively.

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

Chair Damron presented a report on the Executive Committee's business. Her report summarized Executive Committee activities between May 2025 and November 2025. The Executive Committee met three additional times, covering the following Commission business:

- ▶ Reviewed the results of an executive compensation study. The study was initiated as a Commission priority. The Executive Committee was actively engaged throughout the study process, including participating in multiple discussions and holding a special meeting dedicated to the study's progress. Comparative peer groups were identified to reflect WICHE's unique structure, including other interstate compacts, national

higher education organizations, selected higher education institutions, and comparable CEO roles. The study was intended to inform, not immediately change, presidential compensation and to support the annual presidential evaluation process conducted each May. The consultant's report was received and formally accepted by the Executive Committee in the November 2025 open session; no compensation actions were taken. Next steps include the development of an executive compensation philosophy and the consideration of a future compensation study for senior staff.

- ▶ Approved continued State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) participation for Colorado, Idaho, South Dakota, and Washington.
- ▶ Reviewed restructuring the Behavioral Health Oversight Council in greater detail.
- ▶ A draft policy addressing legislative information requests with a thorough discussion occurring at the most recent meeting.
- ▶ Ongoing updates were received on budget and audit matters.
- ▶ The Executive Committee monitored progress on key initiatives and provided feedback on issues brought forward, including executive compensation.

Report of the Programs and Services Committee

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

- ▶ During AY 2024–25, Student Access Programs helped 52,610 students save \$671 million. Preliminary fall 2025 data indicated consistent participation compared with the fall of 2024. Figures are to be finalized by the end of 2025.
- ▶ The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) supported healthcare workforce needs in 10 states and two territories. For AY 2025–26, 571 students received tuition and fees assistance, representing an estimated \$15.75 million investment. The largest program enrollments were in veterinary medicine (125 students), dentistry (124), and optometry (105).
- ▶ Staff reported ongoing support for academic leaders through the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum). Upcoming convenings will take place separately in April 2026, which include the Alliance annual meeting in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and the Forum annual meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- ▶ Commissioners discussed potential increases in financial need for graduate education in FY 2027. Staff were directed to draft a discussion item for the PAS Committee on PSEP support fees for the next biennium, with an additional PAS Committee meeting planned for late February 2026 or early March 2026.

- ▶ The committee members reviewed and discussed policy updates to the institutional and program eligibility requirements for participation in the Student Access Programs (SAP). The programs include:
 - Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)
 - Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)
 - Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

The policies discussed are in the November 2025 Commission Meeting agenda book on pages 5-12 through 5-14. The policies apply to all institutions seeking to participate in WUE, WRGP, or PSEP. Requirements address the institutional sector, location, accreditation, authorization, renewal procedures, memorandums of agreements (MOAs), Commission discretion, compliance, and enforcement.

The committee agreed with the staff recommendations, with amendments made to:

- ▶ Section 4.1 was amended to delete *“Policy: Eligibility regarding the institutional sector shall be explicitly defined in WICHE policy and not solely within the MOA.”*

And adding in its place: *“Eligibility: An Institution is eligible hereunder if it satisfies the requirements of sections 4.2 – 4.7 in this Policy, as may be amended from time to time by the Commission.”*

- ▶ Section 4.7 is amended to add a new line after *“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.”*

“The Commission shall approve an MOA.”

Committee Vice Chair Haynie MOVED TO APPROVE the PAS Committee recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to approve the institutional eligibility guidelines for SAP. The motion was SECONDED by Commission Vice Chair Ann Millner. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Committee Chair Nathan Lukkes reported on the November 2025 activity of the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee. The committee considered a substantive action item to establish a formal policy guiding WICHE’s responses to requests for information and analysis related to pending state legislation. Historically, staff have provided confidential responses to requests from legislators, state staff, and other state education stakeholders. At the request of the PAR Committee, staff developed a proposed policy that would increase communication with the Commission as part of the research and analysis process.

The staff recommendation is documented on pages 6–13 and 6-14 of the November 2025 agenda book.

- ▶ The committee discussed several issues related to the proposed policy, including clarity of language, differentiation of terms, early engagement with Commissioners, and confidentiality for requesters.
- ▶ Members agreed that any changes should preserve WICHE’s ability to provide independent analysis.
- ▶ The committee chose not to recommend adoption of the proposal to the Committee of the Whole at the November 2025 Commission Meeting. Instead, the Committee adopted a motion directing staff to revise the proposal in consultation with committee members and present the modified proposal to the Executive Committee for future consideration.

The committee heard a report on activities of the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC), discussed staff research on open educational resources, and received brief updates on the W-SARA policy modification process, and the Fall 2025 Tuition and Fees report. There was no action item from the PAR Committee requiring a Committee of the Whole vote.

Report of the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)

Commissioner Gerry Pollet reported on the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) that convened in Seattle, Washington, on September 8–9, 2025. This day-and-a-half meeting focused on the intersection of state and federal higher education policy, and topics included:

- ▶ Upcoming changes to federal financial aid policy and postsecondary regulations, with an emphasis on accreditation
- ▶ Postsecondary behavioral health
- ▶ The relationship between credential completion and value
- ▶ The evolving role of artificial intelligence in postsecondary education

Thirty-one legislators from 13 WICHE states and one territory (Alaska, Colorado, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Washington) attended. The post-meeting evaluations reflected strong satisfaction, with a 32% response rate and 100% of respondents indicating the meeting was worth their time and they anticipated using the information in their legislative work. Staff will begin outreach to Commissioners in December 2025 to initiate the appointment process for 2026 LAC members. Staff are exploring late September 2026 dates for a convening.

Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Committee

Commissioner Rodney Jacob reported on the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC) that met virtually on October 28, 2025. The primary focus of the meeting was discussion

of a potential restructuring of the BHOC to align more closely with other WICHE advisory bodies (such as the LAC) and to better reflect its role as an advisory body, rather than an oversight or governance body. The following details were possible modifications to BHOC:

- ▶ Name change: Members agreed the BHOC name should be updated to reflect its role as an advisory body, rather than an oversight or governance entity.
- ▶ Elimination of officers: There was consensus to eliminate officer positions (chair, vice chair, immediate past chair) in a future structure, consistent with the LAC model.
- ▶ Core membership: The group supported continuing the practice of appointing each state's chief behavioral health executive (or designee), noting this is a long standing and effective approach.
- ▶ Expanded membership: Members endorsed expanding membership to include other senior state behavioral health leaders and expressed interest in participating in the nomination process for their state.
- ▶ State based focus: There was strong support to limit membership to individuals within state behavioral health administrations to maintain a trusted space for candid peer to peer discussions.
- ▶ Ex officio members: The group affirmed the value of including the executive director of the National Association of State Mental Health Directors as an ex officio member and supported inviting the executive director of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Agency Directors to serve in a similar role.

An action item for a vote to consider the proposed formal name change and several restructuring recommendations will be presented to the Commission at the May 2026 Commission Meeting.

Report of WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies Executive Council

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

WCET successfully concluded its 2025 annual meeting with 301 attendees, including participants who also attended the State Authorization Network (SAN) meeting and the Annual Summit for Women in eLearning (ASWE), which were held in conjunction. As part of the meeting, WCET presented its annual WOW Awards, recognizing institutions and programs leading innovation in digital learning, to the following institutions:

- ▶ California Community Colleges, California Virtual College
- ▶ Colorado Community College System, Colorado Online

- ▶ University of Phoenix, College of Health Professions
- ▶ University of Maryland Global Campus, (UMGC) Reengagement Plan

WCET honored Gloria Niles of the University of Hawai'i System with its inaugural Russ Poulin Policy Award.

WCET also announced the release of the WCET and SAN Policy Tracker, a new website that monitors federal digital learning policies, including U.S. Department of Education negotiated rulemaking, Dear Colleague letters, executive orders, congressional actions, and judicial opinions.

Recent notable WCET publications include AI Literacies in Focus: From Frameworks to Action, Making the Case for Digital Learning, and AI Education Policy, Guideline, and Practice Ecosystem Framework 2025. SAN released the State to State Institutional Approval for Distance Education Handbook, a practical resource designed to help institutions not participating in reciprocity agreements — including California institutions — comply with state authorization requirements in states where their students are located.

Finally, staff reported that Every Learner Everywhere, WCET's initiative funded by the Gates Foundation, applied for an additional \$2.7 million in continuation funding. Since the May 2025 Commission Meeting, the initiative has served more than 300 additional institutions through direct services and webinars.

Action Items

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Committee Chair David Lassner gave the following report of the Audit Committee, which met with Forvis Mazars, the auditing firm, and staff, on August 15, 2025.

Forvis Mazars conducted the FY 2025 audit remotely and presented the audited financial statements to the committee. During the October 2025 meeting, Auditor Karmyn Jeffries reviewed the statements and the auditor's opinion and reported that the firm had issued an unmodified, or "clean," opinion, indicating that the financial statements fairly present WICHE's financial position as of June 30, 2025. The auditors reported no disagreements with management or staff. The committee accepted the audited financial statements. WICHE is also required to complete a Single Audit because federal expenditures exceeded \$750,000; however, completion of the compliance portion was delayed pending the release of the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Compliance Supplement. The review and approval of the Single Audit were deferred until that supplement is issued.

Following Forvis Mazars' presentation, the committee met privately with the auditors and then with staff. The Audit Committee plans to meet again in January 2026 or February 2026

for an educational session for a) consideration of whether to retain Forvis Mazars as the contracted audit firm or issue a request for proposals, b) a review of WICHE's cybersecurity program, and c) a review and approval of the completed Single Audit. The committee recommended that the Commission accept the FY 2025 audited financial statements.

Commissioner Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE the acceptance of the FY 2025 audit and financial statements, and Commissioner Maryrose Beasley SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair David Lassner gave the report of the Nominating Committee, which met via videoconference on September 23, 2025, to consider vice chair nominations from the Commission. Following thorough deliberation, the committee recommended Commissioner Frankie Eliptico of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), representing the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States, to serve as incoming Vice Chair of the Commission for 2026. Commissioner Eliptico was consulted in advance regarding his availability and willingness to serve, and he indicated that he was honored by the nomination and was prepared to serve WICHE as Commission Vice Chair.

Committee Chair Lassner summarized the proposed slate of WICHE officers for 2026 as follows:

- ▶ Ann Millner (UT), Chair
- ▶ Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair
- ▶ Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair

Committee Chair Lassner MOVED TO APPROVE these nominations for the 2026 officers. Commissioners Jacob and Larry Tidemann SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

Discussion Item

UPDATE ON WICHE'S FY 2025 AND FY 2026 BUDGET

Ashley Clark provided a budget update. She reported the following fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget details:

- ▶ The FY 2025 budget ended strong and the FY 2026 began positively.
- ▶ The FY 2025 budget had an excess revenue of surplus of \$807,694.
- ▶ The reserves at the end of FY 2025 were \$6,809,318. Revenue exceeded budget due to higher indirect costs and recovery, as well as high interest rates; the trend of high interest rates is not expected to continue.

- ▶ In FY 2025, some programs were under budget while others were over budget. Programs and Services was slightly over budget, but its revenue was also over budget, resulting in the program adding \$517,903 to the General Fund.
- ▶ The General Fund-supported and self-supported programs did well in FY 2025 and WICHE is in a solid financial position.
- ▶ All but one state had paid FY 2026 dues; President Michelau is in contact with the remaining state, and payment is expected.
- ▶ Application for the U.S. Department of Interior Technical Assistance Program (TAP) has been completed to fund the Pacific Island jurisdictions annual dues for FY 2025 and FY 2026. There has been no announcement on funding awards.
- ▶ The FY 2027 unit budget preparations will be underway in December 2025.

There was no discussion or questions about the FY 2025 or FY 2026 budget.

Information Item

NON-GENERAL FUND RESERVES FOR FY 2026

Clark reported that all units, except Programs and Services, stayed within their reserve financial limits as set by the Commission. Programs and Services reverted \$517,903 to the General Fund reserve.

Additionally, the full-reserves figures for the Behavioral Health Program were not included in the agenda book. Clark read into record the following figures:

FY 2025 Total Available Reserve	\$4,370,462
Unit Specific Reserves	\$137,675
Staff Development	\$70,250
Marketing and Website	\$15,000
Research Project: Environmental Scan Western States Implementation of Assessment of Evidence Based Practice	\$75,069
Understanding Rural Adaptations, the Assertive Community Treatment Model	\$96,912
FY 2025 Excess Revenue	\$568,040
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$3,407,516
Additional Allowed Reserve	\$1,284,550

Final Remarks

2025 Chair Damron shared her final remarks about her time leading the Commission. She expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to serve, drawing on experience from many national boards in higher education, nursing, and cancer research. She conveyed how meaningful her role as Chair had been, noting the unique nature of interstate compacts and how the Commissioners appointed by their governors, create a rare and respected form of public service. She concluded by expressing hope that her contributions had brought value and positivity to the organization. She reflected on how meaningful the experience had been and conveyed gratitude for the time spent with her colleagues. She closed with a warm thank you, emphasizing appreciation for the shared journey.

The gavel was passed to 2026 Chair Ann Millner, who gave a few short remarks that included thanking Commissioner Damron for her leadership and engagement on behalf of WICHE and all the Western states and territories and that the Commission hoped to carry that work forward. She hoped that in the coming year, the Commission would continue to serve the Western states and territories by working collectively, sharing the best available information, and addressing emerging challenges together. Chair Millner emphasized that WICHE was created so states with shared regional interests could collaborate, solve problems, and move forward collectively, concluding that the organization is strongest when working together on behalf of students and the states they represent.

President Michelau concluded with her remarks by congratulating the new officers and recognizing Commissioner Damron's intentional leadership and deep commitment to WICHE's mission. She expressed appreciation for Commissioner Damron's thoughtful approach and dedicated service as Chair. President Michelau also noted that she looked forward to working with 2026 Chair Millner and Vice Chair Frankie Elliptico, sharing she was confident that the new Commission officers would continue to strengthen WICHE's mission and collaborative spirit.

Other Business

No other business was presented or discussed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR AND PRESIDENT

Ann Millner, Utah (Chair)
Demarée Michelau (President)

GREETINGS, COMMISSIONERS!

Since our November 2025 Commission Meeting, when Sen. Ann Millner assumed the role of Chair, we have remained closely engaged with Commissioners and partners across our states and Pacific Island jurisdictions. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve WICHE together and to represent the Commission in ways that advance our shared goals of expanding educational opportunity, strengthening workforce capacity, and supporting member priorities across the West and the Pacific. In a period of heightened uncertainty and accelerating workforce and technology change, WICHE is focused on delivering regional value that no state or jurisdiction can create alone. The sections that follow summarize priority areas where we are investing leadership attention to support member needs now and over the year ahead.

Between Commission meetings, we work in partnership with fellow officers, Commissioners, and staff to keep the Commission's work moving: representing WICHE at key convenings, strengthening relationships with WICHE states and Pacific partners, supporting committee work, and preparing items for Commission action. As we prepare for our time together in Seattle, we are mindful of the environment our states, territories, and freely associated states are navigating: a changing federal landscape, financial constraints, and enrollment pressures. The updates below describe where we have been focusing our efforts and how we are working to support states and Pacific partners as new challenges and opportunities emerge, with an emphasis on practical near-term actions and the priorities we will advance in the months ahead.

COMMISSIONER LISTENING SESSIONS AND INSIGHTS

To ground our work in Commissioners' perspectives, we held a series of listening sessions with Commissioners across the region. These conversations surfaced common themes and opportunities, including: reframing the value proposition of higher education with clearer, human-centered storytelling; accelerating workforce alignment amid artificial intelligence (AI)-driven change; growing financial stress and the need for long-term sustainability planning; enrollment and demographic shifts affecting access, affordability, and dual enrollment; and the importance of trusted, nonpartisan data that is both credible and usable for decision-making. Commissioners also emphasized WICHE's role as a neutral convener and practical synthesizer, helping make WICHE's impact more visible and supporting states and Pacific partners in tackling emerging, future-oriented issues such as AI, credential value, and shared data capacity. A summary of the listening sessions is attached to this report.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY

We supported the proposed bylaw amendments before the Commission for approval. These revisions are intended to update and streamline committee roles, clarify areas of oversight, and support leadership continuity. The proposal focuses on (a) updating the mission statement language to reflect prior Commission action; (b) clarifying and strengthening committee structure by transitioning to a Governance and Nominating Committee and an Audit and Risk Committee; and (c) clarifying the Executive Committee's finance-related responsibilities.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WORK BETWEEN COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Executive Committee has continued to meet and act on Commission business between our in-person meetings. This regular cadence supports timely oversight and decision-making and helps ensure that items presented to the full Commission are well-prepared, clearly scoped, and aligned with WICHE's mission.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP AND CONTINUITY

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that Commission committees have strong leadership and an appropriate mix of Commissioners. We are grateful for the Commissioners' willingness to serve, step into leadership roles, and help move complex issues forward between meetings.

The updates that follow, beginning with regional and national engagement, reflect President Michelau's responsibilities as President.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Staying connected across the region matters more than ever as institutions navigate a shifting federal landscape, financial pressures, and intensifying enrollment headwinds. When we engage regularly with Commissioners, campus leaders, and policymakers, WICHE can surface emerging needs early, align on shared priorities, and respond in a timely way. By convening partners and sharing data, tools, and promising practices, we strengthen regional capacity and protect opportunity for students even as conditions change.

Our "monitor and inform" strategy tracks federal changes affecting students, institutions, and state and Pacific Island systems across the West and translates those developments into timely, practical updates for Commissioners and partners. Our Policy team, often partnering with WCET, shares these updates through convenings, targeted briefings, written products, and direct member support as questions and implications emerge. WICHE also advocates for more complete Pacific data collections and better consideration of the region, works with local institutions and agencies to incorporate Pacific data into our reports, and engages federal partners to ensure policies reflect the region's unique context.

My engagement with stakeholders and partners this year has included in-person and virtual meetings across the West and in Washington, D.C., as well as time in the Pacific Islands, to strengthen relationships, stay close to member priorities, and represent WICHE in key policy and program convenings. These touchpoints help ensure WICHE's work remains responsive to the needs of our states, territories, and freely associated states, and informed by the realities facing institutions and communities across the region.

These engagements have ranged from meetings with policy and research partners and trustee convenings to briefings with state leaders and legislators. In these settings, I have focused on what we are seeing in the West and what it means for state and institutional decisions: rapid federal policy shifts, implementation questions related to workforce-focused aid such as Workforce Pell, and the compounding pressures of fiscal strain, demographic change, and persistent workforce shortages, especially in health care, behavioral health, and rural/remote communities. I have also worked to ensure state legislators understand WICHE and the value we provide to states; with so many new legislators across the region, this outreach is imperative. A consistent theme is that leaders need trusted, politically neutral data and practical guidance, and these conversations continue to reinforce WICHE's value as a regional partner that convenes, translates policy into action, and helps states and institutions learn from one another.

ARIZONA CONTINUATION (SUNSET REVIEW)

Under the Western Regional Education Compact that established WICHE and has been adopted by the compacting states, WICHE functions as a state agency in each of our states and is therefore subject to Arizona's sunset review process. In this process, legislative committees of reference (CORs) review agencies and recommend whether to continue, revise, consolidate, or terminate them. WICHE is up for continuation in Arizona this year. WICHE's strategy, which was implemented in close partnership with the Arizona Commissioners, combined early, proactive outreach to the reviewing committees with a strong record of impact, broad letters of support from higher education, workforce, and licensing partners, updated state-facing materials, and coordinated engagement by WICHE leadership. Senate Bill 1423 was introduced by Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Hildy Angius, and as of the writing of this report, SB 1423 has passed the Senate and advanced through the House Committee on Education and the Caucus. If enacted, the continuation would extend to January 1, 2037.

PACIFIC ISLAND MEMBERSHIP

Following an unsuccessful application to renew the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) Technical Assistance Program (TAP) grant that for the past several years has paid for the cost of the WICHE annual dues for the Pacific Island membership, WICHE senior leadership worked in close, collaborative partnership with the Pacific Island Commissioners to communicate the

status of the grant promptly and transparently with territorial and freely associated state leaders, legislators, and college presidents, while reaffirming WICHE's commitment to the region. Together, we engaged OIA and congressional partners to seek feedback, identify alternative federal and philanthropic funding opportunities, and explore shared cost models to sustain membership. These coordinated efforts helped secure a critical bridge solution for FY 2026, led by the Government of Guam, ensuring that students across the Pacific Islands experience no interruption in WUE, WRGP, PSEP, and other WICHE-supported programs as we continue to pursue longer-term, sustainable funding. We are now working toward future solutions.

PEER LEARNING AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

WICHE convenes regular virtual opportunities for higher education leaders across the West to connect with peers, share what they are seeing on the ground, and work through practical challenges in real time. These convenings are powerful forums for identifying emerging issues and advancing solutions that support day-to-day work. Examples include the Western College and University Chief Academic Officer (CAO) Policy call, the twice-monthly State and System-level Chief Academic Officer call, communities of practice on cost savings and humanities leadership, and the quarterly Healthcare Workforce in the West calls. Recent CAO call topics have included accelerated-degree policies, dual credit funding approaches, licensure disclosure requirements, reviewing low-enrollment programs, faculty workload expectations, OER course marking, and implementation questions related to Workforce Pell. WICHE shares notes and resources from these discussions and helps coordinate follow-up so participants can learn from peers and apply approaches that work in other states and systems.

WICHE was also selected to participate in a fully funded ECMC Foundation Peer Learning Collective, a facilitated cohort designed to help grantee leaders navigate volatility in federal and state policy, funding, and operational requirements. The Collective is facilitated by Education First and includes executive coaching and structured peer exchange to help participating organizations anticipate change, pressure-test strategies, and respond effectively. We expect this experience to strengthen our network and increase our capacity to bring timely, practical support back to our Western states and Pacific partners.

DELIVERING VALUE THROUGH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

WICHE's Student Access Programs continue to deliver meaningful savings and expanded opportunities for students and families across the West. Our annual *Student Access Programs: By the Numbers* publication shows that in academic year 2025–26, WUE, WRGP, and PSEP collectively helped more than 52,000 students save \$703 million in out-of-state tuition. In addition to documenting savings, the report provides detailed participation and student migration trends, along with state-by-state summaries that serve as a practical

reference for policymakers, institutional leaders, counselors, advisors, and students. Staff are reviewing policies and practices, identifying areas for improvement, and the Executive Committee recently approved the In-state PSEP Expansion Pilot for Nevada residents. This initiative aims to provide the state with an additional mechanism through WICHE to incentivize residents to pursue careers in health care.

We also strengthened our academic leadership programs by commissioning an external review last year and acting on key recommendations this year. This work is helping us sharpen program goals, better align offerings with member needs, and strengthen recruitment, curriculum, and delivery so these leadership programs remain high-impact, regionally relevant, and responsive to a changing higher education environment. Early results include record attendance at the Western Academic Leadership Forum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, this April and a strong, highly qualified applicant pool for the Western Academic Leadership Academy, WICHE's yearlong professional development program for emerging academic leaders preparing for chief academic officer roles across the region. The Academy supports the next generation of Western CAOs by building the knowledge, skills, and peer networks leaders need to succeed at that level.

We continued to examine and strengthen the internal groups that keep WICHE closely connected to key constituent communities and ensure that our policy work is informed by practice. For example, staff initiated a review of the WICHE Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC), an enduring partner network that supports the Behavioral Health Program through a voluntary support fee. This work is intended to address participation challenges and clarify the council's role, operating guidelines, governance, and value proposition. This "aligning policy to practice" work will help sustain engagement, improve transparency, and ensure the WICHE Behavioral Health Program continues to reflect regional needs related to workforce development, service delivery, system capacity, and cross-state collaboration.

FUNDRAISING HIGHLIGHTS

WICHE pursues fundraising by building authentic relationships with funding partners and earning trust through consistently strong, mission-aligned work. We continue to expand and diversify philanthropic and contract support to advance our work across the region. Highlights include a \$150,000 contract with The Jed Foundation to convene the regional higher education compacts around campus behavioral health, and a \$542,000 award in Arizona to improve services for members of the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System who are seriously mentally ill and receiving treatment under court order. We also secured a \$2.7 million reinvestment from the Gates Foundation through July 31, 2027, to expand work at the intersection of artificial intelligence and student success, and we received an additional \$4.98 million Gates award for the Courseware BEACON Implementation Program, a two-year effort with 12 "Lighthouse" institutions to redesign

coordinated Calculus I courses using AI-enabled courseware. Alongside these awards, I remain in regular contact with funding partners, including Lumina Foundation and Strada Education Foundation, among others, and joined forces with my compact president colleagues to meet with several national funders to deepen relationships and align on opportunities for future investment.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

We are making targeted internal improvements to strengthen effectiveness, support staff, and prepare the organization for the future.

Strategic Realignment of Administrative Functions

To better align our administrative functions with WICHE’s evolving operational needs, we have realigned Human Resources to report to the Vice President, Finance and Administration (VPFA), integrating HR and Accounting under one leadership umbrella to streamline decision-making, strengthen resource planning, and deepen collaboration. This structural change maintains the strategic importance and visibility of HR, ensures continuity of HR leadership, and is not a reflection of the scope of roles or staff performance. To preserve appropriate checks and balances and my strategic engagement in personnel matters, we are implementing a shared “triad” governance model in which VPFA, the HR Director, and I maintain regular touchpoints and direct access for sensitive, high-risk issues.

Responsible AI Practices

A staff survey confirmed significant variability in how they are using AI and which tools they rely on. This year, we took a deliberate, staff-centered approach to expanding WICHE’s use of artificial intelligence by making Microsoft Copilot available within our Microsoft 365 environment and identifying it as our primary AI platform. We paired this rollout with clear expectations that AI should support, not replace, professional judgment, accuracy, and voice. We reinforced WICHE’s policies on the ethical use of generative AI and work product integrity, including strict protections for confidential and personally identifiable information and clear expectations for transparency and accountability when AI is used in substantive work. We also shared training and “how-to” resources to help staff adopt these tools responsibly.

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

As a state agency in each WICHE state, we must comply with the U.S. Department of Justice’s digital accessibility requirements, which also apply to state agencies and higher education institutions across the West. We intend for WICHE’s approach and tools to serve as a practical resource for states as they implement and sustain compliance. Led by our Communications team, in partnership with WCET, we adopted an organization-wide approach aligned with WCAG 2.1 Level AA, using a pragmatic, risk-based framework that

prioritizes high-use, public-facing, and interaction-critical content; requires accessibility for new and active materials going forward; and preserves legacy resources through clear “archived” labeling and accessible versions available upon request. We updated key website content and processes, set benchmarks and routine checks to monitor accessibility performance, and provided staff guidance to build accessible habits in everyday communications. In March 2026, Ally Bartley (University of Colorado Boulder Digital Accessibility Office) led training on accessible presentations; staff then convened a lunch and learn for State Higher Education and Policy Center (SHEPC) staff, curated related resources (slides, video, and audio-only recordings), and posted them on WICHE Connect (WICHE’s intranet).

It is a privilege to serve the West through WICHE. Thank you for your continued partnership and support, and for the leadership of our member states, territories, and freely associated states as we navigate a complex and rapidly changing environment. We also want to recognize the exceptional work of WICHE staff across the organization. Their expertise, responsiveness, and steady focus on serving members are essential to our impact and to the trust WICHE has earned across the region. Looking ahead, we will use the year ahead, beginning with our work together in Seattle, to translate what we heard in listening sessions into clear priorities, strengthen our governance for long-term continuity, and deepen the practical support we provide to states and Pacific partners on workforce alignment, AI-driven change, affordability, and demographic shifts. WICHE remains committed to delivering practical, regionally informed support that expands educational opportunities and strengthens communities across the West.

Key Themes Across the Listening Sessions (with help from Copilot)

HIGH-LEVEL CATEGORIES

- 1. Reframing the Value Proposition of Higher Education:** Across sessions, Commissioners emphasized that the dominant public narrative (cost, debt, skepticism about ROI) does not reflect the lived reality of many Western public institutions. There is an appetite for clearer, more human-centered storytelling grounded in outcomes and data, but translated into messages that resonate with families, legislators, and employers. A recurring tension is a strong belief in higher education's value alongside declining public trust and a fragmented national narrative.
- 2. Workforce Alignment and the Future of Work:** Workforce needs, especially rapid change driven by AI and automation, showed up in nearly every conversation. People want to move from "naming the risk" to practical responses (program agility, employer engagement, and scalable work-based learning). There is growing interest in short-cycle, noncredit, and earn-and-learn pathways, alongside questions about quality, portability, and how to support faculty and institutions through change.
- 3. Financial Stress and Institutional Sustainability:** Many Commissioners described increasing financial fragility particularly for regional/rural institutions, places experiencing enrollment decline, and campuses facing deferred maintenance or revenue shocks (including research funding volatility). Shared services and consolidation come up often but are acknowledged as politically and operationally difficult. A repeated suggestion is more proactive "stress testing" and long-term sustainability planning, even as expectations for near-term efficiency gains continue to rise.
- 4. Enrollment, Demographics, and Access:** Demographic decline is moving from a forecast to an operational reality that is shaping budgets, programs, and state policy choices. Affordability and navigation challenges remain central, especially for adult learners and students moving across institutions/sectors. Dual/concurrent enrollment is widely seen as both an opportunity and a stressor, particularly when funding models create unintended financial pressure for institutions.
- 5. Data Credibility and Trust:** Trustworthy, nonpartisan data is viewed as essential, particularly when it helps "connect the dots" across states and supports legislative/board conversations. At the same time, there is a consistent request to make data more accessible for non-technical audiences and more clearly linked to decisions and options (not just trends). A notable emerging theme is interest in stronger student-level outcome tracking and, potentially, a shared cross-state data capacity to reduce duplication and improve comparability.
- 6. What Commissioners Are Asking of WICHE (Explicitly and Implicitly):** Commissioners consistently see WICHE as a trusted convener and a practical synthesizer that brings

states together, translates evidence into usable insights, and helps where individual states lack capacity. They also want WICHE to “make the work visible” through clearer stories about program impact (e.g., WUE, SARA, behavioral health, workforce initiatives) and to help convene hard, future-oriented topics (AI, credential value, sustainability, different viewpoints) in a neutral way.

- 7. Looking Ahead: Signals to Watch (Next 2–3 Years):** Participants pointed to several pressure points likely to intensify: federal policy volatility (aid, research, immigration, data systems), faster enrollment decline, rising healthcare education bottlenecks (faculty/clinical placements/residency slots), and widening legislative scrutiny of higher education ROI and efficiency. AI is viewed as a cross-cutting disruptor affecting labor markets, teaching and learning, and institutional operating models.
- 8. Strategic Implications for WICHE:** The themes suggest a need to sharpen focus and prioritization, strengthen narrative leadership about Western higher education’s value, and invest in translation/visibility so strong work is better understood and used. There is also interest in targeted experimentation (pilots, subregional collaborations) and in convening earlier on emerging issues, especially AI, sustainability, and shared data infrastructure, so states can learn together before problems become crises.

DETAILED THEME SUMMARIES

1. Reframing the Value Proposition of Higher Education

Across sessions, Commissioners returned repeatedly to concerns about how higher education’s value is understood by students, families, legislators, employers, and the public. There is strong agreement that:

- ▶ The prevailing narrative (cost, debt, elite institutions) does not reflect the reality of most Western public institutions.
- ▶ Economic development arguments alone are no longer persuasive; Commissioners are asking for clearer, more human-centered stories that connect education to opportunity, workforce resilience, quality of life, and community vitality.
- ▶ Data are necessary but insufficient on their own. Commissioners want data translated into credible narratives (including the economic and innovation value of research) and reinforced by trusted third-party validators such as employers and industry leaders.

Tension: Strong belief in the value of higher education vs. declining public trust, political skepticism, and a fragmented national narrative that many states feel they cannot shift alone.

2. Workforce Alignment and the Future of Work

Current and future workforce needs are central to nearly every conversation. Common threads include:

- ▶ Anxiety about rapid labor-market change (AI, automation, professional credential inflation) and a desire to move from “naming the risk” to exploring practical responses.
- ▶ Concern that traditional degree structures, funding models, and faculty support systems are misaligned with the pace of change and employer needs (including how AI is affecting teaching and academic integrity).
- ▶ Growing interest in short-cycle, noncredit, and “earn-and-learn” pathways — paired with questions about quality, portability, and how to scale delivery for working adults.
- ▶ Recognition that workforce alignment extends beyond technical skills to durable skills (critical thinking, communication, adaptability) and experiential learning — while states debate how far workforce goals should drive program and institutional decisions.

Tension: Pressure for rapid workforce responsiveness vs. higher education’s slower, tradition-based systems — and uncertainty about who should lead on AI strategy (states, institutions, employers, or regional partners).

3. Financial Stress and Institutional Sustainability

Commissioners described growing financial fragility, particularly among:

- ▶ Regional and rural institutions
- ▶ Systems facing enrollment decline
- ▶ Institutions burdened by deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure, and institutions facing abrupt state or federal revenue shocks (including disruptions to research funding and constrained capacity to compete on salaries)

Shared services, back-office consolidation, and inter-institutional collaboration are widely discussed but acknowledged as politically and operationally difficult. Several Commissioners also raised interest in more explicit “stress testing” and long-term sustainability planning to understand institutional risk before a crisis. There is concern that legislatures expect efficiency gains without fully understanding structural constraints or the compounding effects of enrollment, inflation, and federal policy volatility.

Tension: Expectations for efficiency and “quick wins” vs. political risk, institutional mission preservation, and the realities of multiyear fiscal and enrollment trajectories.

4. Enrollment, Demographics, and Access

Demographic decline and enrollment shifts are no longer abstract — they are actively shaping budget, program, and policy decisions. Commissioners also highlighted access pressure points tied to affordability, transfer pathways, and the cost of leaving one’s home community (including for students in the Pacific jurisdictions seeking off-island options).

Declines in traditional-age student enrollment are compounded by weaker participation among adult learners and ongoing questions about how to reach working learners with flexible, affordable pathways.

Dual and concurrent enrollment are viewed as both an opportunity and a stressor — described by some as a “runaway train” when funding models are misaligned, and institutional finances are negatively affected even as the policy goal remains popular.

Commissioners expressed concern that institutions and states are not adequately planning for long-term demographic realities — and emphasized the importance of clearer student navigation, stronger transfer systems, and integrated pathways that reduce friction for learners moving across sectors and institutions.

Tension: Maintaining access, affordability, and completion goals amid shrinking pipelines, fiscal pressure, and uneven capacity across states, systems, and regions.

5. Data Credibility and Trust

There is strong confidence in WICHE’s research and policy work. Commissioners consistently described WICHE data as:

- ▶ Trusted and nonpartisan
- ▶ Useful for legislative and board-level conversations
- ▶ Particularly valuable when it helps “connect the dots” across states and makes comparisons possible

Multiple Commissioners expressed interest in stronger student-level outcome tracking (including “unit record” approaches) and in a cross-state or Western data infrastructure that could reduce duplication, improve comparability, and support workforce and transfer planning.

At the same time, Commissioners want data to be:

- ▶ More accessible
- ▶ More clearly framed for nontechnical audiences, including newer legislators and appointees
- ▶ More explicitly tied to decision-making, narrative, and actionable options (not just trends), including around workforce shortages and AI

6. What Commissioners Are Asking of WICHE (Explicitly and Implicitly)

Explicit Expectations

Commissioners repeatedly named WICHE as:

- ▶ A convener for regional and cross-state dialogue (including within-state convening when helpful)
- ▶ A trusted source of data, policy analysis, and practical synthesis
- ▶ A facilitator of collaboration where individual states lack capacity (e.g., workforce planning, data modernization, and program development)
- ▶ A connector among legislators, boards, agencies, institutions, and (increasingly) employers and industry partners

WICHE is seen as especially valuable when it helps states learn from one another.

Implied Roles

Beyond what was stated directly, the conversations suggest Commissioners are also looking to WICHE to:

- ▶ Serve as a translator turning complex data into usable narratives for policymakers and the public, and pairing trends with practical options
- ▶ Act as a neutral point of view, especially as higher education becomes more politicized and states seek help navigating viewpoint diversity, academic freedom, and related debates
- ▶ Function as a catalyst for experimentation, including pilots, subregional collaborations, proof-of-concept efforts, and regional approaches to workforce shortages (notably in health care)
- ▶ Provide early signal detection, helping states anticipate demographic, workforce, AI, and policy shifts — and fill practical gaps such as “legislative 101” briefs on how higher education systems work (e.g., accreditation, dual/concurrent enrollment)

Where WICHE Is Adding Value Today

- ▶ High confidence in policy and research quality
- ▶ Strong appreciation for convenings when agendas are timely and relevant
- ▶ Clear recognition of WICHE’s role in programs such as WUE, SARA, behavioral health, and workforce-aligned initiatives

Where Commissioners Want WICHE to Lean In

- ▶ Sharpening and amplifying the value narrative of Western higher education, including the innovation and economic impact of research
- ▶ Making the impact of WICHE programs more visible (e.g., WUE, WRGP, PSEP, SARA, behavioral health), particularly to legislators, newer leaders, and the public through clearer stories and examples

- ▶ Helping states grapple with future-oriented questions (AI, credential value, enrollment sustainability) earlier and more collectively — and convening “hard topics” with care when states are ready
- ▶ Exploring shared data capacity (including cross-state outcomes tracking) and tailored support for Pacific jurisdictions where access to off-island education is a major affordability barrier

7. Looking Ahead: Signals to Watch (Next Two to Three Years)

Commissioner discussions point to several signals leadership should monitor closely:

- ▶ Federal policy volatility, particularly around student loans, Pell, immigration, research funding, and the reliability of federal data systems.
- ▶ Acceleration of enrollment decline, especially in rural and regional institutions, and policy spillovers from rapid growth in dual/concurrent enrollment.
- ▶ Rising tension around professional degree costs relative to wages and loan caps alongside persistent bottlenecks in healthcare education (clinical placements, faculty, and residency slots).
- ▶ Workforce disruption from AI, with implications for program design, credentialing, student confidence, and faculty workload/support.
- ▶ Increased legislative scrutiny of higher education ROI, efficiency, and relevance — often surfacing as narrower or punitive policy proposals.
- ▶ Growing differentiation among states (capacity, governance, politics), increasing demand for regional solutions — including data modernization and convening on difficult issues such as viewpoint diversity.

These are not predictions, but indicators of where pressure is likely to intensify.

8. Strategic Implications for WICHE (Internal Framing)

The listening sessions raise several considerations for leadership:

- ▶ Focus and prioritization: Where can WICHE most effectively concentrate its convening, research, and leadership capacity (e.g., workforce bottlenecks, data modernization, or institutional sustainability) given the breadth of need?
- ▶ Narrative leadership: How might WICHE more intentionally shape and carry a clear, credible story about Western higher education’s value supported by employers, and inclusive of research, access, and quality-of-life outcomes?
- ▶ Experimentation: Where do pilots or subregional efforts make sense as a way to learn quickly (e.g., regional healthcare education/residency solutions, AI support for faculty, or shared services) without over-committing?

- ▶ Visibility and translation: How can WICHE ensure its work is not only strong, but understood and used by key audiences (e.g., short “legislative 101” briefs; clearer program stories; interim briefings for new legislators)?
- ▶ Future-oriented agenda setting: Which topics (e.g., AI and faculty support, enrollment sustainability, credential value, cross-state data capacity) warrant sustained, multi-year attention — and what role can WICHE play in convening hard conversations with a Western lens?

These questions may help anchor upcoming leadership discussions, Commission agendas, and LAC engagement.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

November 2025 to February 2026

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved with Amendment Colorado Springs, Colorado – November 13, 2025

Committee Members Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Chair
Ann Millner (UT), Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Bob Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)

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

Committee Members Absent

Jennifer White (ID)

Staff Present

Demarée Michelau, President

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m., and a quorum was confirmed.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Damron requested any corrections to the minutes of the September 18, 2025, Executive Committee meeting. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 9, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Damron requested any corrections to the minutes of the October 9, 2025, Executive Committee meeting. There were none. Chair Damron declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Other Business

There was no other business discussed. Commissioner David Lassner made a MOTION to go to closed session, and Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. The committee approved.

The committee entered the closed session at 7:40 a.m. to discuss the Executive Compensation study with Quatt staff, and then returned to open session to adjourn the meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Damron adjourned the meeting at 8:45 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Video Conference February 26, 2026

Committee Members Present

Ann Millner (UT), Chair
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and
Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair
Barbara Damron (NM) Immediate Past
Chair

Kathleen Goepfinger (AZ)
Bob Shireman (CA)
JB Holston (CO), *proxy for Jim Chavez*
Terry George (HI), *proxy for David Lassner*
Dean Fisher (ID), *proxy for Jennifer White*
Clayton Christian (MT)
Fred Lokken (NV)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Mike Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Tom Begich (AK)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Jennifer White (ID)

Staff Present

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice
President, Programs and Services
Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and
Administration
Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the
WICHE Cooperative for Educational
Technologies 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
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
Communications

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Damron called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m., and a quorum was confirmed.

Information Item

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

Chair Millner introduced newly appointed Colorado Commissioner JB Holston, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

Action Item

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 13, 2026, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Millner requested any corrections to the minutes of the November 13, 2026, Executive Committee meeting. A committee member requested that the minutes include the committee entering closed session to discuss the Executive Compensation study with Quatt staff, then returning to open session to adjourn the meeting. Chair Millner acknowledged the requested correction. The minutes were approved by Chair Millner as corrected.

Action Item

AMEND PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED MINUTES—CORRECTIONS TO THE AUGUST 14, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Corrections to the August 14, 2025, minutes were included in the meeting packet distributed to members. Chair Millner asked for any questions regarding the proposed corrections. There were none. Chair Millner acknowledged the corrections and the amendments were approved as presented.

Discussion Item

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO COMMITTEE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Chair Millner reported that during the officers' retreat in January 2026, they discussed WICHE's governance framework, including establishing a Compensation Subcommittee of the Executive Committee and expanding the existing Nominating Committee into the Governance and Nominating Committee and the Audit Committee into the Audit and Risk Committee. Changes to committee composition and responsibilities would require amendments to the Bylaws. The officers also discussed the current structure of the automatic appointment of the Immediate Past Chair (IPC) to the role of Chair of the Audit and Nominating Committees. In most cases, the IPC has not served on the committee before chairing it, which the officers noted can be awkward, and appointing standing committee chairs for multi-year terms could provide continuity of leadership in committee activities and actions.

The committee discussion included:

- ▶ Governance considerations related to audit committee structure and possible state requirements.
- ▶ Succession planning to be incorporated into a committee's responsibilities, with a clear distinction between president and Commissioner succession planning.
- ▶ The committee requested that President Demarée Michelau prepare a redlined version of the Bylaws incorporating the proposed changes and send it to the Commission for review prior to the May 2026 meeting, where the Commission would consider the proposal for approval.
- ▶ The discussion also emphasized the importance of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of any proposed committees and their chairs in the Bylaws' amendment.

Discussion Item

INFORMATION REQUESTS PERTAINING TO STATE LEGISLATION

Patrick Lane reviewed the status of the proposed WICHE policy and procedures for when staff receive Information Requests pertaining to state legislation. He reminded the committee that an initial draft of the policy had been reviewed by the Executive Committee at the August 18, 2025, meeting. The Executive Committee feedback from that meeting was shared at the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee when they met during the November 2025 Commission Meeting. The PAR committee adopted a motion recommending additional changes and clarifications to the proposed policy and directing staff to present the revised policy to the Executive Committee.

Lane highlighted the changes discussed by the PAR Committee:

- ▶ Clarify and define what staff recognize as an "Information Request."
- ▶ Enable staff to seek Commissioner input on information requests when a Commissioner's expertise would strengthen the research or analysis to be provided.
- ▶ Ensure that Commissioners may share any relevant information with staff that can inform the preparation of a response to an information request.
- ▶ Provide confidentiality if requested.

Lane proposed that the next step was to gather feedback from the Executive Committee and based on that feedback, circulate an updated policy draft by email to the PAR Committee. Then, after receiving input from the PAR Committee, staff would incorporate the PAR committee's direction and return the proposal to the Executive Committee for approval.

The committee discussion was in-depth and brought out many different perspectives reflecting the complexity of the topic:

- ▶ The importance of confidentiality during the legislative process and the potential for political consequences.
- ▶ Ensure clear guardrails for staff and Commissioners to handle confidentiality requests effectively and consistently.
- ▶ Concerns about the organizational management process for handling confidentiality requests and the timing of when redactions would take place.
- ▶ At each annual Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting, staff inform attendees that they can request research and analysis at any time.
- ▶ A suggestion to revise guideline number 8 about WICHE's formal role within the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which is in part to oversee state compliance with the requirements of the agreement. The suggested revision was to remove the second sentence and replace it with language indicating that requests related to whether proposed state legislation related to SARA conforms to SARA policy are considered information requests.
- ▶ Concerns about the balance between confidentiality and transparency, particularly the possibility that research and analysis prepared by staff for a requestor, without prior notice to Commissioners, could leave the organization or Commissioners unprepared to respond to the information shared, which could result in political pressures for WICHE and the Commissioners.

The committee concluded that the following item in the proposed policy should be removed:

2. Recognizing that there may be legitimate reasons to seek WICHE's assistance confidentially, requestors may ask WICHE to undertake the analysis without notifying Commissioners or other stakeholders. If the requestor asks for confidentiality, the notification and sharing requirements below (requirements 3-7) will not apply.

There was additional direction that the policy should be provided up front to any requestor. Lane noted that the policy, along with its full set of guidelines, would be standardized as a boilerplate and shared with each information request governed by this policy.

Lane will send an email to the PAR Committee with the Executive Committee's feedback and its request to remove guideline 2 from the draft policy guidelines. If the PAR Committee needs to deliberate the request, it will take place during the May 2026 Commission Meeting at their committee meeting.

Information Item

CONTRACT SIGNATORY AUTHORITY AND DELEGATION UNDER WICHE BYLAWS

President Michelau reported that Article IV, Section 4 of the Bylaws states that the president of the Commission is authorized to sign contracts, grants, and other agreements necessary for the daily operation of WICHE and may delegate similar authority to other WICHE administrators. The Bylaws also require the president to provide the Executive Committee at each regular Commission meeting with a list of staff members who hold delegated signatory authority. She noted that while delegation of signatory authority has occurred in practice for many years, formal reporting to the Executive Committee has not. To align with bylaw requirements, moving forward, the signatory and delegation information will appear in the agenda book of all regular Commission meetings.

Discussion Item

BUDGET UPDATE

Ashley Clark provided a budget update. The budget is tracking close to the forecast, with revenues and expenditures generally aligned with the approved budget. While there is some variation at the category level, no major structural issues have emerged, and no mid year corrective action is needed. Staff are refining their forecasts and expect refined numbers after February 2026 closes. Work is underway on the preliminary FY 2027 budget, with the expectation of presenting a balanced budget to the Commission in May. Planning reflects a focus on maintaining organizational stability and capacity. There was a brief discussion by committee members about the trend of salary increases at the state level. At the May 2026 Commission Meeting, salary increases will be discussed and voted on; the discussion was for information gathering purposes.

Information Item

UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION STUDY

President Michelau provided an update on the Executive Compensation study. She noted that the contracted work with Quatt was completed. An informal group of the officers and two executive committee members was established to begin developing a compensation philosophy for the organization. The group is expected to meet in April 2026 and will work toward formulating recommendations regarding executive compensation planning.

Discussion Item

MAY 2026 COMMISSION MEETING UPDATE AND AGENDA REVIEW

President Michelau provided an update on the agenda for the May 2026 Commission Meeting. She noted the first plenary session is expected to focus on federal policy developments and is considering potential speakers from the U.S. Department of Education. She provided details on the plans for the reception and dinner on May 18, 2026; the committee agreed, without a vote, to hold the reception and dinner at the Seattle Space Needle.

Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

Adjournment

Chair Millner adjourned the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

ACTION ITEM

Approval and Adoption of Proposed Amendments to the WICHE Bylaws

Background

WICHE historically modifies its Bylaws sparingly and only after considerable thought and deliberation. After initial adoption on August 11, 1952, they have been modified only 18 times in WICHE’s 73-year history. The WICHE Bylaws were last updated on May 21, 2019, and the officers are requesting this revision to update and streamline committee roles, clarify oversight areas, and ensure leadership continuity. This revision focuses on three key areas.

1. Update Mission Statement to Reflect Commission Action.

On May 17, 2022, the Commission voted to change the mission statement from “The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all **citizens** 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” to “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, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life.” The rationale for this change was to more accurately include our Pacific Island members, some of whom are citizens of their own sovereign nations. Further, unlike citizens of other U.S. territories who are U.S. citizens, American Samoans are U.S. nationals. While this change was adopted by the Commission in 2022, the corresponding change to the Bylaws is needed at this time.

2. Clarify and Redefine the Committee Structure.

The current Bylaws set forth detailed provisions for both the Audit Committee and the Nominating Committee, including their composition, appointment processes, term structures, restrictions on delegation representation, and responsibilities related to audit oversight and officer nomination. The two proposed changes described below would modify or expand some of these established structures and define the Immediate Past Chair’s role as a member, not chair of the Nominating and Governance, and Audit and Risk Committees.

a. Transition from “Nominating Committee” to “Nominating and Governance Committee.”

The intent of this change is to broaden the scope of the existing Nominating Committee to include governance oversight responsibilities. While the core function of nominating candidates for Vice Chair would remain, the expanded body would also provide a forum for reviewing governance practices, considering board development

needs, and supporting leadership succession planning. The Immediate Past Chair would no longer immediately become the chair of the committee, but would instead become a member to preserve leadership continuity.

b. Transition from the “Audit Committee” to an “Audit and Risk Committee.”

The intent of this change is expand the formal scope and role of the existing Audit Committee to encompass risk management. Over the past year, the Audit Committee assumed responsibility for cybersecurity oversight, receiving periodic briefings on security posture, emerging threats, and mitigation strategies. While cybersecurity would continue to represent a primary area of organizational risk assessment, it would not be the only area addressed under the proposed expanded mandate.

Under the current Bylaws, the Audit Committee’s scope is focused on:

- ▶ Appointment and compensation of the auditor
- ▶ Approval of audit fee amendments
- ▶ Receipt and review of the annual audit
- ▶ Recommendation to the Commission regarding acceptance of the audit

These responsibilities would remain but be enhanced to include areas of risk assessment and management. Renaming the committee to reflect broader risk assessment would better align its stated role with this expanded scope. The Immediate Past Chair would no longer immediately become the chair of the committee, but would instead become a member to preserve leadership continuity.

c. Clarify the Executive Committee’s responsibility as holding Finance Committee responsibilities.

Article II, Section 5 (Duties and Functions of the Commission) outlines the duties and functions of the Commission, including the approval of expenditures.

Under its broad responsibility defined in the Compact for overseeing the management and control of WICHE, the Commission has many specific duties and functions. Its power to control, manage, and govern WICHE necessarily includes exercise of wide discretion, including discretion in what actions it takes directly and in what authority it delegates to individuals and groups within WICHE. The delegation by the Commission of authority to individuals within WICHE does not relieve the Commission from its ultimate responsibility for the entire organization. The Commission may withdraw or modify delegated authority, but not on a retroactive basis. Listed below are those duties and functions considered by the Commission to be of primary importance:

...

f. To approve, by budgeting, the expenditures of all moneys.

Article V, Section 2 (Powers of the Executive Committee) states that the Executive Committee may exercise all powers of the Commission.

The Executive Committee has historically served as the Commission's de facto Finance Committee, reviewing proposed budgets and spending at each meeting between Commission meetings. This longtime practice has provided Commissioners from each member delegation the ability to monitor the organization's finances. Further, Commission policy requires that any proposed project or expense exceeding \$50,000 be approved by the Commission (proposed projects and expenses within the WICHE Behavioral Health and WCET are exempt from this limit and are approved by the President). These actions are considered by the Commission or the Executive Committee between meetings to not only monitor budget implications but also their relevance to the WICHE mission. The proposed change would make explicit that the Executive Committee is responsible for any roles or responsibilities that could be undertaken by a Finance Committee.

Action Requested

Approval and adoption of proposed amendments to the WICHE Bylaws.

**WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION**

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I

Organization, Mission, Operating Principles

Section 1. Organization

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a public interstate agency that operates under the Western Regional Education Compact. The Compact has been adopted by the legislatures of 16 Western states and U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states, signed into law by their governors, approved by the Congress of the United States, and signed by the President. The Compact calls for the governor of each of those states to appoint three Commissioners (referred to collectively herein as “The Commission”) to oversee the development of WICHE programs and to assure that the Compact is carried out for the benefit of the ~~citizens~~ residents of the West. Other states in the Western region may become affiliated members of WICHE when mutual interests exist and when the Commission determines that it would benefit WICHE to enter such arrangements.

Higher education, as defined by the Commission and WICHE, consists of those programs offered by accredited colleges and universities, and includes the following:

- a. Academic, technical, and professional fields of study leading to associate, baccalaureate, and/or graduate degrees;
- b. Continuing education;
- c. Vocational-technical education; and
- d. Distance-delivered education.
- e. Such other programs and services as defined by the Commission

Section 2. Mission

The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all ~~citizens~~ 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.

Section 3. Objectives

WICHE seeks to accomplish its mission through a variety of activities that have the following objectives:

- a. To extend the availability of quality higher education programs among Western states and Pacific Island members.
- b. To identify emerging issues, trends, problems, and solutions affecting higher education.
- c. To provide research, analysis, and reporting of information on public policy issues of concern in the WICHE states and Pacific Island members, and to provide opportunities for discussion and a stronger understanding of these issues among policymakers.
- d. To promote collaboration within higher education and among the educational sectors, the government sector, and the private sector.
- e. To identify the broad array of technical, programmatic, and financial resources available in higher education and to link those resources to the needs of the region.
- f. To serve as an informed and objective representative of higher education before Western governmental and education leaders.
- g. To help increase the participation and success in higher education of underrepresented and underserved populations.

- h. To promote the use of new and effective technologies, models, and methods in higher education.
- i. To strengthen the linkages between higher education and the economy, including workforce requirements and government services.
- j. To encourage Western higher education cooperation with other regions and, where appropriate, across national boundaries.

Section 4. Program Criteria

The name of the agency implies certain criteria:

- a. Western. That the program has significant implications for people and institutions in the Western region, but may have implications for other states as well;
- b. Interstate. That the program has significant implications for more than one state, usually a group of states, with interstate and interinstitutional cooperation implied;
- c. Commission. That the program is sponsored or co-sponsored by the Commission and has its approval;
- d. Higher Education. That the program has a significant component related to higher education.

Section 5. Operating Principles

- a. Programs and projects shall receive formal approval of the Commission according to procedures the Commission has established and may, from time to time, revise;
- b. Requests for services originating with or endorsed by the governors or legislatures of the compacting states and Pacific Island members shall be given priority by the Commission and staff.

Section 6. Affiliated States

States and Pacific Island members geographically in the Western region but not signatories to the Western Regional Education Compact may be afforded status as affiliated states in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Commission.

ARTICLE II Membership

Section 1. WICHE Members

The membership of the Commission shall consist of three residents of each member state or Pacific Island member, at least one of whom shall be an educator engaged in the field of higher education. The Commissioners from each member state or Pacific Island member shall be appointed by the governor thereof as provided by law in such entity (or President in certain Pacific Island member countries). The Commissioners from each affiliated state shall be selected as determined by the state. Commissioners may be removed or suspended from office as provided by the laws of the states from which they shall have been appointed.

Upon the majority vote of the member states, U.S. Pacific territories or freely associated states of the United States meeting the Program Criteria set forth in Article I, Section 4 of these Bylaws may be admitted as members either individually or in joint membership with other U.S. territories or freely associated states. If admitted individually, such territory shall be treated as a member state for the purpose of these Bylaws and shall have the same rights and obligations as all other members, shall pay the same membership dues as all members, and shall be represented on the Commission by three members, at least one of whom shall be an educator engaged in the field of higher education. If one or more territories or freely associated states are admitted as joint members, said territories or freely associated states shall be represented on the Commission by a total of three individuals and said joint members shall have one vote in accordance with Article III, Section 5 of these Bylaws and the details laid out in the membership document for accepting the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States approved by the Commission on November 13, 2012.

Section 2. Tenure

The term of each Commissioner shall be four years. Each Commissioner shall hold office until a successor shall be appointed and qualified.

Section 3. Vacancies

If any Commission office becomes vacant for any reason, the Secretary-Treasurer shall inform the appropriate governor (or President in certain Pacific Island countries), and request him or her to fill the office for the remainder of the unexpired term.

Section 4. Powers of the Commission

The Compact delegates to the Commissioners acting as a Commission complete power and control over the organization known as WICHE and its component parts. The powers of the Commission include the following powers that the Compact has expressly given to the Commission:

- To make and implement policy.
- To make contracts.
- To hire the president of WICHE and determine his or her compensation and terms of appointment.
- To determine what programs and services shall be offered.
- To sue and to be sued.
- To determine through budgeting and policy the parameters for personnel positions to be funded and the amount and configuration of WICHE's compensation system.
- To hold title to all property belonging to WICHE.

Section 5. Duties and Functions of the Commission

Under its broad responsibility defined in the Compact for overseeing the management and control of WICHE, the Commission has many specific duties and functions. Its power to control, manage, and govern WICHE necessarily includes exercise of wide discretion, including discretion in what actions it takes directly and in what authority it delegates to individuals and groups within WICHE. The delegation by the Commission of authority to individuals within WICHE does not relieve the Commission from its ultimate responsibility for the entire organization. The Commission may withdraw or modify delegated authority, but not on a retroactive basis. Listed below are those duties and functions considered by the Commission to be of primary importance:

- a. To select and appoint a president of WICHE who serves as WICHE's chief executive officer (generally considered to be the most important task carried out by the Commissioners).
- b. To adopt bylaws, policies, rules, and regulations for the operation of WICHE.
- c. To evaluate periodically the Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the Commission; the established procedures and policies of WICHE; the performance of the president of WICHE; and consider proposals from the president or from committees within WICHE with the president's recommendation.
- d. To delegate authority and responsibility deemed by the Commission to be appropriate and necessary for the most effective operation of WICHE with the full understanding that such delegation implies the right of the Commission to withdraw or modify the delegation when it is considered wise to do so .
- e. To approve, or authorize others to approve, all grants and contracts between WICHE and other parties, including but not limited to those contracts for: services rendered, programs offered, equipment and materials to be purchased, lease or rent of facilities, lease or rent or purchase of land, construction of buildings, and care and preservation of all WICHE property.
- f. To approve, by budgeting, the expenditures of all moneys.
- g. To approve policies which apply to the rights and responsibilities of those who are employed by WICHE.

- h. To receive benefits and donations directly from the federal government or from state governments or from private or corporate sources, to be used in ways recommended by the president and deemed by the Commissioners to be in the best interests of WICHE and consistent with its Mission.
- i. To give priority to requests for services, within the parameters of the Compact, Mission, and resources, originating with or endorsed by the governors or legislators of the compacting.

ARTICLE III
Meetings

Section 1. Meetings of the Commission

The full Commission shall meet twice each year. Meetings of the Commission shall be held during the months of May or June and November or December on the day and at a time and place set at least one meeting in advance of the meeting to be held. All members shall be given written or electronic notice (or such other form of notice as may be approved from time to time by the Commission at a regular meeting of the Commission) of the meetings at least sixty (60) days prior to the full Commission meetings.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called at any time by the Chair or upon request of the delegations of three or more states, provided, however, that all members shall be given at least thirty (30) days' notice as to the time and place the special meeting is to be held, unless such notice is waived by the written action of a majority of the whole number of member states.

Section 3. Attendance at Meetings

Commissioners shall attend two meetings of the full Commission and all special meetings of the Commission each year. When conditions develop which will prevent their attendance, they shall notify the president's office as soon as possible.

Section 4. Quorums

One or more Commissioners from each WICHE member of a majority of the whole number of WICHE members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5. Voting

Each WICHE member represented at any meeting of the Commission or any committee of the Commission is entitled to one vote.

Section 6. Agenda

Items of business requiring action at the meetings of the Commission shall be limited to those appearing on the agenda, which shall be mailed or otherwise delivered electronically to the members not less than five business days in advance of the scheduled meeting. Whenever possible, working papers and staff recommendations on these items shall accompany and be delivered in the same manner as the agenda. Nothing in this bylaw shall prohibit the Commission from adding items to the agenda of any meeting if no action is requested thereon at that meeting.

Section 7. Executive Sessions

Executive sessions of the Commission may be held at the discretion of the Chair of the Commission or at the request of any three Commissioners present and voting. The president shall be present at all executive sessions. The Chair of the Commission, with the approval of a majority of the Commissioners present and voting, may invite other individuals to attend.

Section 8. Special Executive Sessions

Special executive sessions, limited to the members of the Commission, shall be held only to consider the appointment, salary, or tenure of the president.

ARTICLE IV
Officers, Terms, Duties

Section 1. Officers

The officers of the Commission shall include a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Past Chair, and a Secretary-Treasurer. The president shall be the Secretary-Treasurer.

Section 2. Election

The Chair and the Vice Chair shall be elected at the Commission meeting in the fall and shall hold office for one year, or until their successors are elected and qualified.

Section 3. Duties

The officers shall perform the usual duties of their respective offices, including the following:

- a. **Chair.** The Chair of the Commission shall serve as Chair ex officio of the Executive Committee, shall call and preside at all meetings of the Commission and of the Executive Committee, shall prepare agendas for these meetings, shall appoint the appointive members of all committees, and shall be an ex officio member of all Commission committees, with power to vote, but in no event shall any WICHE member have more than one vote in any committee, including the Executive Committee. In the intervals between meetings of the Commission and of the Executive Committee, the Chair shall represent these bodies.

At the next meeting of each body, the Chair shall report to members all action taken on their behalf. All such acts of the Chair shall be taken subject to ratification by the Executive Committee or the Commission, according to their respective jurisdictions. Pursuant to Article V, Section 1, upon retirement from this office, the Chair, if still a WICHE Commissioner, shall serve one year on the Executive Committee and may vote only in accordance with the provisions of Article V, Section 1, below.
- b. **Vice Chair.** In the absence of the Chair or in the event the Chair is present but desires the Vice Chair to do so, it shall be the duty of the Vice Chair to perform all the duties of the Chair. The Vice Chair shall be an ex officio member of all Commission committees, with power to vote in accordance with the provisions of Article V, Section 1, below, and shall assist the Chair and president in liaison with executive, legislative, and other public bodies. In the event there is a vacancy in the office of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall serve as Acting Chair until the full Commission, at its next regularly scheduled meeting, can take formal action to designate the Chair.
- c. **Past Chair.** Upon retirement from the office of Chair, the past Chair, if still a WICHE Commissioner, shall serve one year in the position of Past Chair and serve on the Executive Committee with power to vote in accordance with the provisions of Article V, Section 1, below. In the event that there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice Chair, the Past Chair shall serve as Acting Vice Chair until the full Commission, at its next regularly scheduled meeting, can take formal action to elect or designate a new Vice Chair.
- d. **Secretary-Treasurer.** The Executive Committee shall appoint the president to act as its Secretary-Treasurer to keep minutes of all meetings of the Commission and its committees. If requested by the governor of any member, it shall be the duty of the Secretary-Treasurer to provide copies of the minutes and records of Commissioner attendance of all Commission and Executive Committee meetings so requested. The Secretary-Treasurer shall file, index, and preserve carefully all minutes, papers, and documents pertaining to the business and proceedings of the Commission and its committees; shall act as custodian of all funds of the Commission; and shall keep proper accounts concerning the disposition of all such funds. The Commission shall cause the books of account of the Commission to be audited annually.

Section 4. Annual Authorizations of Officers; Delegation of Authority

Each year, after the election of new officers of the Commission, the following authorizations and delegations of authority are approved by the Commission, such authorizations and delegations being effective until rescinded or until the next election of Commission officers:

- a. The Chair and other newly elected officers of the Commission are authorized to sign or delegate the signing of checks, drafts, and other documents on the Commission’s behalf following Commission fiscal procedures.
- b. The Vice Chair of the Commission is authorized to sign for the president of the Commission in the absence of the Chair.
- c. The Past Chair of the Commission is authorized to sign for the Chair or the Vice Chair in the absence of both.
- d. The president of the Commission is authorized to sign contracts, grants, and other agreements that are necessary for the daily operation of WICHE and to hire, evaluate, promote, and make retention decisions of all WICHE employees (except for the president’s position). The president of the Commission is further authorized to delegate similar authority to other WICHE-employed administrators connected with various entities of the Commission to execute designated contractual documents and to hire, evaluate, promote, and make retention decisions for WICHE staff related to their respective responsibilities. The president shall furnish the Executive Committee at each regular meeting of the Commission a list of staff members with delegated signatory authority.

Section 5. Bond

The officers shall execute such bond as may be required from time to time by the Executive Committee. The cost of such bond shall be charged against Commission funds.

Section 6. Delegation of Authority

The officers are authorized to enter contractual agreements and sign documents on behalf of the Commission. The Secretary- Treasurer is further authorized to sign contracts, grants, and other agreements that are necessary for the effective operation of WICHE.

ARTICLE V
Committees

Section 1. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of one Commissioner from each WICHE member, with committee members selected by their respective state or member delegations by whatever procedure each delegation may determine. The Chair of the Commission shall serve ex officio, as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Vice Chair and the Past Chair shall be ex officio members of the Executive Committee. The Chair, Vice Chair, and the Past Chair may vote if representing their state in Executive Committee meetings; notwithstanding any other provision of the bylaws, in no case shall there be more than one vote per WICHE member.

Section 2. Powers of the 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. The Executive Committee shall also serve as the Commission’s Finance Committee and carry out such financial oversight responsibilities as delegated by the Commission. The Executive Committee may fix its own rules of procedure, and it shall keep a record of its proceedings and shall report these proceedings to the Commission at the next regular or special meeting of the Commission.

Section 3. Attendance at the Executive Committee Meetings

Members of the Executive Committee shall attend all regular and special Executive committee meetings, and when unable to attend, shall arrange for one other Commissioner from their respective states or member delegation to attend as their official representative with power to vote in accordance with the provisions of

Article V, Section 1.

Commissioners who are not members of the Executive Committee shall be invited to all meetings of the Executive Committee at their own expense, with voice but no vote.

Section 4. Conduct of the Executive Committee Meetings

The provisions of the following listed sections of Article III shall also apply to the meetings of the Executive Committee:

- Section 4. Quorums
- Section 5. Voting
- Section 6. Agenda
- Section 7. Executive Sessions
- Section 8. Special Executive Sessions

Section 5. Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit ~~and Risk~~ Committee of the Commission shall be responsible for overseeing the independent financial audit, financial reporting integrity, and related audit activities. It is also charged with overseeing risk assessment and management, including cybersecurity and other significant risks affecting WICHE's operations, compliance, and mission. The committee shall be composed of at least three and not more than five individuals and shall ~~be composed~~include only ~~of~~ current or former Commissioners, each of whom shall otherwise be independent of any fiduciary advantage from either WICHE or from the public accounting firm employed to audit WICHE. Each Committee member should be knowledgeable about nonprofit financial management principles and practices. The Chair of the Commission shall appoint the members of the Audit Committee, with the Past Chair of the Commission serving as ~~the Chair~~a member of the Audit Committee. The Chair of the Commission shall appoint the chair of the Committee. To preserve continuity, members of the Audit Committee shall be appointed to three-year, staggered terms, ~~including the Past Chair~~. No member shall serve for more than five consecutive years, and no more than one Commissioner from each WICHE member delegation should serve on the Committee at one time. The Audit Committee shall:

- ~~review~~Review the appointment and compensation of the registered public accounting firm employed to audit WICHE, and recommend to the Commission retaining or reselecting the auditor;
- ~~review~~Review and approve any amendments to the fees to be paid in the audit contract; and
- ~~receive~~Receive the annual audit of the organization from the auditor, engage in a review of the audit with the auditor, and recommend to the Commission whether to accept or reject the annual audit as submitted to the Commission.
- Review the organization's annual Form 990 prior to filing and report to the Commission that such review has occurred.
- Monitor significant organizational risks through regular reports and briefings from management.

Section 6. Nominating and Governance Committee

The Nominating ~~and Governance~~ Committee of the Commission shall be responsible for overseeing the nomination process for Commission officers, including consideration of leadership readiness and continuity, and for providing guidance and oversight on governance practices, board development, and leadership succession planning. The committee shall be composed of at least three and not more than five individuals and shall ~~be composed~~include only ~~of~~ current or former Commissioners. The Chair of the Commission shall appoint the members of the Nominating Committee, with the Past Chair of the Commission serving as ~~the Chair~~a member of the Nominating ~~and Governance~~ Committee. The Chair of the Commission shall appoint the chair of the Committee. To preserve continuity, members of the Nominating Committee shall be appointed to three-year, staggered terms, ~~including the Past Chair~~. No member shall serve for more than five consecutive years, and no more than one Commissioner from each WICHE member delegation should serve on the Committee at one time. The Nominating Committee shall:

- Select annually, for election by the full Commission during the November Commission meeting, one or more nominees for the office of Vice Chair, in accordance with these Bylaws and with procedures established by the Commission.
- In the event of a vacancy in the office of Chair, select for election by the full Commission during the next regular Commission meeting, one or more nominees for the office of Vice Chair, in accordance with these Bylaws and with procedures established by the Commission.
- Provide guidance and oversight on Commission governance practices, including review of bylaws, committee structures, and related governance policies.

Section 7. Special Committees

At any meeting, the Commission may authorize the creation of such special committees as it deems necessary and appropriate and may fix their size, duties, and tenure.

Section 8. Committees

Members of Committees shall attend all regular and special meetings of their committees, and when unable to attend, shall arrange for one other Commissioner from their respective member delegation to attend as their official representative with power to vote.

Section 9. Standing Committees

The Chair of the Commission, with the ratification of a majority of the commissioners, may from time to time establish such standing committees as the Chair and the majority of the Commission deem necessary and appropriate to conduct the work of the Commission. Each such standing committee shall have one Commissioner from each WICHE member delegation and each WICHE member delegation shall have one vote, and one vote only, on matters brought before said standing committee.

ARTICLE VI The President of the Commission

Section 1. Employment of the president by the Commission

The Commission employs the president of WICHE.

Section 2. Delegation of Authority by the Commission to the president

The president of WICHE is the chief executive officer of WICHE to whom the Commission delegates the authority and responsibility for implementing the Commission’s Mission, Objectives, Program Criteria, and Operating Principles and managing, supervising, and controlling WICHE’s staff, except for such matters as the Commission reserves to itself. The president and all other holders of WICHE’s employee positions are subject to the rules, regulations, policies, and operating budgets issued and approved by the Commission. The president or persons designated by the president are responsible for naming persons to fill positions at WICHE. The president may reorganize the structure of WICHE’s staff, subject only to the right of the Commission to review the reorganization if the Commission deems it appropriate.

Section 3. Reporting by the president

The president alone reports directly to the Commission. Other individuals and groups within WICHE, except those responsible for internal auditing, may approach the Commission officially on formal Commission business only through the president or in accordance with approved rules, regulations, policies and procedures for review by the Commission or for setting the Commission’s agendas.

Section 4. Duties and Powers of the president

The role of the president of WICHE is one of creative leadership and therefore not to be described by a detailed list of specific duties. As the chief executive officer of WICHE, the president is responsible to the Commission for implementation of the Commission’s rules, regulations, policies, and procedures and for the functioning of WICHE’s staff and has the authority and responsibility necessary to direct the staff in carrying

out the responsibility and authority delegated to the staff by these policies. All decisions and actions of the president are subject to the right of the Commission to intervene. This right is used with discretion and only as appropriate. The magnitude and complexity of the operation of WICHE make it neither wise nor feasible for the Commission to intervene in decisions and actions of the president and those to whom the president delegates responsibilities, except in the most unusual circumstances. Under the general authority granted to the president of WICHE by the Commission, the president has duties and responsibilities including but not limited to:

- a. Discharging primary responsibility for all the factors that contribute to the quality of WICHE programs and services.
- b. Maintaining general supervision of all relationships between representatives of the member states and the various levels of WICHE staff.
- c. Directing financial management of WICHE and its component parts in conformity with Commission management rules, regulations, policies, and procedures. This function includes but is not limited to the preparation of budgets, requests to WICHE members, grant and contract requests, maintenance of financial records and accounts for WICHE and its hosted programs, the receipt and expenditure of all WICHE funds, preparation of required financial reports, and signing of grants and contracts.
- d. Directing personnel, including employment and termination, individual wage determination within Commission-ratified policy, assigning and reassigning administrative duties, and conditions of employment for administrators, staff, and other employees of WICHE's programs.
- e. Directing operation and maintenance of the physical plant, purchase of supplies and equipment, and the maintenance of appropriate inventories and records of real and personal property under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Ensuring that the WICHE Office shall be established in one of the member States.
- f. Overseeing fundraising.
- g. Directing management of investments in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Commission.
- h. Serving as the primary spokesperson for the Commission to news media, constituent groups, government agencies, etc.
- i. Redelegating the above authority as deemed necessary.

Section 5. Removal of the president of the Commission

The relationship between the president of the Commission and the Commission is governed by the letter of appointment or contract between them and by the rules, regulations, and policies of the Commission. The president may be removed only as stated in the letter of appointment or contract.

ARTICLE VII Finance

At the direction of the Executive Committee, the president shall submit a proposed annual budget for the consideration of the Commission. The Commission shall act upon such proposed budget at its spring meeting.

ARTICLE VIII Changing Bylaws

Any bylaw may be adopted, amended, or repealed by the affirmative vote of a majority of the whole number of WICHE members, provided, however, that notice of the proposed action shall be included in the call for the meeting at which they are to be considered and that copies of all proposed changes shall be sent with the call to all members of the Commission.

ARTICLE IX
Suspension of Rules

At any meeting of the Commission or its Executive Committee, any rules laid down in these bylaws may be suspended by a vote of two-thirds of the whole number of WICHE members for any purpose not inconsistent with the provision of the Western Regional Education Compact. This article does not apply to Article VIII.

Adoption and revisions to the bylaws

Bylaws adopted August 11, 1952; revised August 14, 1961; December 5, 1964; March 27, 1965; August 9, 1971; August 14, 1975; August 13, 1977; February 3, 1979; December 5, 1980; June 15, 1984; June 17, 1989; December 2, 1989; June 13, 1992; December 6, 1997; May 22, 2000; November 9, 2004; November 6, 2007; May 8, 2018; and May 21, 2019.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) Operating Guidelines

Summary

WICHE's Behavioral Health Program (BHP) seeks Commission approval of revised Operating Guidelines for the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC), including a name change from the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC) to BHAC. The proposed guidelines align policy with current practice by clarifying the council's purpose, membership, and meeting structure, and by updating the advisory body from an "oversight" model to an "advisory" model to strengthen participation and improve feedback from regional partners. The proposed changes have been vetted with the WICHE Executive Committee and the Behavioral Health Oversight Council.

Background

The Mental Health Training and Research Council (later named the Western Council for Mental Health) was created in 1957 in response to the findings of a national survey that revealed that mental illness was the number one public health program and a related Harvard study that demonstrated that this problem was the result of a critical shortage of manpower and training. These studies prompted the Western Regional Council of State Governments to recommend that a) the Council of State Governments, in cooperation with Governors, mental health officials in the West, and WICHE conduct a survey of the facilities for training, research, and prevention programs; and b) interstate agreements for the most efficient use of existing training facilities and research funds be established.

The Mental Health Training and Research Council served as the advisory body to WICHE's Mental Health Program, guiding program priorities and maintaining strong connections with state mental health agencies across the Western region. In fall 1960, WICHE's Mental Health Program received funding from both the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and a \$20,000 allocation from WICHE, primarily derived from indirect cost reimbursements. By December 1964, with NIMH support expected to end in 1967, the Western Council recommended that member states begin paying annual support fees to sustain the program. This proposal introduced a new financial commitment not included in WICHE's original membership dues.

Despite initial resistance, by 1967–68, nine states were contributing. Although the support fee remained voluntary and subject to annual negotiation, it became widely accepted. In 1975, the support fee was doubled to \$15,000, and that revenue supported much of the Mental Health Program's operations, including staff salaries and benefits, and enabled the program to carry out approved workplans and budgets.

Over the years, the advisory body has undergone several name changes:

- ▶ **1957:** Mental Health Training and Research Council
- ▶ **1961:** Western Council on Mental Health Training and Research (perhaps not an official name change from the one above, and possibly used interchangeably)
- ▶ **1991:** WICHE Mental Health Advisory Council
- ▶ **1996:** Mental Health Oversight Council
- ▶ **2019:** Behavioral Health Oversight Council

While the name and the functions of the advisory group have evolved, the \$15,000 support fee has remained consistent. Since the 1990s, BHOC no longer preapproves workplans or budgets but instead reviews annual spending and activities and offers guidance on regional needs. In November 2018, the advisory body (then known as the Mental Health Oversight Council) unanimously voted to change the program's name from the Mental Health Program to the Behavioral Health Program, which is now primarily self-funded through partnerships, grants, and contracts.

In response to the program's name change, the Mental Health Oversight Council became the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC). Currently, member participation varies, with Pacific Island jurisdiction members showing strong engagement. On the mainland, frequent turnover among state mental health directors, whose average tenure is less than two years, has led to inconsistent attendance.

Operating Guidelines for the Council were approved in its early years but have not been actively followed since before the current Vice President's tenure began in 2001. These guidelines were only rediscovered during the digitization of archival materials. Inconsistent participation, turnover, and a lack of clarity regarding its role and relationship with the Commission prompted staff to review the BHOC's current status. The primary goal of this effort is to align policy with practice and establish operating guidelines that reflect WICHE's current priorities and address the broader behavioral health needs of the Western region, including workforce development, service delivery, system capacity, and regional collaboration.

This action item seeks approval of revised Operating Guidelines with the intention of aligning policy to practice. This will improve clarity for those participating in the advisory council, Commissioners, and other state leaders.

Proposed Operating Guidelines

WICHE staff reviewed the historical documents, engaged BHOC members, the Executive Committee, staff, and other stakeholders to identify recommendations for Commission consideration pertaining to:

- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Support Fees
- ▶ Value Proposition

GOVERNANCE

Current Status: The BHOC consists of the state directors of mental health from the Western states that are actively paying the Behavioral Health Support fee, as well as two Commissioners (appointed by the WICHE Commission Chair). Due to frequent turnover in these roles, maintaining consistent membership within the BHOC presents an ongoing challenge. While the BHOC does not hold formal governance authority (that responsibility lies with the WICHE Commission), current practice includes designating a chair and vice chair. However, these leadership positions are often difficult to fill and sustain because of the high rate of turnover among members.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO GOVERNANCE:

- ▶ The Behavioral Health Oversight Council would become the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC).
- ▶ Membership of the BHAC would include:
 - Designated state or Pacific Island jurisdiction mental health commissioner (as reported to SAMHSA and the National Association of State Mental Health Directors (NASMHPD))
 - Up to one at-large member nominated by the state or Pacific Island jurisdiction mental health commissioner from either of these roles (two-year term):
 - State substance use program official
 - Medical or clinical director for state behavioral health division
 - Executive director of the Western Psychiatric State Hospital Association (WPSHA) or their designee
 - Executive director of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) or their designee
 - Two WICHE Commissioners appointed by the WICHE Commission Chair (two-year term)
- ▶ WICHE covers meeting-related travel expenses to the annual BHAC in-person meeting for the designated state or Pacific Island jurisdiction mental health commissioner or their designee and two WICHE Commissioners.
- ▶ BHAC would eliminate the positions of chair and vice chair.
- ▶ BHAC would retain the current meeting structure of one in-person and one virtual.

SUPPORT FEES

Current Status: Set in 1975, the support fee is \$15,000. Most states pay the support fee regularly, though California consistently does not, and other states may miss payments during leadership transitions. Originally separated from WICHE dues in 1967, the support fee effectively positions the WICHE Behavioral Health Program as a self-funded unit within WICHE. The only exception is a contribution from the General Fund, which covers 10% of the Vice President's salary for work conducted on behalf of the broader organization.

Although WICHE annual dues and the support fee are collected separately, they are typically invoiced around the same time (May/June) but not necessarily to the same agency, which can create confusion within states. Unlike WICHE annual dues, which are required under the Western Regional Education Compact, the support fee remains a voluntary commitment.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION PERTAINING TO THE SUPPORT FEE:

Given the current state of the BHOC, staff are not recommending an increase to the support fee at this time. However, staff recommend that:

- ▶ To enhance transparency and ensure the support fee remains a regular consideration, beginning in FY 2028, the Commission would review it alongside the WICHE dues, following a recommendation from the BHAC. This coordinated approach would help prevent the fee from being overlooked for another extended period and reduce confusion within state agencies by clarifying the authority and process for setting it.
- ▶ WICHE annual dues and support fees would remain separate, but to increase transparency and clarity, staff propose sending the notice of annual dues payment at the same time as the support fee invoice, along with background on the support fee.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Current Status: The BHOC offers guidance and support to the WICHE Behavioral Health Program staff while also serving as a collaborative network of professional peers. This engagement with the WICHE Behavioral Health Program enables BHOC members to mutually explore solutions to common challenges with their peers, while also advising the WICHE Behavioral Health Program on the needs and priorities of WICHE states and territories. At its core, the BHOC serves as a platform to explore regional collaboration, is a source of key information about needs among members, and helps to maintain program relevance and value to members. However, due to inconsistent participation, turnover, and a lack of clarity about its role, its full potential has not been realized.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION PERTAINING TO THE VALUE PROPOSITION

To ensure continued engagement and support, it is essential that members experience the value of the BHAC and that WICHE and BHAC members can clearly communicate that value

to Commissioners, state leaders, and those responsible for funding the initiative through the support fee. The following is a list of benefits that staff have identified as ways to enhance BHAC's value and highlight the strategic advantages of participating:

- ▶ **Robust information exchange:** Facilitating the sharing of data, insights, and promising practices across states and the Pacific Island jurisdictions to inform policy and improve outcomes.
- ▶ **Targeted technical assistance:** Providing expert knowledge exchange to BHAC members on emergent issues, practices, and model programs from across the West.
- ▶ **Advancement of public behavioral health systems:** Driving system-level improvements through sharing information on applied research and evidence-based strategies.
- ▶ **Professional development opportunities:** Providing opportunities for shared learning experiences for members through engagement with subject matter experts, federal partners, and other national leaders.
- ▶ **Rapid response:** The Western Regional Education Compact, which establishes WICHE as an agency of each state/territory, enables the WICHE BHP to engage through interagency-intergovernmental agreement quickly and efficiently in a collaborative work-planning manner.

Staff and Fiscal Impact

Staffing would remain the same, and the cost of the annual meeting would be covered by state and Pacific Island jurisdiction support fees.

Action Requested

Approve the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) Operating Guidelines, including the name change from the Behavioral Health Oversight Council (BHOC) to BHAC.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2027 Salary and Benefit Recommendations

Summary

President Demarée Michelau recommends a 3.5% FY 2027 performance-based salary increase to staff who have demonstrated strong performance over the past year. The 3.5% reflects an average across eligible staff as determined by the performance review process and leadership calibration. The proposed budget also includes a 3.5% increase in staff benefits, reflecting projected changes in benefit costs and benefits directly associated with staff salaries.

Background

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

Salary

As reflected in the proposed budget agenda item, President Michelau is pleased to recommend a 3.5% FY 2027 performance-based increase to staff who have demonstrated strong performance over the past year. The 3.5% reflects an average across eligible staff, as determined by the performance review process and leadership calibration, and is consistent with WICHE practice.

Benefits

The proposed budget also includes a 3.5% increase in benefits for staff, all of which are related either to benefits directly associated with salary (i.e., WICHE contributions to the retirement plan, life insurance, workers’ compensation, unemployment compensation, and Social Security) or to projected changes in the costs of general benefits (i.e., health/dental insurance premiums, Social Security, and workers’ compensation). Major benefits to staff include the following:

- ▶ Participation in WICHE’s retirement plan, which provides two-to-one matching for contributions up to a combined 15% (5% from staff, 10% from WICHE) in TIAA-managed accounts.
- ▶ Health and dental insurance, which includes participation in a health savings account (HSA) plan through insurer UnitedHealthcare. WICHE provides a set portion of the health and dental insurance payment, with the staff members paying the remainder, which

varies depending upon the plan they select. WICHE also contributes an amount annually to each staff member's health savings account. An optional flexible spending account (FSA) is available for eligible medical and dependent care expenses.

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

The full amount of a 3.5% average salary increase is approximately \$383,309.50. The General Fund portion is \$89,656.05, and the Non-General Fund portion is \$293,653.45. These proposed increases are reflected in the proposed FY 2027 budget.

Action Requested

Approve the FY 2027 salary merit pool (3.5% average) and the FY 2027 benefits pool (3.5%) for eligible WICHE staff.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget – General Fund and Non-General Fund Budgets

Background

The General Fund budget proposed by staff for FY 2027 (July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027) supports a portfolio of WICHE programs that provide services to WICHE states and shared membership of the Pacific Island jurisdictions and support a wide range of significant projects. General Fund revenue supports core WICHE activities, including the work of the Student Access Programs, the Policy Analysis and Research unit, and Communications.

In addition, General Fund resources provide an organizational structure that allows WICHE to participate in regional resource-sharing and collaborative activities in postsecondary education, many of which are supported by non-state dollars.

The FY 2027 budget is being presented as a balanced budget with a slight surplus and reflects WICHE annual dues of \$180,000 per WICHE state and shared membership of the Pacific Island jurisdictions (approved in May 2024). The materials on the following pages include the General Fund budget and four Non-General Fund budgets aligned with WICHE's programmatic units. Non-General Fund (externally funded) activities include projects supported by sources such as fees, grants, memberships, or contracts. Of these four Non-General Fund budgets, the WCET and Behavioral Health units are self-funded.

Action Requested

Approve the FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget, including the General Fund and Non-General Fund budgets.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
General Fund Budget
Comparing FY 2026 with FY 2027
Revenue and Expenditures

Mar 2026

	FY 2026				FY 2027				
	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2026 Projection	Projection Higher or (Lower) than Budget		FY 2027 Budget	FY 2027 Budget Higher or (Lower) than FY 2026 Budget		FY 2027 Budget Higher or (Lower) than FY 2026 Projection	
Revenue									
4102 Indirect Cost Reimbursements	\$1,246,000	\$1,520,890	\$274,890	22.1%	\$1,338,000	\$92,000	7.4%	(\$182,890)	-12.0%
4104 Indirect Cost Sharing-WICHE	(\$618,000)	(\$616,725)	\$1,275	-0.2%	(\$618,000)	\$0	0.0%	(\$1,275)	0.2%
4201 Members/Fees States/Institutions a	\$2,792,000	\$2,792,000	\$0	0.0%	\$2,880,000	\$88,000	3.2%	\$88,000	3.2%
4300 Interest	\$770,000	\$971,802	\$201,802	26.2%	\$870,000	\$100,000	13.0%	(\$101,802)	-10.5%
4560 SHEPC excess rents	\$20,000	\$5,000	(\$15,000)	-75.0%	\$0	(\$20,000)	-100.0%	(\$5,000)	-100.0%
4600 Other Income	\$24,024	\$19,237	(\$4,787)	-19.9%	\$24,000	(\$24)	-0.1%	\$4,763	24.8%
Total Revenue	\$4,234,024	\$4,692,203	\$458,179	10.8%	\$4,494,000	\$259,976	6.1%	(\$198,203)	-4.2%
Expenditures									
0102 Student Access Program	\$527,512	\$511,858	(\$15,654)	-3.0%	\$581,885	\$54,373	10.3%	\$70,027	13.7%
0104 Policy Analysis & Research	\$520,549	\$514,858	(\$5,691)	-1.1%	\$536,164	\$15,616	3.0%	\$21,307	4.1%
0105 Communications & Public Affairs	\$465,181	\$471,871	\$6,689	1.4%	\$483,365	\$18,183	3.9%	\$11,494	2.4%
0106 Programs & Services	\$131,735	\$111,390	(\$20,346)	-15.4%	\$135,687	\$3,952	3.0%	\$24,298	21.8%
0110 President's Office	\$724,660	\$702,169	(\$22,491)	-3.1%	\$746,097	\$21,437	3.0%	\$43,928	6.3%
0111 Commission Expense	\$415,229	\$357,650	(\$57,578)	-13.9%	\$426,404	\$11,175	2.7%	\$68,753	19.2%
0112 Administrative Services	\$987,391	\$1,104,585	\$117,194	11.9%	\$1,167,026	\$179,635	18.2%	\$62,441	5.7%
0115 Miscellaneous Gen. Fund	\$351,422	\$299,974	(\$51,448)	-14.6%	\$306,292	(\$45,130)	-12.8%	\$6,318	2.1%
0116 Program Development	\$25,750	\$25,750	\$0	0.0%	\$25,000	(\$750)	-2.9%	(\$750)	-2.9%
0131 LAC Meeting	\$83,571	\$99,731	\$16,160	19.3%	\$86,078	\$2,507	3.0%	(\$13,653)	-13.7%
Total Expenditures	\$4,233,001	\$4,199,835	(\$33,165)	-0.8%	\$4,493,998	\$260,998	6.2%	\$294,163	7.0%
Surplus (Deficit) for the Fiscal Year	\$1,023	\$492,368	\$491,345		\$2	(\$1,022)			
Reserves at Beginning of Year									
1 Minimum Reserve b	\$507,960	\$507,960	\$0	0.0%	\$539,280	\$31,320	6.2%	\$31,320	6.2%
2 Reserve for Unexpected Shortfall c	\$423,300	\$423,300	\$0	0.0%	\$449,400	\$26,100	6.2%	\$26,100	6.2%
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	\$150,000	\$0	0.0%	\$150,000	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
5 Reserve Available for Dedication	\$4,384,848	\$4,384,848	\$0	0.0%	\$4,819,797	\$434,949	9.9%	\$434,949	9.9%
Reserves at Beginning of Year	\$6,316,108	\$6,316,108	\$0	0.0%	\$6,808,477	\$492,369		\$492,369	
Reserves Dedicated during Year									
6 Deficit (Surplus) for the Fiscal Year above	(\$1,047)	(\$492,369)	\$491,321		(\$2)	(\$1,046)	99.8%	(\$492,367)	100.0%
Reserves Dedicated during the Fiscal Year	(\$1,047)	(\$492,369)	\$491,321		(\$2)	(\$1,046)		(\$492,367)	
Reserves at End of Year	\$6,317,155	\$6,808,477	\$491,321		\$6,808,479	\$491,323			

- (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.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Two Year Budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027

PRR
Mar 2026

Programs and Services

Object / Description	FY 2026		FY 2027		Variance	%
	Total	Budget	Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26 Forecast > 01-Apr-26 -- 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-25 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27		
9 months elapsed 3 months remaining						
						FY 2027 budget higher or (lower) than FY 26
11-25 Cost-savings Partnerships	\$717,385	\$909,800	\$647,849		(\$261,951)	-28.8%
12-05 Fidelity - Technology Capacity	\$173,075	\$118,767	\$47,388		(\$71,379)	-60.1%
12-48 Anticipated Projects 2	\$0		\$215,000		\$215,000	
12-49 Anticipated Project 1	\$0	\$500,000			(\$500,000)	-100.0%
15-01 Western Academic Leader Forum	\$146,130	\$129,040	\$104,902		(\$24,138)	-18.7%
15-20 Western Alliance Comm Colleges	\$132,491	\$116,948	\$95,956		(\$20,992)	-17.9%
15-25 Mellon - WICHE Academy	\$384,579	\$346,553			(\$346,553)	-100.0%
15-27 Joint Compact-Mellon	\$31,644	\$31,644	\$10,771		(\$20,873)	-66.0%
15-30 Forum Academy	\$69,901	\$77,059	\$81,181		\$4,122	5.3%
Revenue	\$1,655,206	\$2,229,811	\$1,203,047		(\$1,026,764)	-46.0%
Total Revenue	\$1,655,206	\$2,229,811	\$1,203,047		(\$1,026,764)	-46.0%
11-25 Cost-savings Partnerships	\$426,368	\$294,317	\$635,645		\$341,327	116.0%
12-01 Programs and Services Core	\$4				\$0	
12-05 Fidelity - Technology Capacity	\$160,593	\$73,610	\$39,012		(\$34,599)	-47.0%
12-48 Anticipated Projects 2	\$0		\$214,557		\$214,557	
12-49 Anticipated Project 1	\$74,921	\$499,685			(\$499,685)	-100.0%
15-01 Western Academic Leader Forum	\$117,901	\$113,703	\$96,837		(\$16,866)	-14.8%
15-20 Western Alliance Comm Colleges	\$104,316	\$113,188	\$94,461		(\$18,727)	-16.5%
15-25 Mellon - WICHE Academy	\$245,972	\$276,137			(\$276,137)	-100.0%
15-27 Joint Compact-Mellon	\$28,853	\$41,336	\$10,568		(\$30,768)	-74.4%
15-30 Forum Academy	\$63,100	\$73,505	\$80,413		\$6,908	9.4%
Expense	\$1,222,028	\$1,485,480	\$1,171,492		(\$313,988)	-21.1%
Total Expense	\$1,222,028	\$1,485,480	\$1,171,492		(\$313,988)	-21.1%
Revenue over (under) Expense	\$433,177	\$744,330	\$31,554		(\$712,776)	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Two Year Budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027

PAR
Mar 2026

Policy Analysis & Research

Object / Description	FY 2026		FY 2026		FY 2027	
	<i>Total</i>		<i>Budget</i>		<i>Budget</i>	
	<i>Actual ></i> <i>Forecast ></i>	01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26	01-Jul-25 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27	<i>Variance</i>	<i>%</i>
17-05 W-SARA		\$666,174	\$559,929	\$586,613	\$26,684	4.8%
50-01 Policy Core Account		\$1,075			\$0	
50-18 HSG Methods Review & Expansi		(\$567)		\$40,000	\$40,000	
50-34 Compacts BH Policy Meeting		\$130,000	\$130,000		(\$130,000)	-100.0%
51-12 Textbook Price Transparency		\$6,235	\$6,235	\$18,765	\$12,530	201.0%
53-02 Colorado Workforce Planning G		\$37,873	\$18,750		(\$18,750)	-100.0%
53-16 Wyoming Innovation Partnership		\$94,714	\$132,833	\$131,896	(\$937)	-0.7%
53-38 OER Hewlett Phase III (Policy)		\$314,392	\$316,993	\$77,969	(\$239,024)	-75.4%
53-39 NCOER Phase III		\$10,000			\$0	
53-53 MDRC Rural Nursing		\$49,987	\$45,104	\$51,804	\$6,700	14.9%
54-04 ECMC Completion Landscape		\$159,010	\$119,460	\$39,498	(\$79,962)	-66.9%
54-22 Strada SOI Outreach		\$35,000	\$35,000		(\$35,000)	-100.0%
55-01 Anticipated New Funding		\$7,781		\$461,000	\$461,000	
Revenue		\$1,511,674	\$1,364,304	\$1,407,545	\$43,241	3.2%
Total Revenue		\$1,511,674	\$1,364,304	\$1,407,545	\$43,241	3.2%
17-05 W-SARA		\$558,086	\$559,929	\$586,613	\$26,684	4.8%
50-01 Policy Core Account		\$5,440			\$0	
50-18 HSG Methods Review & Expansi		\$6,439		\$40,000	\$40,000	
50-34 Compacts BH Policy Meeting		\$130,000	\$130,000		(\$130,000)	-100.0%
51-12 Textbook Price Transparency		\$4,535	\$8,359	\$16,641	\$8,282	99.1%
53-02 Colorado Workforce Planning G		\$37,126	\$18,750		(\$18,750)	-100.0%
53-16 Wyoming Innovation Partnership		\$94,713	\$132,833	\$131,896	(\$937)	-0.7%
53-36 OER Hewlett Phase II (Policy)		\$4			\$0	
53-38 OER Hewlett Phase III (Policy)		\$314,392	\$265,440	\$77,969	(\$187,471)	-70.6%
53-39 NCOER Phase III		\$20,000			\$0	
53-53 MDRC Rural Nursing		\$54,741	\$61,612	\$51,805	(\$9,807)	-15.9%
54-04 ECMC Completion Landscape		\$136,230	\$136,176	\$39,498	(\$96,679)	-71.0%
54-22 Strada SOI Outreach		\$33,396	\$35,000		(\$35,000)	-100.0%
55-01 Anticipated New Funding		\$7,781		\$461,000	\$461,000	
Expense		\$1,402,881	\$1,348,098	\$1,405,421	\$57,323	4.3%
Total Expense		\$1,402,881	\$1,348,098	\$1,405,421	\$57,323	4.3%
Revenue over (under) Expense		\$108,793	\$16,206	\$2,124	(\$14,082)	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Two Year Budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027

MHH
Mar 2026

Mental Health

Object / Description	FY 2026		FY 2027		Variance	%
	Total	Budget	Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26 Forecast > 01-Apr-26 -- 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-25 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27		
9 months elapsed 3 months remaining					FY 2027 budget higher or (lower) than FY 26	
40-01 MH - State Affiliation Fees	\$660,910	\$603,037	\$500,000		(\$103,037)	-17.1%
40-10 MH - Decision Support Group	\$74,000	\$60,000	\$74,000		\$14,000	23.3%
40-21 MH - Suicide Prevention Toolkits	\$91				\$0	
41-01 MH - Consulting Main Account	\$4,000	\$4,000			(\$4,000)	-100.0%
41-39 AZ MMIC Training 2017	\$74,243				\$0	
41-45 SD DBH Annual Fidelity Review	\$100,120	\$49,900	\$100,120		\$50,220	100.6%
41-49 Maricopa Cty Fidelity Reviews	\$516,322	\$473,684	\$571,477		\$97,793	20.6%
41-54 University of Wisconsin TA	\$7,443	\$8,777			(\$8,777)	-100.0%
41-80 VA Rural Suici FY 15, 16 and 17	\$1,563,273	\$1,583,273	\$897,833		(\$685,440)	-43.3%
41-89 AZ Statewide Fidelity Reviews	\$560,506	\$650,471	\$560,505		(\$89,966)	-13.8%
42-51 AK - BHA Assessment	\$147,147	\$143,626			(\$143,626)	-100.0%
42-94 CO BHA - Rural BH Initiative	\$784,084	\$1,169,190	\$335,000		(\$834,190)	-71.3%
43-54 Montana PACT Fidelity Reviews	\$323,150	\$209,850	\$288,650		\$78,800	37.6%
43-56 MT-BHDD Tech Assistance	\$66,240		\$58,880		\$58,880	
43-57 MT-BHDD BH Wkfrs Needs Ass	\$94,936		\$80,960		\$80,960	
43-63 AAAP - SOR/TOR TA	\$42,426	\$48,465	\$56,568		\$8,103	16.7%
43-64 AZ-Trng & Qlty Rec for SMI	\$338,706		\$232,254		\$232,254	
43-65 SD-TA Civil Comm Statutes	\$30,676	\$30,676	\$15,338		(\$15,338)	-50.0%
43-74 HRSA Rural Opioid Response TA	\$600,001	\$153,711	\$720,000		\$566,289	368.4%
43-76 ROTA-Regional Center	\$553,661	\$259,005	\$86,000		(\$173,005)	-66.8%
43-78 CO BHA Crisis Professional T/A	\$14,824	\$195,966			(\$195,966)	-100.0%
44-42 AK-API Clinical Peer Review	\$30,000				\$0	
44-48 AK API Regulatory Compliance	\$212,100	\$197,100	\$197,100		\$0	0.0%
45-01 MH - Anticipated New Funding	\$0	\$950,000	\$1,175,000		\$225,000	23.7%
45-40 AK Trust PIC FY17/18	\$31,250	\$22,500	\$120,000		\$97,500	433.3%
45-43 MH - AK PIC Interns FY11-FY19	\$78,000	\$130,000			(\$130,000)	-100.0%
46-01 HI - DOH	\$58,800	\$50,600	\$52,200		\$1,600	3.2%
46-03 HI - DOE	\$25,300	\$25,300	\$25,300		\$0	0.0%
46-06 HI - DOE Interns	\$532,170	\$754,919	\$790,038		\$35,119	4.7%
46-08 HI - DOH Interns	\$960,153	\$795,643	\$1,009,458		\$213,815	26.9%
46-15 HI DOE Recruitment	\$107,000	\$117,000	\$107,000		(\$10,000)	-8.5%
46-17 HI Recruitment of Clinical Psy	\$25,773	\$38,212	\$22,087		(\$16,125)	-42.2%
46-18 School Based BH Professionals	\$145,833	\$68,906	\$145,738		\$76,832	111.5%
46-20 U of TX MH Dissemination Ctr	\$49,950	\$49,950	\$49,950		\$0	0.0%
46-24 NM Psychology Internship	\$270,023	\$352,287	\$279,415		(\$72,872)	-20.7%
46-25 AK-PI-PIC	\$134,550		\$134,550		\$134,550	
46-27 SD Psychology Internship	\$4,265	\$30,000	\$4,265		(\$25,735)	-85.8%
46-31 OR Psych Internship FY 15-18	\$2,895	\$3,000	\$2,895		(\$105)	-3.5%
46-32 Idaho Psychology Internship	\$129,005	\$125,000	\$129,005		\$4,005	3.2%
46-33 Sanford Psychology Internship	\$0	\$65,000	\$2,895		(\$62,105)	-95.5%
46-36 UT Psychology Internship	\$40,000	\$31,001	\$35,074		\$4,073	13.1%
46-40 NV Intern Stipends FY 15-16-17	\$205,620	\$199,065	\$203,895		\$4,830	2.4%
46-41 Guam Psychology Internship	\$358,423	\$104,083	\$168,000		\$63,917	61.4%
46-46 HI EIS Compensation Study	\$57,569				\$0	
46-47 HI EIS Allowed Costs& Indirect	\$59,568				\$0	
46-51 NV Psych Internship FY 15	\$39,584	\$40,036	\$43,267		\$3,231	8.1%
Revenue	\$10,114,590	\$9,793,233	\$9,274,717		(\$518,516)	-5.3%
Total Revenue	\$10,114,590	\$9,793,233	\$9,274,717		(\$518,516)	-5.3%
40-01 MH - State Affiliation Fees	\$1,248,634	\$1,100,000	\$1,100,000		\$0	0.0%
40-10 MH - Decision Support Group	\$69,425	\$46,000	\$69,743		\$23,743	51.6%

Object / Description	FY 2026		FY 2026	FY 2027	Variance	%
	Total		Budget	Budget		
	Actual > Forecast >	01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26 01-Apr-26 -- 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-25 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27		
	9 months elapsed					
	3 months remaining					
					FY 2027 budget higher or (lower) than	FY 26
40-21 MH - Suicide Prevention Toolkits		\$12			\$0	
41-39 AZ MMIC Training 2017		\$68,429			\$0	
41-45 SD DBH Annual Fidelity Review		\$52,551	\$44,910	\$52,813	\$7,903	17.6%
41-49 Maricopa Cty Fidelity Reviews		\$481,168	\$425,632	\$542,903	\$117,271	27.6%
41-54 University of Wisconsin TA		\$7,530			\$0	
41-80 VA Rural Suici FY 15, 16 and 17		\$1,326,640	\$1,345,782	\$781,115	(\$564,667)	-42.0%
41-89 AZ Statewide Fidelity Reviews		\$524,105	\$601,900	\$533,075	(\$68,825)	-11.4%
42-42 WA HCA Digital Behavioral Hlth		\$14			\$0	
42-51 AK - BHA Assessment		\$118,395	\$143,475	\$0	(\$143,475)	-100.0%
42-94 CO BHA - Rural BH Initiative		\$779,034	\$1,052,271	\$315,000	(\$737,271)	-70.1%
43-54 Montana PACT Fidelity Reviews		\$275,620	\$183,619	\$219,712	\$36,093	19.7%
43-56 MT-BHDD Tech Assistance		\$66,240		\$58,880	\$58,880	
43-57 MT-BHDD BH Wkfrs Needs Ass		\$86,029		\$76,912	\$76,912	
43-63 AAAP - SOR/TOR TA		\$42,426	\$43,619	\$56,568	\$12,949	29.7%
43-64 AZ-Trng & Qlty Rec for SMI		\$283,399		\$197,416	\$197,416	
43-65 SD-TA Civil Comm Statutes		\$29,714	\$29,714	\$11,729	(\$17,985)	-60.5%
43-74 HRSA Rural Opioid Response TA		\$567,251	\$130,654	\$700,800	\$570,146	436.4%
43-76 ROTA-Regional Center		\$553,661	\$255,120	\$86,000	(\$169,120)	-66.3%
43-78 CO BHA Crisis Professional T/A		\$20,010	\$175,390		(\$175,390)	-100.0%
44-42 AK-API Clinical Peer Review		\$29,992			\$0	
44-48 AK API Regulatory Compliance		\$164,205	\$161,161	\$177,390	\$16,229	10.1%
45-01 MH - Anticipated New Funding		\$0	\$902,500	\$1,075,000	\$172,500	19.1%
45-40 AK Trust PIC FY17/18		\$20,912	\$20,700	\$108,000	\$87,300	421.7%
45-43 MH - AK PIC Interns FY11-FY19		\$61,176	\$115,050		(\$115,050)	-100.0%
46-01 HI - DOH		\$50,587	\$37,950	\$49,590	\$11,640	30.7%
46-03 HI - DOE		\$28,299	\$18,975	\$24,035	\$5,060	26.7%
46-06 HI - DOE Interns		\$486,868	\$698,300	\$711,034	\$12,734	1.8%
46-08 HI - DOH Interns		\$861,248	\$712,100	\$908,512	\$196,412	27.6%
46-15 HI DOE Recruitment		\$95,495	\$114,075	\$98,780	(\$15,295)	-13.4%
46-17 HI Recruitment of Clinical Psy		\$25,571	\$51,989	\$20,982	(\$31,007)	-59.6%
46-18 School Based BH Professionals		\$125,344	\$60,457	\$125,725	\$65,268	108.0%
46-20 U of TX MH Dissemination Ctr		\$42,458	\$44,955	\$44,955	\$0	0.0%
46-24 NM Psychology Internship		\$258,321	\$345,241	\$251,474	(\$93,767)	-27.2%
46-25 AK-PI-PIC		\$134,463		\$127,823	\$127,823	
46-27 SD Psychology Internship		\$4,265	\$28,500	\$3,625	(\$24,875)	-87.3%
46-31 OR Psych Internship FY 15-18		\$0	\$1,500	\$0	(\$1,500)	-100.0%
46-32 Idaho Psychology Internship		\$129,005	\$119,975	\$116,105	(\$3,870)	-3.2%
46-33 Sanford Psychology Internship		\$31,763	\$61,750	\$2,750	(\$59,000)	-95.5%
46-36 UT Psychology Internship		\$35,362	\$29,451	\$33,320	\$3,869	13.1%
46-40 NV Intern Stipends FY 15-16-17		\$195,497	\$188,116	\$183,506	(\$4,610)	-2.5%
46-41 Guam Psychology Internship		\$350,043	\$101,481	\$168,000	\$66,519	65.5%
46-46 HI EIS Compensation Study		\$55,783			\$0	
46-47 HI EIS Allowed Costs& Indirect		\$51,106			\$0	
46-51 NV Psych Internship FY 15		\$39,214	\$39,035	\$38,940	(\$95)	-0.2%
Expense		\$9,877,263	\$9,431,347	\$9,072,212	(\$359,135)	-3.8%
Total Expense		\$9,877,263	\$9,431,347	\$9,072,212	(\$359,135)	-3.8%
Revenue over (under) Expense		\$237,326	\$361,886	\$202,505	(\$159,381)	

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Two Year Budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027

WCT
Mar 2026

WCET

Object / Description	FY 2026		FY 2027		Variance	%
	Total	Budget	Budget	Budget		
	Actual > 01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26 Forecast > 01-Apr-26 -- 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-25 30-Jun-26	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27	01-Jul-26 30-Jun-27		
9 months elapsed 3 months remaining						
					FY 2027 budget higher or (lower) than FY 26	
20-01 WCET Core Revenue	\$27,755	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	0.0%	
20-02 WCET Indirect Cost Share	\$186,867	\$110,000	\$175,000	\$65,000	59.1%	
20-03 WCET Membership Dues	\$1,020,630	\$1,021,250		(\$1,021,250)	-100.0%	
20-04 WCET Sponsorships	\$51,885	\$75,000	\$60,000	(\$15,000)	-20.0%	
20-05 WCET Dues Alt	\$0		\$1,025,000	\$1,025,000		
20-25 WCET Annual Meeting 2025	\$159,206	\$270,000		(\$270,000)	-100.0%	
20-26 WCET Annual Meeting 2026	\$22,196	\$22,700	\$220,000	\$197,300	869.2%	
20-27 WCET Annual Meeting 2027	\$0		\$35,000	\$35,000		
20-44 WCET - ASWE Annual Summit	\$18,751	\$20,000		(\$20,000)	-100.0%	
20-47 WCET Summit Spring 2026	\$39,333	\$10,000		(\$10,000)	-100.0%	
22-46 WCET Alamo Foundation	\$5,000		\$25,000	\$25,000		
24-08 Gates BEACON	\$537,467		\$2,383,243	\$2,383,243		
24-09 Gates R2	\$674,216		\$2,034,951	\$2,034,951		
24-10 Gates Reinvestment	\$1,846,906	\$2,000,000		(\$2,000,000)	-100.0%	
24-13 Gates Website Support	\$340,645	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$50,000	50.0%	
24-14 WCET ELE AASCU APLU FA24	\$23,563			\$0		
24-15 WCET ELE UNCF SP25	\$111,125			\$0		
24-17 WCET ELE AIHEC ELE SP25	\$2,300			\$0		
24-27 WCET ELE Capability Building	\$73,163	\$159,837		(\$159,837)	-100.0%	
24-28 WCET ELE Network Improvemen	\$8,554	\$56,150		(\$56,150)	-100.0%	
24-29 WCET ELE CCA APLU SU24	\$0	\$5,000		(\$5,000)	-100.0%	
24-34 WCET ELE CCA ATD SU24	\$0	\$25,000		(\$25,000)	-100.0%	
24-37 WCET ELE Excelencia ATD FA2	\$0	\$30,000		(\$30,000)	-100.0%	
24-49 WCET ELE General	\$0	\$454,107		(\$454,107)	-100.0%	
25-16 State Authorization Net FY26	\$860,203	\$778,000	\$812,000	\$34,000	4.4%	
25-42 State Auth Net 2025 Cohort 2	\$3,136			\$0		
25-43 State Auth Net 2026 Cohort 1	\$5,066			\$0		
26-36 State Auth Workshop March 202	\$6,273			\$0		
Revenue	\$6,024,240	\$5,142,044	\$6,925,194	\$1,783,150	34.7%	
Total Revenue	\$6,024,240	\$5,142,044	\$6,925,194	\$1,783,150	34.7%	
20-10 WCET - Administration	\$1,059,954	\$1,208,482	\$1,215,725	\$7,243	0.6%	
20-25 WCET Annual Meeting 2025	\$153,012	\$270,000		(\$270,000)	-100.0%	
20-26 WCET Annual Meeting 2026	\$22,196	\$22,700	\$243,723	\$221,023	973.7%	
20-27 WCET Annual Meeting 2027	\$0		\$35,001	\$35,001		
20-44 WCET - ASWE Annual Summit	\$16,653	\$20,000		(\$20,000)	-100.0%	
20-47 WCET Summit Spring 2026	\$23,291	\$6,500		(\$6,500)	-100.0%	
22-46 WCET Alamo Foundation	\$5,000		\$25,000	\$25,000		
24-08 Gates BEACON	\$537,467		\$2,383,243	\$2,383,243		
24-09 Gates R2	\$674,216		\$2,034,951	\$2,034,951		
24-10 Gates Reinvestment	\$1,846,906	\$2,000,000		(\$2,000,000)	-100.0%	
24-13 Gates Website Support	\$340,644	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$50,000	50.0%	
24-14 WCET ELE AASCU APLU FA24	\$23,563			\$0		
24-15 WCET ELE UNCF SP25	\$111,125			\$0		
24-17 WCET ELE AIHEC ELE SP25	\$2,300			\$0		
24-27 WCET ELE Capability Building	\$73,163	\$159,837		(\$159,837)	-100.0%	
24-28 WCET ELE Network Improvemen	\$8,554	\$56,150		(\$56,150)	-100.0%	
24-29 WCET ELE CCA APLU SU24	\$0	\$5,000		(\$5,000)	-100.0%	
24-34 WCET ELE CCA ATD SU24	\$0	\$25,000		(\$25,000)	-100.0%	
24-37 WCET ELE Excelencia ATD FA2	\$0	\$30,000		(\$30,000)	-100.0%	
24-49 WCET ELE General	\$0	\$454,107		(\$454,107)	-100.0%	

	FY 2026	FY 2026	FY 2027		
9 months elapsed					
3 months remaining					
<i>Object / Description</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Actual > 01-Jul-25 -- 31-Mar-26</i>	01-Jul-25	01-Jul-26	FY 2027 budget higher	
	<i>Forecast > 01-Apr-26 -- 30-Jun-26</i>	30-Jun-26	30-Jun-27	or (lower) than FY 26	
25-16 State Authorization Net FY26	\$644,802	\$769,780	\$808,846	\$39,066	5.1%
25-32 State Auth Network Cohort 2	\$0			\$0	
25-42 State Auth Net 2025 Cohort 2	\$839			\$0	
25-43 State Auth Net 2026 Cohort 1	\$421			\$0	
26-36 State Auth Workshop March 202	\$3,500			\$0	
Expense	\$5,547,607	\$5,127,556	\$6,896,487	\$1,768,932	34.5%
Total Expense	\$5,547,607	\$5,127,556	\$6,896,487	\$1,768,932	34.5%
Revenue over (under) Expense	\$476,633	\$14,488	\$28,706	\$14,218	

ACTION ITEM

Approval of Dedicated Reserve Levels for Non-General Fund Activities

Background

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

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

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

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$9,072,212
20% Minimum Reserves	\$1,814,442
20% Unanticipated Expenses	\$1,814,442
10% Program Development	\$907,221
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$4,536,106

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

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$6,087,641
20% Minimum Reserves	\$1,217,528
20% Unanticipated Expenses	\$1,217,528
10% Program Development	\$608,764
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$3,043,821

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

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$808,846
20% Minimum Reserves	\$161,769
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$404,423
30% Program Development	\$242,654
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$808,846

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

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2027	\$818,808
Minimum Reserves	\$0
N/A Unanticipated Expenses	\$125,000
25% Program Development	\$204,702
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$329,702

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

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$580,352
100% Minimum Reserves	\$580,352
0% Unanticipated Expenses	\$0
0% Program Development	\$0
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve (Required by NC-SARA Policy)	\$580,352

Justification: NC-SARA requires a 100% reserve of annual revenues based upon the previous FY 2026 allocation, per an agreement between NC-SARA and the regional compacts on funding SARA efforts. If the resources available from W-SARA exceed its reserve requirements, it is proposed that the excess funds be transferred to the Policy Analysis and Research unit reserve.

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$635,645
0% Minimum Reserves	\$0
N/A Unanticipated Expenses	\$125,000
25% Program Development	\$66,034
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$191,034

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

Approval of Non-General Fund Reserve Amounts for the Cost-savings Partnerships (within the Programs and Services Unit)

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$635,645
20% Minimum Reserves	\$127,129
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$317,823
30% Program Development	\$190,694
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$635,645

Justification: The minimum reserve requirement, though higher than the percentage in the General Fund, is the amount that would be required to meet financial obligations of the program, should it be terminated. The quite substantial program development reserve is necessary at this time because these cost savings partnerships continue to be developed

and thus have a greater need for funds to pursue new ventures and secure existing ones. If the resources available from the cost savings partnerships exceed reserve requirements, it is proposed that the excess funds be transferred to the Programs and Services unit reserve.

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

FY 2027 Budget to be Approved May 2026	\$271,711
20% Minimum Reserves	\$54,342
50% Unanticipated Expenses	\$135,856
30% Program Development	\$81,513
FY 2027 Target (Allowed) Reserve	\$271,711

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

Action Requested

Approval of the categories and amounts reflected above.

ACTION ITEM

Approval of Annual Dues for the FY 2028 and FY 2029 Biennium

Summary

The Commission approves dues in May every other year for the coming biennium, and action on the dues for FY 2028 and FY 2029 is necessary at this meeting. The Commission sets dues two years in advance so that states operating on biennial budgets can include WICHE dues in their budget planning. Action is required at this meeting because states, territories, and freely associated states will begin budget planning for future years before the Commission meets in November.

Rationale for Dues Increases

For many years, the Commission has adhered to a philosophy that it was best to gradually increase dues each year to adjust for inflation rather than to have significant fluctuations that require substantial increases in some years to make up for ground lost by holding dues stable in other years. This has served the organization well and allowed WICHE to cover natural inflationary increases in costs of service delivery (and increased demand for WICHE services), salaries, health insurance, and goods and services purchased by WICHE. The Commission has asked staff to calculate the return on investment concerning the WICHE dues. The following four pages reflect the value that WICHE provides to its states and Pacific Island jurisdictions.

Current Circumstances of WICHE Dues

In February and March 2026, President Michelau reported to the Executive Committee the intention to continue the 3% dues increase for both FY 2028 and FY 2029, and that is the approved request being made at this time. The rationale for the increase is to be consistent with the philosophy of a gradual dues increase to cover natural inflationary increases in costs of service delivery, etc. In addition, this increase helps the General Fund side of the budget remain in balance with the non-general fund side of the budget, including personnel costs. Finally, staff anticipate that interest rates will not generate as much revenue as in previous years.

It should be noted that WICHE dues comprise, on average, approximately 13-16% of WICHE's budget; the remaining budget is made up of membership dues, grants, contracts, and other sources. In addition, Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) fees are passed from our states and territories onto participating institutions and total approximately \$15.4 million.

While WICHE has a considerable reserve, the organization cannot spend the reserve on operating costs, such as personnel and salaries. The ample reserves for the organization

are both an opportunity and a challenge. In recent years, there have been considerable additions to the General Fund reserves, but that pace is not expected to continue as IT needs increase and costs rise, particularly for efforts to enhance cybersecurity.

Staff recommend increasing the dues by \$6,000 in FY 2028 and \$6,000 in FY 2029, which is approximately a 3% increase while keeping a round number. The proposed dues are:

Fiscal Year	Dues	Amount	Percentage Increase
FY 2026 (approved May 2024)	\$174,500	\$5,500	3.25%
FY 2027 (approved May 2024)	\$180,000	\$5,500	3.15%
FY 2028	\$186,000	\$6,000	3.33%
FY 2029	\$192,000	\$6,000	3.25%

Action Requested

Approval of WICHE dues at \$186,000 in FY 2028 and \$192,000 in FY 2029.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-26

\$703M

TOTAL SAVED

by students through WICHE's Student Access Programs.

\$642M

SAVED
through WUE

\$46M

SAVED
through WRGP

\$16M

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.

49,125

STUDENTS
chose WUE schools
in the West

\$13,060

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.

3,030

STUDENTS
chose WRGP schools
in the West

\$15,179

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 nearly \$16 million to grow their healthcare workforce and reduced the educational costs of 570 students.**

134 accredited programs are offered through PSEP at 64 institutions.

A student can save between \$38,100 and \$149,000 on tuition over the lifespan of a professional health degree program, depending on the field of study.

About WICHE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a regional interstate higher education compact of 15 Western states and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States. Since 1953, WICHE has focused on its mission of expanding 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.

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

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

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 convenes the **OERWEST NETWORK** as part of a national effort to expand free course materials and other open educational resources (OER) that reduce textbook costs and support student success. WICHE is also conducting a regional landscape analysis examining how textbook price transparency and affordability policies are being implemented across the West.

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.

STATE AUTHORIZATION NETWORK (SAN) helps guide institutions through state regulations around online courses and programs.

WICHE hosts regular **PEER-TO-PEER VIRTUAL CONVENINGS** on current issues and promising strategies to postsecondary and workforce challenges in the West.

Cost-savings Partnerships

WICHE offers pre-negotiated student health and technology contracts to colleges and universities, K-12 school districts, state and local governments, and education-related nonprofits through a cost-savings program with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Last year, participating entities saved an average of 9% compared with other purchasing options.

\$9.9M REGIONAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL SAVINGS

Distance Education Reciprocity

Institutions in the West save money on out-of-state authorization fees by participating in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) through WICHE. This voluntary agreement provides reciprocity for the state authorization of distance education, while ensuring meaningful consumer protections for students and reducing regulatory red-tape for institutions.

\$52.8M REGIONAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL SAVINGS

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. WICHE BHP continues to actively support five of those communities and hosts all 38 communities at an annual summit to exchange ideas and hear from national experts in Veteran suicide prevention.

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.

WESTERN STATES DECISION SUPPORT GROUP (WSDSG) serves as a collaborative, information-sharing membership network for state behavioral health data and evaluation staff from across the WICHE region. WSDSG members discuss emerging issues in behavioral health data collection, reporting, and system evaluation, as well as meet annually for training and presentations to stay apprised of developments in behavioral health data and evaluation.

DATA AND POLICY RESOURCES Policymakers and campus leaders can explore WICHE's data and policy resources to better understand what's happening at home and across the West. These resources provide reliable state-level and regional insights to help make informed, strategic decisions that strengthen postsecondary education and workforce outcomes.

- ▶ **Knocking at the College Door** is the leading U.S. resource for projections of high school graduates. Visit wiche.edu/knocking to access reports, interactive dashboards, webinars, presentations, as well as state-level data.
- ▶ **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**.
- ▶ With support from the ECMC Foundation, WICHE equips state leaders with analysis and resources on **Completion Strategies in the West** to increase credential completion and improve student success across states.

Our data experts provide research, analysis, and peer collaboration opportunities on key higher education issues, including workforce development, state finance, transfer, student success strategies, and more, to help decision-makers develop evidence-based, effective policy solutions.

ACTION ITEM

Acceptance of the FY 2025 Single Audit Reports

Background

WICHE is required to conduct a FY 2025 Single Audit because it expended more than \$750,000 in federal funds during the fiscal year. The Single Audit includes an examination of compliance with federal program requirements in addition to the financial statements.

Forvis Mazars, WICHE's external auditor, was unable to complete the Single Audit concurrently with the primary financial statement audit because the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) had not yet issued the FY 2025 Compliance Supplement. The Compliance Supplement provides the detailed federal guidance necessary to perform the compliance testing required under federal standards. While the Compliance Supplement is typically released during the summer months, its issuance was delayed, and no definitive release date was announced at the time; further delays were associated with the federal government shutdown.

Because the Compliance Supplement was not available, Forvis could not complete the compliance portion of the Single Audit in accordance with federal requirements. As a result, the Commission considered and accepted the primary financial statement audit separately, and asked that the Single Audit be brought forward for approval once the Compliance Supplement was issued and the audit work completed.

Following the release of the Compliance Supplement, Forvis completed the required compliance procedures and finalized the FY 2025 Single Audit Report. The completed report, which is included on the following pages, has now been presented to the Audit Committee, which has approved it for consideration by the full Commission.

Action Requested


Acceptance of the FY 2025 Single Audit, as presented



Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Single Audit Reports

June 30, 2025



**Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
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June 30, 2025**

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**Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards
Year Ended June 30, 2025**

<u>Federal Grantor/Pass-Through Grantor/ Program or Cluster Title</u>	<u>Federal Assistance Listing Number</u>	<u>Pass-Through Entity Identifying Number</u>	<u>Passed Through to Subrecipients</u>	<u>Total Federal Expenditures</u>
Department of Interior				
Economic, Social, and Political Development of the Territories	15.875	N/A	\$ -	\$ 202,400
Total Department of Interior			-	202,400
Department of Health and Human Services				
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Projects of Regional and National Significance	93.243	N/A	-	594,807
Total Department of Health and Human Services			-	594,807
Total Federal Expenditures			\$ -	\$ 797,207

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this Schedule.

**Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Notes to the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards
Year Ended June 30, 2025**

Note 1. Basis of Presentation

The accompanying schedule of expenditures of federal awards (the Schedule) includes the federal award activity of Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) under programs of the federal government for the year ended June 30, 2025. The information in this Schedule is presented in accordance with the requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Because the Schedule presents only a selected portion of the operations of WICHE, it is not intended to and does not present the financial position, changes in net position or cash flows of WICHE.

Note 2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Expenditures reported on the Schedule are reported on the accrual basis of accounting. Such expenditures are recognized following the cost principles contained in the Uniform Guidance, wherein certain types of expenditures are not allowable or are limited as to reimbursement.

Note 3. Indirect Cost Rate

WICHE has elected not to use the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate allowed under the Uniform Guidance.

**Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting
and on Compliance and Other Matters Based on
an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in
Accordance with *Government Auditing Standards***

Independent Auditor's Report

Board of Commissioners
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Boulder, Colorado

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*), the financial statements of the business-type activities, the discretely presented component unit and the fiduciary activities of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2025 and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise WICHE's basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated October 27, 2025.

Our report includes a reference to other auditors who audited the financial statements of the State Higher Education Policy Center, LLC (SHEPC), as described in our report on WICHE's financial statements. The financial statements of SHEPC were not audited in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, and accordingly, this report does not include reporting on internal control over financial reporting or compliance and other matters associated with SHEPC or that are reported on separately by those auditors who audited the financial statements of SHEPC.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered WICHE's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of WICHE's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of WICHE's internal control.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified.

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether WICHE's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of WICHE's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the entity's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

Forvis Mazars, LLP

**Denver, Colorado
October 27, 2025**

**Report on Compliance for the Major Federal Program,
Report on Internal Control Over Compliance and
Report on Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards
Required by Uniform Guidance**

Independent Auditor's Report

Board of Commissioners
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Boulder, Colorado

Report on Compliance for the Major Federal Program

Opinion on the Major Federal Program

We have audited Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)'s compliance with the types of compliance requirements identified as subject to audit in the *OMB Compliance Supplement* that could have a direct and material effect on its major federal program for the year ended June 30, 2025. WICHE's major federal program is identified in the summary of auditor's results section of the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs.

In our opinion, WICHE complied, in all material respects, with the compliance requirements referred to above that could have a direct and material effect on its major federal program for the year ended June 30, 2025.

Basis for Opinion on the Major Federal Program

We conducted our audit of compliance in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS); the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*); and the audit requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Our responsibilities under those standards and the Uniform Guidance are further described in the "Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance" section of our report.

We are required to be independent of WICHE and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion on compliance for the major federal program. Our audit does not provide a legal determination of WICHE's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above.

Responsibilities of Management for Compliance

Management is responsible for compliance with the requirements referred to above and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of effective internal control over compliance with the requirements of laws, statutes, regulations, rules, and provisions of contracts or grant agreements applicable to WICHE's federal programs.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether material noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above occurred, whether due to fraud or error, and express an opinion on WICHE's compliance based on our audit. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance will always detect material noncompliance when it exists. The risk of not detecting material noncompliance resulting from fraud is higher than for that resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above is considered material, if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, it would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user of the report on compliance about WICHE's compliance with the requirements of the major federal program as a whole.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material noncompliance, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding WICHE's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.
- Obtain an understanding of WICHE's internal control over compliance relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances and to test and report on internal control over compliance in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of WICHE's internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and any significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in internal control over compliance that we identified during the audit.

Report on Internal Control Over Compliance

A deficiency in internal control over compliance exists when the design or operation of a control over compliance does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program on a timely basis. *A material weakness in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance, such that there is a reasonable possibility that material noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. *A significant deficiency in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program that is less severe than a material weakness in internal control over compliance, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over compliance was for the limited purpose described in the "Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance" section above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over compliance that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance may exist that were not identified.

Our audit was not designed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

The purpose of this report on internal control over compliance is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over compliance and the results of that testing based on the requirements of the Uniform Guidance. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose.

**Report on Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards Required by
the Uniform Guidance**

We have audited the financial statements of the business-type activities, the discretely presented component unit, and the fiduciary activities of WICHE, as of and for the year ended June 30, 2025 and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise WICHE's basic financial statements. We have issued our report thereon dated October 27, 2025, which contained unmodified opinions on those financial statements. Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming opinions on the financial statements that collectively comprise the basic financial statements. The accompanying schedule of expenditures of federal awards is presented for purposes of additional analysis as required by the Uniform Guidance and is not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the schedule of expenditures of federal awards is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

Forvis Mazars, LLP

**Denver, Colorado
December 19, 2025**

Section II – Financial Statement Findings

Reference Number	Finding
	No matters are reportable

Section III – Federal Award Findings and Questioned Costs

Reference Number	Finding
	No matters are reportable

**Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Summary Schedule of Prior Audit Findings
Year Ended June 30, 2025**

Reference Number	Summary of Finding	Status
	No matters are reportable	

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the FY 2027 Workplan

Summary

Each May, WICHE's 48-member Commission develops and approves the compact's annual Workplan. The Workplan highlights WICHE's strategic priorities and outlines the organization's activities, projects, and initiatives for fiscal year (FY) 2027, which begins on July 1, 2026. WICHE undertakes its work in five strategic priorities, identified and approved by the Commission in the annual Workplan: Affordability & Finance; Access & Success; Workforce & Society; Innovation; and Value & Accountability.

Staff propose maintaining the same strategic priorities as in FY 2026, while refreshing the descriptions to reflect committee input, recommendations, and themes surfaced through recent Commission listening sessions conducted by Commission Chair Ann Millner (UT) and President Demaree Michelau, as well as the region's evolving needs and directions.

- ▶ **Affordability & Finance (A/F):** Supporting alignment of appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policy and practice across institutional, state, and federal levels to reduce cost barriers and expand postsecondary opportunity.
- ▶ **Access & Success (A/S):** Expanding access to and success in postsecondary education by developing and sharing evidence-based strategies and technologies.
- ▶ **Workforce & Society (W/S):** Partnering across sectors (including health, behavioral health, business, and industry) to strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and meet regional talent needs so communities can thrive.
- ▶ **Innovation (I):** Understanding and advancing innovation in practice, leadership development, technology, and policy to expand postsecondary access, success, and credential value to meet today's challenges and prepare for tomorrow's.
- ▶ **Value & Accountability (V/A):** Strengthening data quality, transparency, and analytic capacity to develop shared measures to assess the value of postsecondary education and its impact across the West, including outcomes beyond workforce measures, so decision-makers can improve how they invest time, effort, and resources.

The draft FY 2027 Workplan is provided on the following pages.

Action Requested

Approval of the FY 2027 Workplan.



WICHE

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

WORKPLAN

FY 2027



FY 2027 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) 2027, beginning July 1, 2026, all of which are intended to advance WICHE's mission.

Our Strategic Priorities

- ▶ **AFFORDABILITY & FINANCE (A/F):** Supporting alignment of appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policy and practice across institutional, state, and federal levels to reduce cost barriers and expand postsecondary opportunity.
- ▶ **ACCESS & SUCCESS (A/S):** Expanding access to and success in postsecondary education by developing and sharing evidence-based strategies and technologies.
- ▶ **WORKFORCE & SOCIETY (W/S):** Partnering across sectors (including health, behavioral health, business, and industry) to strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and meet regional talent needs so communities can thrive.
- ▶ **INNOVATION (I):** Advancing innovation in teaching and learning, leadership, student supports, technology, and the policies and practices that expand postsecondary access and success and the value of credentials.
- ▶ **VALUE & ACCOUNTABILITY (V/A):** Strengthening data quality, transparency, and analytic capacity to develop shared measures to assess the value of postsecondary education and its impact across the West, including outcomes beyond workforce measures, so decision-makers can improve how they invest time, effort, and resources.

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, workforce challenges in the West, 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 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 – THE 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. Memberships through WCET and SAN support hundreds of higher education professionals across the U.S. and Canada. Every Learner’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, a regional interstate higher education compact founded on the principle of collaboration, prides itself on working in partnership across these four units to better serve the West. 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 2027

Note: Current Activities are not assigned 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 assigned prioritization rankings because they have not been 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
Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)	W/S, V/A	Western	0.2 and consultants	Forum and Alliance members
Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum) • 2027 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.4	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 50 institutions, 11 systems
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance) • 2027 Annual Meeting • Collaborative Projects	A/S, W/S	Western	0.4	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 68 institutions, eight systems
Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Western	1.25	All WICHE states, CNMI, and Guam fund and/or enroll students through PSEP's 134 cooperating programs
Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.1	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 67 participating institutions
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	A/F, W/S, A/S	Western	1.1	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions; 171 participating institutions
MHEC Technology Contracts	A/F, V/A	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.1	21 vendors offering hardware, software, printers and peripherals, data and networking, security services, and other technology services

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Staff FTE	Partners
MHECare Student Health Solutions	A/F, A/S	WICHE, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB	1.1	Two vendors offering student health and wellness insurance and services
WICHE Group Property Insurance	A/F	WICHE	0.1	Marsh and former MHEC MPP participating institutions and systems
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	0.15	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions, Policy Analysis and Research unit

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, the establishment of academic objectives and priorities, and the cultivation of the essential skills of chief academic officers.

The **WESTERN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM (FORUM)** brings together WICHE region chief academic officers and senior academic leaders from four-year institutions, related 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 support from annual meeting sponsors.

The **WESTERN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC LEADERS (ALLIANCE)** brings together chief academic officers and senior academic leaders at community colleges and technical schools, related systems, and state coordinating and governing boards 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 healthcare professional programs across the region in 10 healthcare fields. Participating states and territories in the West appropriate funds to support their residents in these academic programs.

The **WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM (WRGP)** allows WICHE-region residents to pay reduced out-of-state tuition rates for over 2,200 master’s degrees, graduate certificates, and doctoral programs at participating public universities. 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 students hundreds of millions in tuition annually. Over 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.

MHEC TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS enables institutions to purchase hardware, software, and technology services through competitively bid cooperative purchasing agreements. Several contracts are available to K-12 districts; state, county, local governments; and education-related nonprofits. Hundreds of institutions and other entities in the WICHE region benefit from aggregated volume purchases that lower product costs and save money and time. This program is offered in partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC).

MHECARE STUDENT HEALTH SOLUTIONS offers savings through various health insurance options to students and their dependents who cannot obtain insurance from elsewhere. This program, implemented in partnership with MHEC, offers student health insurance and wellness services provided by UnitedHealthcare Student Resources and the HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, Inc.

The **WICHE GROUP PROPERTY INSURANCE** is exclusively available to institutions that formerly participated in the MHEC's Master Property Program (MPP). WICHE's sponsorship ensures these institutions can maintain campus property insurance.

Policy Analysis and Research unit staff provide support to the region through regular **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. The primary convening is a bimonthly call among state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) that fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues and helps support an institutionally focused call in collaboration with the Programs and Services unit.

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	0.1 12/24 – 11/26	Policy Analysis and Research unit, NEBHE, SREB
Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success	A/S, I	U.S.	Anonymous \$435,000 grant	0.25 2/24 – 10/26	13 institutions in 5 states
WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities	A/S, W/S	Western	Mellon Foundation \$1.5 million grant	0.5 (7/26 – 9/26 to complete reporting) 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 the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), two of the three other higher education regional compacts, on a project to educate and inform interested parties about 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 creating a data dashboard to provide the findings to the funder. The project concludes in fall 2026.

TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSFER SUCCESS: An anonymous funder approved moving grant funds originally slated to support the technology infrastructure of the Interstate Passport® program to a new initiative called Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success. Since spring 2024, six projects involving 13 institutions across five states have been participating in a community of practice to support the implementation of

technology solutions that help students transfer credit between 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 build a new professional network with the fellows appointed at other institutions.

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.	TBD	TBD	Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, higher education organizations
No Holding Back – Tools for Assessing 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 unit

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 considering 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 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 strengthening NASNTIs' 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: In 2023, the Programs and Services (PAS) and Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) units collaborated with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) to provide institutions in the West with tools to (re)evaluate their administrative hold policies to improve student success and better use their data in policy formation. Staff have been collaboratively socializing the toolkit through presentations at national conferences with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). We will continue distributing these resources and seek new partners interested in the continued application of the tools and exploring policy implications.

Potential Future Projects

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

ALLIANCE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program would identify, develop, and prepare aspiring leaders for career advancement and success in progressively more complex administrative roles at community, junior, and technical colleges across the West. The curriculum for this program would emphasize coordination among academic affairs, student affairs, and enrollment management, as is common in higher education.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR EMERGING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY EXPERTS: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program, conducted in partnership with the PAR unit, would be designed specifically for those who work in higher education policymaking, policy analysis, and policy implementation settings. This program would serve to enhance the knowledge, skills, and capacity of emerging higher education policy experts.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR FACULTY ACROSS DISCIPLINES: As a part of the PAS unit's leadership development portfolio, this program would be designed specifically for tenured faculty across academic disciplines (e.g., arts and humanities, STEM, social sciences, and business and development) who have administrative aspirations. The curriculum would be designed to develop and prepare future college and university leaders to assume senior-level roles on campuses across the West.

DUAL MISSION INSTITUTION NETWORK AND CONVENING: Dual mission institutions are a unique and emergent institutional type that is present throughout the West. Representing a new model for higher education, dual mission institutions offer a range of bachelor's degrees, career-focused associate degrees, and workforce training programs. Their commitment to access, innovative credentialing practices, and strong industry partnerships allows them to meet the needs of their regions directly. This project would build on the work of the American Council on Education (ACE) and serve as a networking and learning space for senior academic leaders at dual mission institutions in the WICHE region.

PSEP ADMINISTRATION TIMELINE REDESIGN: To serve students, states, and institutions well, the administration of the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) seeks to balance the timelines of state legislatures and budget committees with the needs of student applicants and the institutions that they apply to. Working with a consultant, the Student Access Programs (SAP) team would review the current administrative process to learn more about how and when applicants are selected and notified, and how those selections are communicated to institutions and states. After this initial assessment, the team will determine the best way to redesign and implement a new timeline, if necessary.

PSEP TRANSPARENCY PROJECT: PSEP students do not have comparable tuition and contact information as students interested in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) and the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP). The SAP team, along with consultants, would like to evaluate which information is most important to PSEP students when selecting an academic program. The team, with technology support, would design new program pages that will function similarly to the WUE and WRGP online tuition savings finder pages. These pages would include tuition costs and relevant details on how the support fee is administered within the program, as well as important contact information and highlights of the program offerings. These pages would be updated annually by the professional programs to ensure up-to-date information for prospective and current students.

WUE AND WRGP INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER ENGAGEMENT: Institutional partners are integral to the continuation and expansion of WUE, WRGP, and PSEP, and engagement activities with these institutional partners may take many forms. The goal is not only to engage more with participating institutions but also to learn more about those institutions that appear to be a good fit for Student Access Programs that are not yet participating.

Exploration will begin with enrollment management leaders who use WICHE's tuition savings programs as a tool in their enrollment strategy to determine whether the team will need additional support from a consultant.

A NETWORK FOR CYBERSECURITY RESOURCE SHARING: Cybersecurity costs have steadily increased over the last decade, with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) introducing new risks and threats to institutional cybersecurity. This landscape introduces an increasingly unbalanced higher education infrastructure in which more highly resourced institutions in highly populated areas can maintain stronger cybersecurity and staffing, whereas less resourced institutions, especially those in rural and remote areas, face staffing shortages and lower operational budgets and are simply less equipped to respond to the expanding cybersecurity enterprise needs. Higher education faces unique and heightened risks due to the diversity of stakeholders and the need to manage sensitive student data. This project will partner with technical, nontechnical, and cybersecurity professionals at institutions of all sizes in the WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions to support sharing resources, promising practices, and sound policies.

A TOOLKIT TO ASSESS THE RETURN ON TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION: Building on work done through Cost-savings Partnerships and the Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiatives, staff propose developing a toolkit to help equip higher education institutions with a protocol and methodology to identify hidden costs, measure impact, and strengthen relationships across institutions to improve outcomes before, during, and after the procurement process. This project will partner with community colleges and universities in WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions to develop a clear understanding of all stakeholders involved in the procurement, implementation, and maintenance of technology systems at institutions of higher education. To accomplish this goal, WICHE proposes partnering with trusted experts, such as the National Association of Collegiate and University Business Officers (NACUBO), EDUCAUSE, and/or WCET, that have engaged in community-based problem solving on other issues around technology and strategic finance. The project will require forming cross-functional teams at institutions across the West to develop and test the toolkit and offer institutional perspectives.

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, Programs and Services unit
<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	2.45	NC-SARA, W-SARA, 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 discussions 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 regular **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. The primary convening is a bimonthly call among state and system chief academic officers (and institutional staff where appropriate) that fosters collaboration on challenges facing higher education. The unit has also spun off a separate call on health workforce issues and helps support an institutionally focused call in collaboration with the Programs and Services (PAS) unit.

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 jurisdiction's postsecondary contexts and data. The PAR 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 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 2027, WICHE will continue to identify webinar opportunities that will be of interest and use to the region.

The **WICHE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCALITY 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, V/A	U.S.	\$553,000	0.95 10/24 – 10/26	Hewlett Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Western	\$131,896	0.75 7/27 – 12/27	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	0.3 01/24 – 06/27	College Board, Lumina Foundation
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	0.25 9/24 – 8/29	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	0.6 1/25 – 8/26	ECMC Foundation
The Hole in State Policy: Short-term Credentials	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	WICHE region	\$598,000	0.65 5/26 – 12/28	Pew Charitable Trusts
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S, I, V/A	National	\$150,000	0.25 1/26 – 8/26	Jed Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Trellis Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE Behavioral Health Program
Textbook Price Transparency	A/F, A/S, V/A	WICHE region	\$25,000	0.1 2/26 – 5/27	Michelson 20MM Foundation

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 New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) — focused on scaling the successful adoption of high-quality open educational resources (OER) to improve student outcomes, increase equity,

and improve affordability. Staff have received indications that this work is likely to receive additional funding.

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. WICHE also works closely with the Wyoming governor's office and the Wyoming Business Alliance 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, regional, and national forecasts of high school graduates. During FY 2027, staff will continue sharing lessons from the work and developing supplements, including analyses of projections for the Pacific region and assessing projections for male and female graduates.

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 those 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 through FY 2029.

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 a major concern in ensuring value in higher education, as non-completers are likely to receive 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. Staff received an extension through August 2026 to continue dissemination efforts.

THE HOLE IN STATE POLICY: SHORT TERM CREDENTIALS: WICHE previously completed a portion of the broad project envisioned here (and approved by the Commission) through convening key stakeholders and authoring a white paper on state approaches to short-term credentials. Building on that effort, WICHE expects to receive a 2.5-year grant from Pew Charitable Trusts to convene cohorts of states to examine key policy and data questions related to short-term credentials, including approaches to consumer protection, support for implementing Workforce Pell programs, and addressing private providers.

IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS:

The PAR unit is partnering with the Jed Foundation (JED) to host a national convening focused on state approaches to improving behavioral health in postsecondary education. JED has secured funding to support the convening in late FY 2026. WICHE continues to provide strategic direction and collaborate closely with JED in planning the meeting. Together with the other regional compacts, WICHE expects to use the meeting to outline additional future efforts to support this work in the West. This convening will accomplish some, though not all, of the project’s scope previously approved by the Commission.

TEXTBOOK PRICE TRANSPARENCY: With funding from Michelson 20MM Foundation, WICHE is conducting a landscape scan of legislation and policy in the West related to textbook price transparency. The project complements WICHE’s existing funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, focused on scaling the adoption of open educational resources (OER).

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
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

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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
National Task Force for College Closures	A/F, A/S, V/A		U.S.	\$750,000	1.5 18 months	MHEC, NEBHE, SHEEO, SREB
Cybersecurity Training for Senior Nontechnical Leaders	I, W/S		Western	In-kind	.05 7/24–6/25	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 support opportunity. The project will also seek to partner with WICHE states, 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.

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 various stakeholders, with a focus on where that value does not meet 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 different 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.

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.

DUAL CREDIT POLICY AND RESEARCH: Dual credit is ubiquitous across the region. As it has spread, interest in better understanding the long-term impact, identifying the ways it can be improved, and how different funding approaches affect implementation and student success. The PAR unit will continue to identify opportunities to engage in this work in ways that benefit the West, including projects that would improve the overall data ecosystem, evaluate different policy approaches to dual credit, and examine different state approaches to serving students.

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 WICHE region to learn about successful strategies around access and success, accountability, finance, workforce, and innovation.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR EMERGING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY EXPERTS: As a part of the PAS unit’s leadership development portfolio, this program, conducted in partnership with the PAR unit, would be designed specifically for those who work in higher education policymaking, policy analysis, and policy implementation settings. This program would serve to enhance the knowledge, skills, and capacity of emerging higher education policy experts.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2026:

COLORADO POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS INITIATIVE PLANNING GRANT: WICHE served as the fiscal agent for Colorado Postsecondary Pathways Initiative, which laid the foundation for an approach that would connect Colorado’s opportunity seekers with high-quality education, training, and career opportunities. This four-month planning grant mapped out a statewide coalition that would aim to ultimately bridge the gap in messaging and advocacy between K-12 education and employers by leveraging strategic partnerships with postsecondary providers.

SUPPORTING STATE OPPORTUNITY INDEX PARTICIPATION IN THE WEST: This was a brief project approved by WICHE’s President under her authority over projects under \$50,000. Through this work, WICHE worked with states and institutions in the West to increase participation in Strada Education Foundation’s State Opportunity Index. This national survey had not previously secured sufficient participation in several Western states to report on key indicators of student success and state policy outcomes. The work began in March 2026 and was expected to be completed by the conclusion of FY 2026.

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	471 member institutions, agencies, organizations
Digital Learning Practices	A/F, A/S, I	U.S. and Canada	3.75	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	1.5	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Leadership Summit	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	0.5	WCET members, sponsors
WCET Webcast Series	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	1.0	Various
wcetMIX (Member Information Exchange) and Member-only Resources	A/S, W/S, I	U.S. and Canada	1.0	WCET, SAN, and member leadership
WCET Leadership Communities	A/S, I	U.S. and Canada	0.1	WCET members
State System and Multi-Institutional Consortia Digital Learning Leaders	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	0.25	Higher education systems and multi-institution consortia
State Authorization Network (SAN)	A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	4.0	183 memberships representing ~ 966 institutions, regional compacts, state agencies, organizations, NC-SARA
WCET Steering Committee Annual Priorities	A/F, A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	0.25	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 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 (AI), digital student support services, digital accessibility, student-centered course design, professional learning for faculty and leaders, evidence-based teaching practices, 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 hosts an **ANNUAL MEETING, A MEMBER-ONLY VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT, AND MONTHLY WEBCAST SERIES**. WCET's annual conference 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 member-only Virtual Summit takes place in the spring and is a half-day, single topic-focused event, with an average attendance of 150 members and nonmembers. Semimonthly "Closer Conversations" webcasts 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 also facilitates two leadership groups, using wcecMIX 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 wctMIX to support collaboration and the timely communication of 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 network 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 and 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 on state authorization and related regulatory compliance. Additionally, SAN continues to grow its library of resources and tools, provides members with an online eight-week training, webinars, and in-person workshops, as well as facilitates 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 the *State-to-State Institutional Approval for Distance Education Handbook* to support institutions that must seek institutional approval for interstate distance education directly from states as opposed to obtaining state institutional approval through participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA).

Each year, the **WCET STEERING COMMITTEE** selects **ANNUAL PRIORITIES** to provide insights and resources to assist members. In 2026, the Steering Committee will focus on:

- ▶ **Microcredentials and Short-term Credentials** How can institutions effectively design and deliver short-term credentials and effectively leverage workforce Pell once it's available in mid-2026?
- ▶ **Change Management and Leadership** What strategies and models can help higher education leaders guide and support their teams during times of dynamic change? How can artificial intelligence be leveraged?
- ▶ **Learning Analytics and Data-driven Decision Making** How can institutions best interpret data and leverage data to effectively make the case for their online learning programs? What are innovative ways AI can be used for data analysis and data visualizations?

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 7/25 – 6/26	WCET, external consultants, and other digital learning nonprofits as needed
Emerging Federal Policies	A/F, I, V/A	U.S.	Internal	1.5 7/25 – 6/27	WCET, SAN, Policy Analysis and Research unit
Every Learner Everywhere	A/F, A/S, I	U.S.	Gates Foundation \$33,607,570	5.8 Through 6/27	13 partner organizations
Federal Judicial and Policy Tracker	A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	Internal 2025 – indefinite	0.25	External consultants, SAN and WCET staff
Planning to Deliver: A 1EdTech and WCET Accessibility Workshop Series	A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	Participant fees	0.2 7/25 – 6/26	1EdTech
Axim Collaborative	A/S, I	Arizona and Texas	Subaward from Axim Foundation \$60,000	0.2 2026 – 2028	Alamo Colleges, Rio Salado College, Inscribe

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 FY 2027 and will include continued work on AI literacies as well as assisting institutions in using our *AI Education Policy, Guideline, and Practice Ecosystem Framework* to develop comprehensive institution-level AI policies. This work is being funded through internal investment, but may lead to additional external funding opportunities.

This year continues to bring significant **EMERGING FEDERAL POLICIES** formed by the federal administration's first-year priorities, several of which could directly affect institutions serving students through digital learning. Key priorities include program accountability regardless of modality or sector, stronger alignment between education and workforce outcomes, accreditation reform, and a leaner U.S. Department of Education. In 2025, the administration issued multiple executive orders directing the department to advance these priorities, including accreditation reform and reductions in department staffing. With the enactment of the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3) on July 4, 2025, the department was further directed to develop higher education regulations to implement the statute. In response, the department initiated negotiated rulemaking to address loan limits, the expansion of Pell Grants for short-term programs through Workforce Pell, and the development of program accountability measures applied consistently across institutional sectors and modalities. Consistent with these priorities, the department also launched a separate negotiated rulemaking on accreditation reform. WCET and SAN will continue to monitor these federal policy developments, inform members, and engage in the SARA Policy Modification Process to support improvements 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 through digital learning by providing direct institutional support, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. Service topics include information on 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.

In 2025, SAN and WCET created 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 provides an easy way to follow these developments and participate in the federal regulatory process.

WCET is collaborating with 1EdTech on an accessibility workshop series, **PLANNING TO DELIVER: A 1EDTECH AND WCET ACCESSIBILITY WORKSHOP SERIES**, to help institutions proactively and collaboratively work towards compliance with the U.S. Department of

Justice accessibility rules, while also ensuring all of their content is accessible for the best user experience.

WCET was included as a subawardee in an **AXIM COLLABORATIVE** grant awarded to Alamo Colleges and Rio Salado College. The primary goal of the project is to dramatically increase the connection and sense of belonging for fully online learners, leading to an improvement in student retention through the use of human-centered technology that builds genuine virtual learning communities, expands social capital for online learners, and improves outcomes. WCET will support the grant by providing opportunities for participants to convene as well as disseminate findings.

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
From Framework Fog to Focus: Partnership to Support Emerging AI Ecosystems in Higher Education	A/S, I	■ ■ ■ ■	U.S.	Funder TBD	0.25 3 years	External consultant and WCET members
Global Compliance Handbook	A/F, A/S, I, V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	U.S.	Internal	0.25 1 year	External consultant and SAN staff

FROM FRAMEWORK FOG TO FOCUS: PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT EMERGING AI ECOSYSTEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION builds on WCET’s successful 2025 revision to its AI policies and practices framework. WCET is exploring the possibility of gaining external funding to develop a multiyear project that would assist institutions in developing AI ethical and responsible use guidelines through a community of practice. In addition to facilitating

the development of a vibrant community of practice, the project would also surface robust, generalizable research that can be used to further modify the framework and assist a broad group of institutions in successfully developing and adopting AI policies and guidelines.

SAN will create a **GLOBAL COMPLIANCE HANDBOOK** to help institutions create country-specific compliance plans for serving students outside the U.S. through distance education. It will highlight key considerations including institutional approval, data privacy, web accessibility, and other country-specific requirements.

Completed Projects

Work that staff finished in FY 2026:

EVERY LEARNER EVERYWHERE focused on strengthening the network by creating a new strategic plan and operationalizing this plan in coordination with the network, updating its services framework, remediating all content for accessibility, reorganizing the team under the leadership of the new director, engaging in a listening tour with the network partners and external stakeholders, and conducting multiple workshops on sustainability planning. The network created new learning experiences that can be provided directly to individuals or as pathways to individuals and institutions, provided multiple services to cohorts of institutions, and hosted 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.

The 2025 **WCET ANNUAL MEETING** took place in Denver, Colorado, in October 2025. The 37th Annual Meeting had nearly 300 attendees. Sessions covered an array of digital learning and higher education topics, including information about recently released regulations, artificial intelligence, alternative assessments, microcredential strategies, and digital learning growth and sustainability. The Annual Summit for Women in eLearning was held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting and brought together nearly 75 attendees to discuss various topics, including leadership, AI, and mentorship.

The **MEMBER-ONLY VIRTUAL SUMMIT** topic for 2025 focused on the intersection of policy and practice for the development of high-quality digital learning. Held in partnership with Quality Matters, the Summit attracted 361 registrants. Topics included artificial intelligence, accessibility, short-term Pell, and the ROI of digital learning. This was the first time that WCET has partnered with another organization for our Virtual Summit, and the partnership with Quality Matters was a success.

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 2025 included compliance with Department

of Justice accessibility rules cost and price of distance education, AI and accessibility, and course sharing models.

The **SAN IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP** was held in March 2026 in Boulder, Colorado. The workshop builds upon the lessons learned in the virtual *SAN State Authorization Foundations Course*. Participants explored strategies for developing policies and processes to implement student consumer protections directed by state and federal requirements for out-of-state activities of their institutions. Participants were placed in small mentor-led groups to receive expert support and facilitate networking with peers.

New **SAN RESOURCES** include the *State-to-State Institutional Approval for Distance Education Handbook*, which supports institutions that do not participate in State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, including those located in California. Additionally, SAN released resources for professional licensure compliance including *Survey Findings on the True Scope of Licensure Compliance*, and a member-only *Nursing Program State-Specific Requirements Chart*, providing practical, state-by-state program approval guidance for nursing programs.

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 2026 were:

- ▶ **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** As institutions move beyond conversations about academic integrity, how can they develop institutional-level policies for the ethical and responsible use of AI across all segments of the institutional community? Additionally, how can institutions develop AI literacies that will assist students, faculty, and staff in successfully navigating rapidly evolving AI systems?
- ▶ **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?

SAN also directed a third edition update of the book, **STATE AUTHORIZATION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**, targeted to be released in spring 2026. 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.

WCET completed several AI projects. **SUPPORTING GOVERNANCE, OPERATIONS, AND INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE** analyzed the results of a spring 2025 survey of institutional-level AI policies and practices. Additionally, WCET

published a second version of its popular AI policies framework, **AI EDUCATION POLICY, GUIDELINE, AND PRACTICE ECOSYSTEM FRAMEWORK 2025**. This resource assists institutions in developing deliberately designed, mature, institution-level AI policies and guidelines that support the successful adoption and deployment across the entire institution. Finally, WCET published in January 2026, **AI LITERACIES IN PRACTICE: A COMPREHENSIVE PLAYBOOK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**, which assists institutions in contextualizing a comprehensive set of AI literacies that can then be deployed across the campus.

WCET also completed the development of its **DISTANCE EDUCATION MATURITY TOOLKIT**, a member-only resource comprised of a comprehensive tool that institutions can use to evaluate the maturity of their online education programs. The toolkit also includes a series of case studies and tools that institutions can use to surface stakeholder needs and concerns in order to strengthen their distance education programs.

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
Online Education Research Agenda	A/S, I, V/A	■ ■ ■ ■	U.S.	Internal initially	0.1 1 year	Policy Analysis and Research unit and external consultants

ONLINE EDUCATION RESEARCH AGENDA Despite the prevalence of distance education and digital learning (most students now take at least one online course), research on what constitutes high-quality distance education and best practices for developing and offering distance education remains scant. In fact, some of the current research is poorly designed and/or tells an incomplete story. Toward that end, the Policy Analysis and Research unit and WCET propose the development of a distance education/digital learning research agenda that would outline the areas of needed research. Grounded in practitioner experience and informed by state policy, legislative, accreditor, and quality assurance perspectives, the agenda will identify research needs, clarify why they now matter, and identify actionable next steps for the field.

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	0.2	WICHE-region behavioral health authorities
Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG): Annual Membership Program	A/S, I, V/A	Western	0.2	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 each 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 GROUP: 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 WICHE BHP also organizes an annual forum featuring training and presentations. WSDSG is funded through an annual membership 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	\$219,550	0.12 6/25 – 5/26	State of Alaska; Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Alaska Psychiatric Institute
Alaska Psychiatric Institute – Regulatory Compliance Technical Assistance	A/S, V/A	Western	\$197,100	0.0 [†] 7/23 – 7/26	Alaska Psychiatric Institute
Alaska Psychiatric Institute – Clinical Peer Review	W/S, V/A	Western	\$150,000	0.0 [†] 7/25 – 6/26	Alaska Psychiatric Institute
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) State Opioid/Tribal Opioid Response (SOR/TOR) Technical Assistance	A/S, W/S	Western	\$169,751	0.14 9/24 – 9/27	American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
Arizona Evidence-Based Practices (EBPS) Fidelity Monitoring*	W/S, V/A	Western	\$1,076,827	7.3 7/25 – 6/26	State of Arizona
Arizona – Mercy Care C.A.R.E.S. Training	W/S, V/A	Western	\$70,000	0.0 [†] 2/24 – 3/26	Mercy Care
Arizona – Training and Quality Recommendations for System Improvement for Severe Mental Illness Population	W/S	Western	\$338,706	0.0 [†] 2/26 – 9/26	State of Arizona
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration Rural Behavioral Health Initiative	W/S, A/S	Western	\$1,558,920	1.5 10/24 – 9/26	State of Colorado
Guam Psychology Internship Consortium (GU-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$358,424	0.75 10/25 – 9/26	U.S. Territory of Guam

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Hawai'i Psychology Internship Consortium (HI-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$2,361,302	0.5 7/25 – 6/26	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Recruitment of School-based Clinical Psychologists*	W/S	Western	\$100,000	0.0 [†] Ongoing	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Recruitment of School-based Behavioral Health and Social Workers*	W/S	Western	\$125,000	0.8 Ongoing	State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i Early Intervention Services Compensation Study	W/S, A/F	Western	\$124,600	0.12 5/25 – 4/26	State of Hawai'i
Idaho Psychology Internship Consortium (ID-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$125,000	0.13 7/25 – 6/26	State of Idaho
Montana Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Workforce Needs Assessment	W/S	Western	\$308,338	0.5 10/25 – 3/27	State of Montana
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	\$536,355	3.0 9/22 – 9/26	U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
National Institutes of Health Behavioral Health Aide Assessment	W/S	Western	\$175,127	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	\$495,965	0.25 8/25 – 8/27	State of Nevada
New Mexico Psychology Internship Consortium (NM-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$354,399	0.5 8/24 – 8/26	State of New Mexico, Indian Health Service

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Oregon State Hospital Psychology Internship Program* (OSH-PIP)	A/S, W/S	Western	\$3,000	0.0 [†] 7/25 – 6/26	State of Oregon
Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)*	W/S	Western	\$720,000	2.25 9/25 – 8/26	JBS International
Together With Veterans* – Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention	W/S	U.S.	\$1,419,567	3.25 4/25 – 3/26	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Rocky Mountain MIRECC
Sanford Health Psychology Internship Consortium (SH-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$64,530	0.25 4/25 – 3/26	Sanford Health
South Dakota IMP(ACT) Fidelity Reviews*	W/S, V/A	Western	\$100,120	0.25 6/25 – 5/26	State of South Dakota
South Dakota Psychology Internship Consortium (SD-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	30,000	0.25 8/22 – 6/26	State of South Dakota
South Dakota Civil Commitment Assessment	A/S, W/S	Western	\$46,014	0.0 [†] 1/26 – 5/26	State of South Dakota
University of Texas Mental Health Dissemination, Implementation, and Sustainment (MHDIS) Center for HHS Regions 6 and 8	A/S, W/S	Texas	\$48,450	1/25 – 9/29 5 years	University of Texas
Utah Psychology Internship Consortium (UT-PIC)*	A/S, W/S	Western	\$35,074	0.0 [†] 7/24 – 6/26	State of Utah
WICHE States BHP-Research and Development Projects	W/S, I	Western	\$171,981	1.4 7/25 – 6/27	WICHE region

* The WICHE BHP expects these projects will be renewed or have already been renewed for FY 2027.

† 0.0 FTE indicates that WICHE relies on consultants and/or subcontractors for this work.

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 is a multisite consortium of Alaska agencies that maintains at least one supervising psychologist on-site 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 conducts on-site reviews and provides guidance on addressing shortcomings in policies and execution.

ALASKA PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE-CLINICAL PEER REVIEW: A consulting WICHE psychiatrist will conduct peer reviews at the request of the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) Medical director or CEO. Up to six selected cases may be reviewed each year to provide an objective clinical assessment and identify opportunities for improved care. Following the reviews, a collaborative debrief with API staff will occur to discuss findings and potential improvements.

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 U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The WICHE BHP provides 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 enhancements to the mental and behavioral health system through networking among state and tribal programs.

ARIZONA EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES FIDELITY MONITORING: The WICHE BHP partners with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System to support the implementation and fidelity reviews of four evidence-based practices (EBPs) in the Maricopa County and statewide public behavioral health systems. The WICHE BHP supports a team of fidelity reviewers who evaluate approximately 20 different providers in Maricopa County and 19 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.

ARIZONA – TRAINING AND QUALITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT FOR SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS POPULATION: The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (hereinafter “AHCCCS”) has contracted with the WICHE BHP to design a plan for a comprehensive training program and development of policy recommendations to meet the overall project goal of improving the quality of services provided to members diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI) who are receiving treatment under court order through Arizona’s Title 36, including those who are unsheltered.

COLORADO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (BHA) 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 to identify and refer individuals with behavioral health needs to appropriate services. The WICHE BHP will develop training modules for rural health providers to build awareness and skills in using behavioral health assessments, as well as confidence in referring patients to appropriate channels for services and care, including telehealth opportunities to support the behavioral health needs of the community.

GUAM PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (GUAM-PIC): The WICHE BHP has partnered with the U.S. Territory of Guam to develop an accredited 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, 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 to establish a pipeline to build Hawai’i’s behavioral health workforce. Two Hawai’i state agencies (the Department of Education and the Department of Health) provide funding to support HI-PIC.

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

HAWAI’I RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND SOCIAL WORKERS: The WICHE BHP is assisting the Hawai’i Department of Education with marketing, recruitment, screening, and referral services for school-based behavioral health

(SBBH) and social work professionals to fill public school vacancies across the Hawaiian Islands. This effort is designed to increase the employment of SBBH and social work professionals.

HAWAI'I EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES COMPENSATION STUDY: The Hawai'i Department of Health, Early Intervention Section, contracted with the WICHE BHP to complete another comparative review of early intervention services, compensation methodology and pricing structures for contracted services and related professional salaries, such as speech language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, etc. The goal of these studies is to obtain comparative data from other states' early intervention programs to inform Hawai'i's rates and contracting practices and to ensure they remain competitive in maintaining a sufficient workforce.

IDAHO PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONSORTIUM (ID-PIC): The WICHE BHP is assisting The State of Idaho in the ongoing operations for 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 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT: The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division, has engaged the WICHE BHP in a contract to conduct a needs assessment to determine gaps and shortages in the state's behavioral health and developmental disabilities workforce. To assess current needs and gaps, the WICHE BHP will review available workforce data and design and conduct a community needs assessment study that includes a survey and key informant interviews.

MONTANA PACT FIDELITY REVIEWS: The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services' Behavioral Health and Disabilities Division 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 improve services, and providing consultation on outcomes and dashboard development.

MOUNTAIN PLAINS RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (MP ROTAC): In October 2022, the WICHE BHP was awarded a two-year grant from the U.S. 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 2024, SAMHSA added funding for a third year of MP ROTAC operations, and the WICHE BHP will be completing all work on this grant by the end of September 2026. However, if a new solicitation is released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the WICHE BHP will apply for a new grant.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AIDE ASSESSMENT: Through a research grant funded by the National Institutes of Health, 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 Program 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.

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 multisector 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 (HRSA). WICHE anticipates a one-year extension of this project.

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS – RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION: The WICHE BHP is collaborating with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) to support the operations of Together With Veterans (TWW), a 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 TWW program has been implemented in 38 rural communities, 32 of which have completed their three-year commitment to the program. The TWW program sites are located in rural communities throughout the country, stretching from New Hampshire to 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 work with the state to develop a fidelity review scale for forensic 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 the achievement of accreditation of the internship program.

SOUTH DAKOTA CIVIL COMMITMENT ASSESSMENT: The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS), Human Services Center (HSC), requested WICHE technical assistance to review civil commitment statutes and processes. WICHE will conduct a comprehensive assessment of South Dakota’s involuntary commitment system, including interviews with key stakeholders, a scan of comparable processes in selected states, and identification of opportunities to improve alignment, efficiency, and clarity across regions and partner agencies.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MENTAL HEALTH DISSEMINATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND SUSTAINMENT (MHDIS) CENTER FOR HHS REGIONS 6 AND 8:

THE WICHE BHP serves as a sub-awardee to the University of Texas-Austin, providing technical assistance to SAMHSA grantees across two Health and Human Services Regions. The WICHE BHP will assist in establishing the advisory board and in assessing the technical assistance desired by grantees and the optimal methods for providing it.

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.


WICHE STATES BHP-RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: To better serve WICHE states, the WICHE BHP is conducting two research projects that will result in white papers that will be used to inform WICHE state policy and decision-makers. These projects will provide important information to WICHE states and Pacific jurisdictions in planning behavioral health services and will advance the fidelity review services WICHE provides. The first research project will perform an environmental scan of Western states’ implementation and assessment of evidenced-based behavioral health evidence-base practices (EBPs). The second project will research rural adaptations of the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Model, including adaptations, innovations, or modifications that rural providers make to improve the fit with their rural context.

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
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

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Improving Policy and Practice to Support Behavioral Health on Campus	A/S, W/S		Western	TBD	TBD	WICHE states

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

The WICHE BHP is providing technical assistance to the Community Guidance Center in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (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 among the other Pacific jurisdictions in expanding 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 Analysis and Research 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:

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS: The past two years of the national match for psychology internship positions has seen a significant growth in the imbalance between intern applicants and accredited internship program positions. For the current match season for internships in academic year 2026-27, 4,645 applicants registered for the match, and the total number of available internship slots/positions is currently 3,969, or a shortage of 716 registered internship positions. This presents an ideal opportunity to create new slots to meet the unmet need. The WICHE BHC has started outreach to state partners to gauge interest and support.

TOGETHER WITH VETERANS – RURAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION 2.0: The WICHE BHP will be actively working with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to propose a continuation of the Together With Veterans – Rural Veterans Suicide Prevention Program. This will continue the recruitment and development of rural community-based projects at the local level and will include education, training, and coaching.

Completed Projects

Work that staff completed in FY 2026:

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 developing a crisis professional training curriculum consisting of 24 distinct modules. The WICHE BHP also augmented the BHA staff with crisis-professional expertise, supported the work of a crisis-professional advisory board, reviewed curriculum modules, and developed training for crisis professionals, first responders, and youth and young adults.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The WICHE BHP worked 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 focused on the integration of substance use disorder and mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery in rural communities. The WICHE BHP provided expert trainers for a series of six training sessions over 12 weeks, twice a year, over a two-year period. Many expert trainers were provided in conjunction with the ongoing work of the WICHE BHP's RCORP and MP ROTAC initiatives.

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 sought to identify digital behavioral health technologies appropriate for children, youth, and young adults. The WICHE BHP provided project management, administrative support, and subject-matter expertise for this project.

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	Description
Evolving Higher Education Policy Issues	A/S, I	Policy Analysis and Research, WCET	Projects and Initiatives (variously funded)	Through WCET's <i>Frontiers</i> blog and other avenues, the Policy Analysis and Research unit and WCET 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 copublication in areas ranging 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 convening, a collaboration between the Policy Analysis and Research Unit and Behavioral Health Program will bring together leading states focused on emerging policy approaches in this critical area.
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	A/F, A/S, W/S, I, V/A	Policy Analysis and Research, Programs and Services	Current Activities	WICHE states and Pacific Island jurisdictions

ACTION ITEM

Approval of the Conflict of Interest Policy for the WICHE Commission, President, and Staff

Background

As a 501(c)(3) organization, WICHE is required to complete Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax). On that form, Question 12a asks whether the organization had a “written conflict of interest policy” for the previous year. While not legally required, in 2022, the Commission approved a Conflict of Interest Policy to be reviewed and approved every other year (included below). If approved, current Commissioners will be asked to sign the Conflict of Interest form, and new Commissioners will be asked to sign it during onboarding.

Conflict of Interest Policy of Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

ARTICLE I

Purpose

The purpose of this Conflict of Interest Policy (this “Policy”) is to protect the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, a public interstate agency (“WICHE”), when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer of WICHE or a Commissioner of WICHE (referred to collectively herein as the “Commission”) or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit entities.

ARTICLE II

Definitions

1. Interested Person. Any Commissioner, principal officer, or member of a committee designated by the Commission, who has a direct or indirect Financial Interest (as defined below) is an Interested Person.
2. Financial Interest. A person has a Financial Interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:
 - a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which WICHE has a transaction or arrangement;
 - b. A compensation arrangement with WICHE or with any entity or individual with which WICHE has a transaction or arrangement; or
 - c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which WICHE is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.

Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A Financial Interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Article III, Section 2, a person who has a Financial Interest may have a conflict of interest only if the Commission decides that a conflict of interest exists.

ARTICLE III

Procedures

- 1.** Duty to Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an Interested Person must disclose the existence of a Financial Interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the Commission.
- 2.** Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of a Financial Interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the Interested Person, he/she shall leave the meeting of the Commission while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining Commissioners shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.
- 3.** Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest.
 - a.** An Interested Person may make a presentation to the Commission, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.
 - b.** The Commission shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
 - c.** After exercising due diligence, the Commission shall determine whether WICHE can obtain, with reasonable efforts, a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
 - d.** If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the Commission shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested Commissioners whether the transaction or arrangement is in WICHE's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.
- 4.** Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy.
 - a.** If the Commission has reasonable cause to believe an Interested Person has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, the Commission shall inform such Interested Person of the basis for such belief and afford the Interested Person an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.

- b. If, after hearing the Interested Person’s response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Commission determines the Interested Person has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

ARTICLE IV

The foregoing Conflict of Interest Policy was adopted by WICHE’s Commission effective as of May 7, 2024.

Demarée Michelau, Secretary

EXHIBIT A

Form of Conflict of Interest Statement

Conflict of Interest Statement

The undersigned Commissioner or officer of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, a public interstate agency (“WICHE”), hereby acknowledges and agrees that he or she:

- A. has received a copy of the Conflict of Interest Policy (the “Policy”) of WICHE;
- B. has read and understands the Policy;
- C. has agreed to comply with the Policy; and
- D. understands that in order for WICHE to maintain its federal tax exemption, it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

This Conflict of Interest Statement is effective as of May 19, 2026.

Printed Name

State

Signature

Date

Action Requested

Approval of the Conflict of Interest Policy, as presented.

ACTION ITEM

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

Summary

The Commission has developed and approved Codes of Ethics for the Commission, President, and staff. The three codes, while tailored to the unique responsibilities of each role, are intentionally aligned to promote consistent ethical expectations across WICHE's governance and operational functions. The Codes of Ethics were most recently approved in 2024 and are reviewed annually.

The annual affirmation ensures continued awareness and adherence to these standards. Upon affirmation, Commissioners acknowledge their ongoing responsibility to uphold these standards in all WICHE-related activities. One minor revision is proposed this year; the affirmation reflects continued commitment to these standards.

Code of Ethics – Commission

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

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

- ▶ Fulfill their responsibilities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
- ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.
- ▶ Avoid possible conflicts of interest between their responsibilities as a state-appointed official and the policies, procedures, and operations of the multistate organization. Should a potential conflict arise, a Commissioner has the responsibility to disclose this to the Commission and to recuse themselves from any discussion or actions with regard to the potential conflict of interest.
- ▶ Foster high standards of professional and ethical conduct within WICHE and the Commission.

- ▶ Support the principles of due process and civil and human rights of all individuals while being vigilant to resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Assure that allegations of ethics violations concerning a member of staff or the Commission are thoroughly investigated and reviewed. The President or their designee shall review allegations concerning a WICHE staff member. Allegations against the President or a Commissioner shall be reviewed by the Commission officers in consultation with the Executive Committee.
- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would appear to be, a conflict between the Commissioner's personal interests and the interests of WICHE or its **memberparticipating** states or Pacific Island jurisdictions.
- ▶ Avoid exploiting their position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

Code of Ethics – President

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

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

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

- ▶ Fulfill her responsibilities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
- ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and adhere with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.

- ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest between her responsibilities and the policies, procedures, and operations of WICHE; and through policies, procedures, and actions, ensure the appropriate ethical conduct of the WICHE staff.
- ▶ Disclose any potential conflicts of interest, should one ever arise, to the officers of the Commission.
- ▶ Support principles of due process and civil and human rights for all individuals, while being vigilant and resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would appear to be, a conflict between the President's personal interests and the interests of WICHE or its **memberparticipating** states or Pacific Island jurisdictions.
- ▶ Avoid exploiting her position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

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

Code of Ethics – Staff

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

- ▶ It is essential that WICHE espouse its own standards of ethical conduct since codes differ by state and Pacific Island jurisdiction and may not apply to an interstate agency such as WICHE. In this regard, it is crucial for the WICHE staff to:
 - ▶ Fulfill their responsibilities in a professional manner with honesty, integrity, dignity, fairness, and civility.
 - ▶ Act in an informed, competent, and responsible manner, and with due diligence to provisions of the Western Regional Education Compact, the Bylaws, and the approved policies and procedures of the organization.
 - ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest between their responsibilities and the policies, procedures, and operations of WICHE. Through policies, procedures, and actions, ensure appropriate

ethical conduct. If staff members have any question whether a situation is a conflict of interest, they should discuss the matter with their supervisor. If it remains unresolved, refer the matter to the President for final determination.

- ▶ Should a potential conflict arise for any staff member, they have the responsibility to disclose this to their immediate supervisor.
- ▶ Foster high standards of professional and ethical conduct within WICHE and with external interactions.
- ▶ Support the principles of due process and civil and human rights of all individuals, while being vigilant to resolve circumstances of discrimination, inequity, inappropriate behavior, harassment, or abuse within WICHE.
- ▶ Refrain from accepting duties, incurring obligations, accepting gifts or favors of monetary value, or engaging in private business or professional activities where there is, or would appear to be, a conflict between the staff member's personal interests and the interests of WICHE or its **memberparticipating** states or Pacific Island jurisdictions. Activities directly related to WICHE business, such as business dinners with colleagues or vendors, are not considered to be a conflict of interest.
- ▶ Avoid exploiting their position for personal gain through the use of political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.
- ▶ Obey local, state, and national laws and pursue any changes in those laws, policies, and regulations only through legal, ethical, and otherwise appropriate means.
- ▶ Support this WICHE Code of Ethics as a fundamental underpinning for the values, the decisions, and the actions of the Commission and the organization.

Action Requested

Affirmation of the Codes of Ethics for the Commission, the President, and staff, as presented.

INFORMATION ITEM

Contract Signatory Authority and Delegation Under WICHE Bylaws

Summary

This Information Item is provided to ensure transparency and compliance with WICHE Bylaws regarding contract signatory authority and the delegation of that authority. It documents who currently holds delegated signatory authority and explains how this authority is exercised operationally at WICHE.

Background

Article IV, Section 4. Annual Authorization of Officers; Delegation of Authority, part d of the WICHE Bylaws state, "The president of the Commission is authorized to sign contracts, grants, and other agreements that are necessary for the daily operation of WICHE...The president of the Commission is further authorized to delegate similar authority to other WICHE-employed administrators connected with various entities of the Commission to execute designated contractual documents and to hire, evaluate, promote, and make retention decisions for WICHE staff related to their respective responsibilities. The president shall furnish the Executive Committee at each regular meeting of the Commission a list of staff members with delegated signatory authority."

While delegation of signatory authority has occurred in practice for decades, formal reporting of such authority to the Executive Committee has not. To align with Bylaw requirements, this Information Item will now be included on the agenda of all regular Commission meetings.

WICHE's Policies and Procedures Manual establishes the operational framework for exercising contract signatory authority. Under these policies, the signatory authority is based on contract value as follows:

Signatory thresholds for contracts are defined as follows:

- ▶ Project Managers: Contracts under \$25,000
- ▶ Vice Presidents: Contracts under \$100,000
- ▶ President: Contracts over \$100,000

All contracts require signatures from the contractor, the appropriate WICHE administrator, and Human Resources. Fully executed contracts are forwarded to HR for final approval and distribution to Accounting and the relevant unit.

The following individuals have delegated authority to sign contracts and approve costs between \$25,000 and \$100,000:

- ▶ Raymonda Burgman Gallegos – Vice President, Programs and Services

- ▶ Ashley Clark – Vice President, Finance and Administration
- ▶ Van Davis – Executive Director, WCET and Vice President, Digital Learning
- ▶ Patrick Lane – Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
- ▶ Dennis Mohatt – Vice President, Behavioral Health
- ▶ Melanie Sidwell – Vice President, Communications

The following individual has the authority to sign contracts and approve costs of \$100,000 and above:

- ▶ Demarée Michelau – President

References

REFERENCES

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WICHE COMMISSION

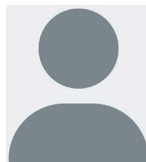
The WICHE Commission oversees the development of WICHE programs and ensures that the Western Regional Education Compact is carried out for the benefit of the residents of the West. WICHE's 48 Commissioners, who are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and U.S. Pacific territories and the 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

ALASKA

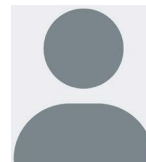


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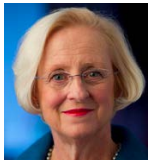


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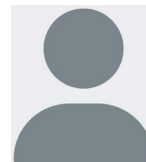
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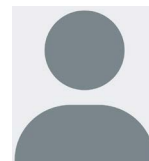
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APPROVED FUTURE COMMISSION MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Date	Location
November 5-6, 2026	Colorado
May 3-4, 2027	New Mexico
November 4-5, 2027	Colorado
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

COMMISSION COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ann Millner (UT), Chair
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair
Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goepfing (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)
Michael Meotti (WA)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair
Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair
VACANT (AK)
Chad Sampson (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
JB Holston (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)

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair
Tom Begich (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Kate Siegel Shimko (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)

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Barbara Damron (HI), Committee Chair
Kathleen Goepfing (AZ)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Ben Cannon (OR)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

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Robert Shireman (CA)
David Lassner (HI)
Danita Bye (ND)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
Larry Tidemann (SD)

Special Committees

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Kathleen Goepfing (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
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Fred Lokken (NV)
Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI)
Ann Millner (UT)
Michael Meotti (WA)

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WICHE STAFF

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

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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
Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator
Nick Fusilier, 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, 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
Lisa Kerchherr, Administrative Assistant III
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA
Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Dennis Mohatt, Vice President
Jason Alves, Director of Veterans Initiatives
Genevieve Berry, Project Manager, MHTCC
Gina Brimner, Director of Special Projects
Madison Chamberlain, Fidelity Specialist and Data Lead
Kristy Crawford, Fidelity Specialist
Janell Daly, Senior Administrative Coordinator
Margie DeAnda, Project Coordinator – Hawai'i Recruitment
Karly Dickinson, Technical Assistance Lead
Nicole Eastin, Fidelity Specialist and Team Lead
Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead
Amanda Gentz, Post Doctoral Psychology Fellow
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
Annette Robertson, Fidelity Review Program Manager
Vanessa Roup, Technical Assistance Associate, RCORP/ROTAC

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
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
Amanda Owen, Assistant Director,
Membership and Initiatives
Betsy Piland, Assistant Director,
Community Content

Megan Raymond, Senior Director,
Membership and Programs
Leigha Wade, Administrative Assistant III

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Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and
Administration
Christine Chavez, Accounting Specialist
Diane Haslett, Accountant I

COMMUNICATIONS

Melanie Sidwell, Vice President
Joseph Garcia, Senior Graphic Designer
Kyle McMullen, Intern

HUMAN RESOURCES

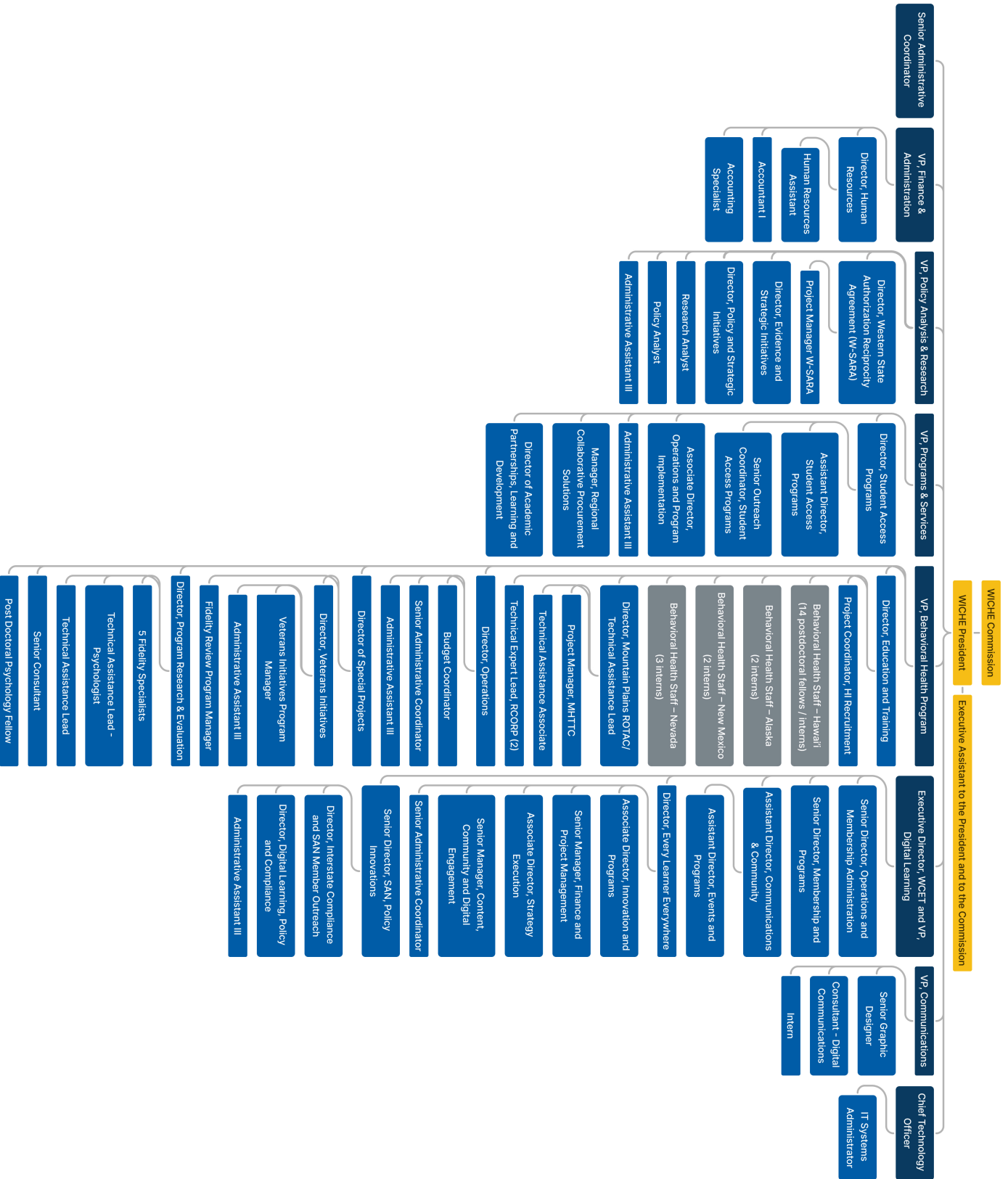
Deirdre Coulter, Director of Human
Resources
Georgia Frazer, Human Resources
Assistant

IT SERVICES

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

April 2026

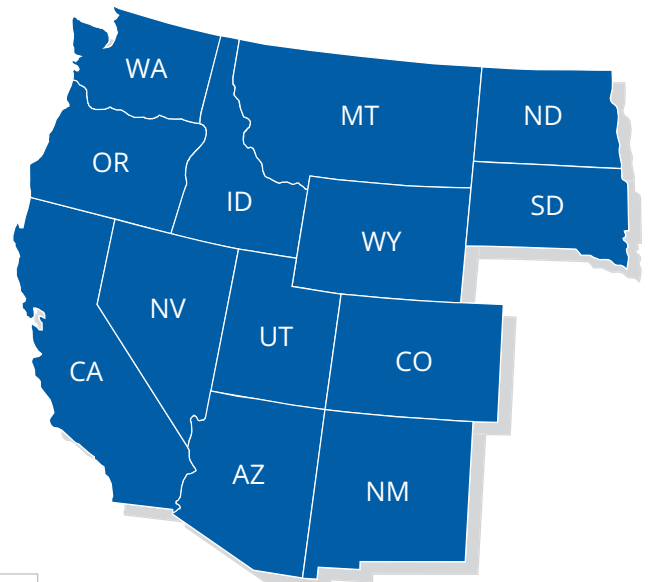
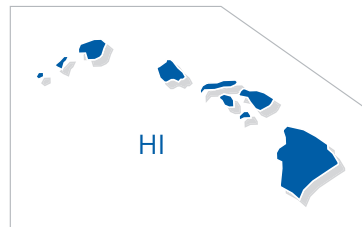
WICHE ORGANIZATION



WICHE REGION

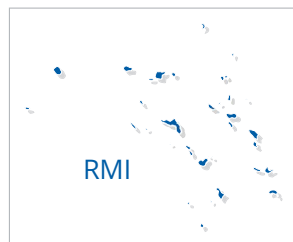
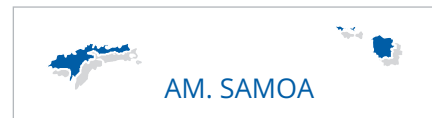
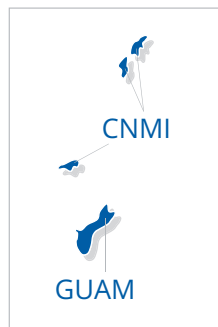
WICHE STATES

- 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
- Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
- Republic of Palau
- Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)



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 _____ educase.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.edu

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](http://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](http://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
SHEEO Offices in the West:
ABOR Arizona Board of Regents abor.asu.edu
ACPE Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education acpe.alaska.gov/
CCHE 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	wpsa.org
WRGP	Western Regional Graduate Program	wiche.edu/tuition-savings/wrgp
WSDSG	Western States Decision Support Group (WICHE BH Data Analysis Group)	wiche.edu/western-states-decision-support-group
WUE	Western Undergraduate Exchange	wiche.edu/tuition-savings/wue
YI	Young Invincibles	younginvincibles.org

Thank you for joining us in Seattle, Washington, and for your service and leadership as Commissioners. Your expertise and collaboration strengthen our shared commitment to advancing higher education and sound public policy across the West. Together, we look ahead with determination at a time when higher education remains one of our region's most valuable and powerful tools for expanding opportunity, strengthening communities, and supporting economic vitality through smart and strategic workforce development. The work of this Commission helps to ensure that our shared direction and priorities are grounded in today's realities while remaining open to tomorrow's possibilities. I remain grateful for your collective partnership and for the thoughtful leadership you bring to this important work.

See you November 5-6, 2026, when we convene at the next Commission meeting in Colorado!

- Demi Michelau, WICHE President

