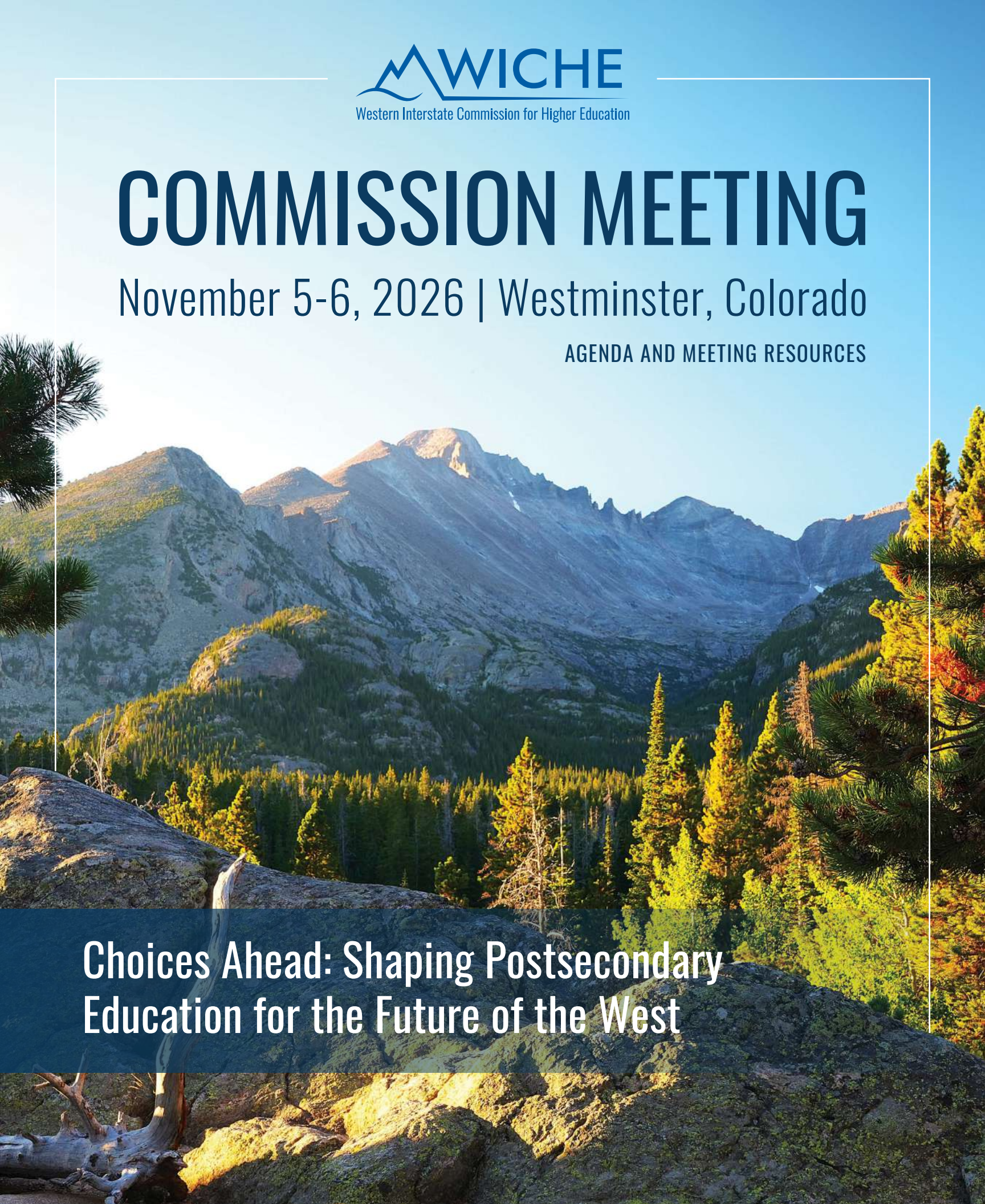


COMMISSION MEETING

November 5-6, 2026 | Westminster, Colorado

AGENDA AND MEETING RESOURCES



Choices Ahead: Shaping Postsecondary
Education for the Future of the West

WICHE Commission Meeting Agenda

Choices Ahead: Shaping Postsecondary Education for the Future of the West

November 5-6, 2026 (*New Commissioner Orientation – November 4, 2026*)
The Westin Westminster | 10600 Westminster Blvd, Westminster, CO 80020

Wednesday, November 4, 2026

Noon <i>Cotton Creek I</i>	Optional Lunch for New Commissioners and WICHE Staff	
1:00 - 4:00 p.m. <i>Cotton Creek II</i>	New Commissioner Orientation	
5:40 p.m. <i>Meet in Hotel Lobby (depart at 5:45 p.m.)</i>	Dinner for New Commissioners New Commissioners and WICHE Officers are invited to dinner at Hideaway Steakhouse.	

Thursday, November 5, 2026

7:00 - 9:00 a.m. <i>Lake House</i>	Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests	
7:45 - 8:45 a.m. <i>Cotton Creek II</i>	Executive Committee Meeting (Open)	1-1
9:00 - 9:30 a.m. <i>Westminster Ballroom I-II</i>	Welcome and Opening Remarks Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE <i>On the Horizon</i> Leading in the West: Governors' Perspectives on the Road Ahead Speaker Jack Waldorf, Executive Director, Western Governors' Association	2-1

9:30 - 10:30 a.m. <i>Westminster Ballroom I-II</i>	Plenary Session I – The Story of the West: Postsecondary Trends, Pressures, and Choices Ahead Introduction Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature Presenters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE • Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE 	3-1
10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	Break	
<i>The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions aimed at providing Commissioners with the opportunity to leverage diverse perspectives to explore relevant topics aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities.</i>		
10:45 - Noon <i>Cotton Creek I</i>	Roundtable 1 – Moving from Strategy to Implementation: Building the Infrastructure of Student Success Facilitator Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, Programs and Services, WICHE Panelists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kari Brown-Herbst, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, Laramie County Community College • Gwen Sharp, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education 	4-1
10:45 - Noon <i>Cotton Creek II</i>	Roundtable 2 – Legislative Signals from the West Facilitator Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE Panelists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature • Commissioner Gerry Pollet (WA), Representative, Washington State Legislature 	4-2
Noon - 1:15 p.m. <i>Lake House</i>	Networking Lunch	
1:15 - 2:30 p.m. <i>Cotton Creek II</i>	Programs and Services Committee Meeting	5-1
1:15 - 2:30 p.m. <i>Cotton Creek I</i>	Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting	6-1
2:30 - 2:45 p.m.	Break	

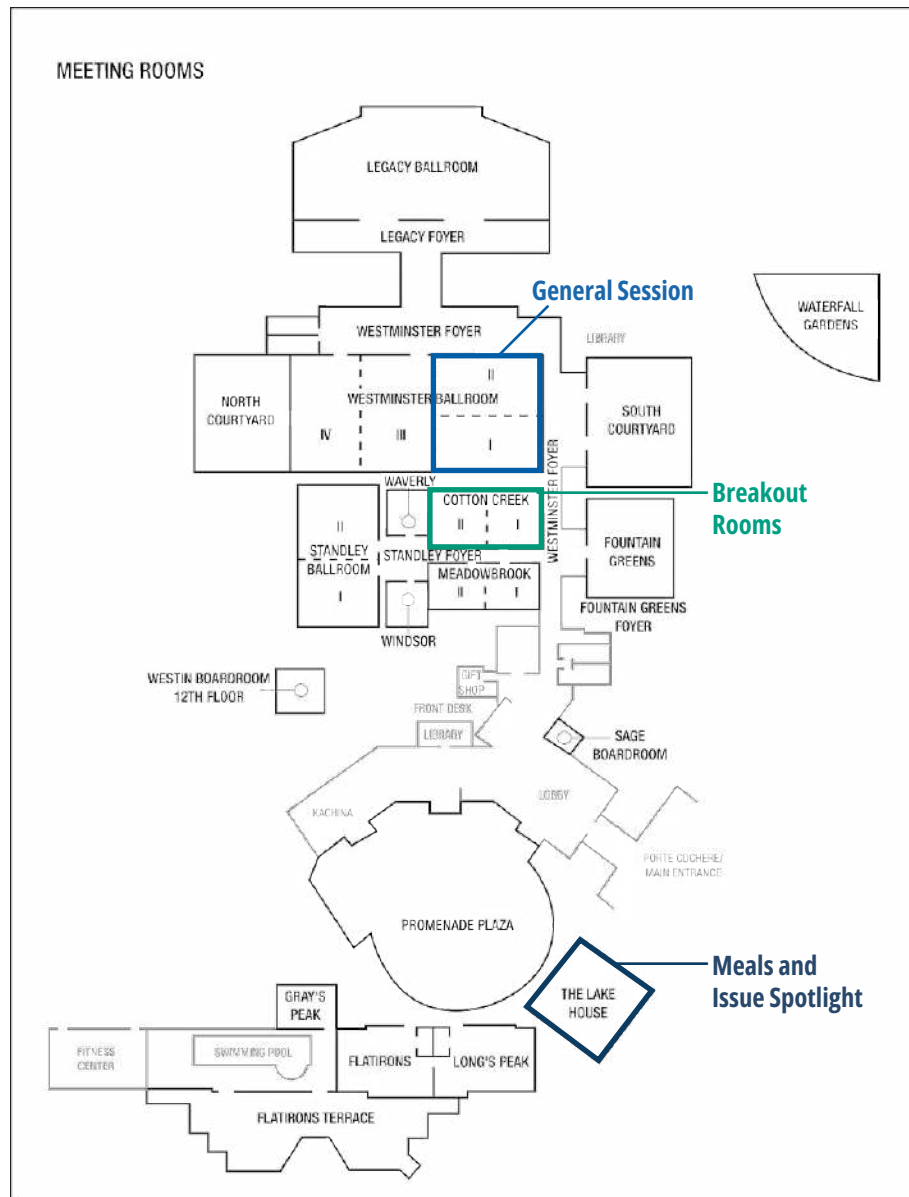
2:45 - 4:00 p.m. <i>Westminster Ballroom I-II</i>	Plenary Session II – State Strategies for Sustaining and Strengthening Postsecondary Education Moderator Anne Trujillo, Retired News Anchor, Denver7 (KMGH) and Trustee, Adams State University Panelists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Brent Sanford, Commissioner, North Dakota University System • Chris Ferguson, Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives, California Community Colleges • Commissioner Wendy Hensel, President, University of Hawai'i System 	7-1
5:45 - 8:30 p.m. <i>Lake House</i>	Meet the Centennial State: A Dinner Celebrating Colorado	

Friday, November 6, 2026

7:00 - 8:30 a.m. <i>Lake House</i>	Full Breakfast Available for Commissioners, Staff, and Guests. Delegations will caucus to discuss the Committee of the Whole – Action Items	
8:00 – 8:30 a.m. <i>Lake House</i>	<i>Issue Spotlight</i> National Convening on Postsecondary Mental Health: Implications for the West Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonya Horn, Director of Research and Evaluation, Behavioral Health Program, WICHE • Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE 	8-1
8:30 - 8:45 a.m.	Break	
<i>The WICHE Roundtables are facilitated, interactive discussions aimed at providing Commissioners with the opportunity to leverage diverse perspectives to explore relevant topics aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities.</i>		
8:45 - 10:00 a.m. <i>Cotton Creek I</i>	Roundtable 3 – Rural Health Transformation: Workforce, Access, and Regional Collaboration Facilitator Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE State Presenter Amy Brumfield, Systems Initiatives Director, Office of the Idaho State Board of Education Postsecondary Respondent Charlie Yingling, Dean, Orvis School of Nursing, University of Nevada, Reno	9-1

8:45 - 10:00 a.m. <i>Cotton Creek II</i>	Roundtable 4 – Planning for Disruption: Continuity and Resilience in Higher Education Facilitator Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE Panelists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair, and Interim President, Northern Marianas College • Kate Hausbeck Korgan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Nevada, Las Vegas • André Le Duc, Vice President and Chief Resilience Officer, University of Oregon 	9-2
10:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:15 - 11:30 a.m. <i>Westminster Ballroom I-II</i>	Committee of the Whole – Business Session	10-1
11:30 – 11:45 a.m. <i>Westminster Ballroom I-II</i>	Closing Remarks Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair	

The Westin Westminster Floor Plans



Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026

7:45 – 8:45 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 7:45 – 8:45 a.m. | Cotton Creek II

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)
Terrence George (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 Session)

Presiding

Ann Millner (NM), Chair



Approval of the September 23, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes 1-2

Discussion Item

Commission Priorities for the FY 2028 Workplan

Other Business

Adjournment

Action Item

Approval of the September 23, 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 Goeppinger (AZ)
 Jim Chavez (CO)
 Ellen Junn (CA), *proxy for Robert Shireman*
 Jennifer White (ID)
 Clayton Christian (MT)
 Fred Lokken (NV)
 Kyle Davison (ND)
 Ben Cannon (OR)
 Larry Tidemann (SD)
 Fred Baldwin (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Robert Shireman (CA)
 Terrence George (HI)
 Michael Meotti (WA)

Other Commissioners Present

Michelle Johnson (NV)

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
 Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research
 Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research
 Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
 Demarée Michelau, President
 Melanie Sidwell, Vice President, Communications
 Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Laura Ewing called the roll, and a quorum was confirmed.

Information Item

Announcement of New Commissioners

Chair Millner announced newly appointed North Dakota Commissioner DJ Campbell, who serves as Vice Chair, North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, and Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Sanford Health.

Action Item

Approval of August 18, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Chair Millner invited any corrections to the minutes of the August 18, 2026, Executive Committee meeting. No corrections were requested. Chair Millner declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Action Item

Approval of the Executive Compensation Philosophy

Chair Millner presented the proposed Executive Compensation Philosophy, developed from Executive Committee discussion during the May 2026 Commission Meeting, to formalize WICHE's approach to executive compensation. She noted that the Commission officers, with support from Commissioners Clayton Christian and Ben Cannon, who serve on the Executive Compensation Subcommittee, developed the philosophy to establish a clear, consistent framework for executive compensation decisions. The philosophy is intended to ensure that executive compensation remains reasonable, appropriately documented, and aligned with IRS requirements. It also establishes the use of an identified peer group and a target compensation range between the 50th and 75th percentiles to guide compensation reviews for the President and inform staff salary considerations. The Chair stated that the philosophy was intended to provide continuity and guidance for future Executive Committees.

Prior to consideration of the motion, the Commission discussed the scope of the Executive Compensation Philosophy, including its relationship to future staff compensation reviews. President Demarée Michelau clarified that while the Commission determines the President's compensation, the President's administrative authority covers future staff compensation reviews and salary structures. Discussion also addressed the proposed target compensation range of the 50th to 75th percentiles of the identified peer group and its use in guiding executive compensation decisions. Commissioners discussed the need to balance flexibility in future executive compensation decisions with a documented framework for determining reasonable compensation consistent with IRS guidance.

Commissioner Larry Tidemann MOVED TO APPROVE the Executive Compensation Philosophy developed by the Executive Compensation Subcommittee. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the Executive Peer Organization Policy

Chair Millner presented the proposed Executive Peer Organization Policy, noting that the identified peer group was developed to reflect compensation data from State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) agencies within WICHE's region, other interstate higher education compacts, and organizations with missions and structures similar to WICHE. She explained that the committee had narrowed the list to focus on organizations most comparable to WICHE and proposed reviewing the peer group every three years to ensure continued relevance. Chair Millner referenced the discussion from the previous action item on using the 50th to 75th percentile range to evaluate executive compensation.

Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron MOVED TO APPROVE the Executive Peer Organization Policy. Commissioner Christian SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the Rebuttable Presumption of Reasonableness

Chair Millner presented the Rebuttable Presumption of Reasonableness Policy, noting that it formalizes WICHE's process for complying with IRS guidance regarding executive compensation. Under the policy, compensation for disqualified persons will be established and documented in a manner intended to meet the IRS standard for the rebuttable presumption of reasonableness.

Vice Chair Frankie Eliptico MOVED TO APPROVE the Rebuttable Presumption of Reasonableness Policy. Commissioner Jim Chavez SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the Proposed Bonus Policy

President Michelau presented the action item. The current Bonus Policy (approved in 2008) has provided flexibility, but it would benefit from clarification and refinement. In particular, the existing 20% maximum for performance-based bonuses is high for an organization of WICHE's size and structure, and the policy lacks detail on documentation, fiscal guardrails, and consistent application across units. Scaling the maximum bonus down to 10% aligns the policy with WICHE's organizational size and fiscal responsibilities while preserving flexibility to recognize exceptional performance. The policy also includes a staff appreciation bonus as an additional type of bonus. Any bonus awards would remain discretionary and subject to available funding, reserve requirements, President approval, and documentation of the award basis.

Commissioner Tidemann MOVED TO APPROVE the Bonus Policy. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the President Performance Evaluation Policy

Chair Millner presented the President's Performance Evaluation Process Policy, noting that it clarifies the evaluation process, timeline, and responsibilities of the Commission Officers and Executive Committee. The policy establishes a structured annual process to evaluate the President, develop compensation recommendations consistent with the Executive Compensation Philosophy, and present recommendations to the Executive Committee for consideration in closed session.

Vice Chair Eliptico MOVED TO APPROVE the President Evaluation Policy. Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Arizona's Renewal Application to Continue Membership in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) through W-SARA

Molly Hall-Martin presented the details of Arizona's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Arizona has 42 participating institutions: 14 public, 11 private/not-for-

profit, 16 for-profit, and one Tribal college. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Arizona's SARA institutions enrolled 318,526 distance education students through SARA, and 25,841 students located in Arizona were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA-member states/territories.

Hall-Martin reported that during the renewal period, Arizona received no SARA-related student complaints. During the renewal period, no institutions were denied renewal; one institution was denied initial participation, and the appeals process was utilized, and the denial decision was upheld. No Arizona institutions were on provisional status. Two institutions were on the Heightened Cash Monitoring list for financial responsibility, though no Arizona State Portal Entity (SPE) action had been taken.

Hall-Martin reported that WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA) staff found Arizona fully compliant with SARA policy, and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) recommended renewal.

Commissioner Goeppinger MOVED TO APPROVE Arizona's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Fred Baldwin SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention from the state of Arizona.

Action Item

Approval of Oregon's Renewal Application to Continue Membership in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) through W-SARA Action

Molly Hall-Martin presented the details of Oregon's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Oregon has 33 participating institutions: 17 public, 12 private/not-for-profit, four for-profit, and two institutions since the last renewal. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Oregon's SARA institutions enrolled 10,120 distance education students through SARA, and 18,468 students located in Oregon were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA-member states/territories.

Hall-Martin reported no changes to Oregon's authorizing statutes, nor to the agency that serves as the Oregon State Portal Entity (SPE). However, the state is in the process of moving SARA fees from statute into administrative rule in order to facilitate future changes to the fee structure. During the renewal period, Oregon received two complaints; one related to violation of policy and procedure, and one regarding academic quality. Both complaints are currently under review. Hall-Martin reported that W-SARA staff found Oregon in compliance with SARA policy, and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) recommended renewal.

Commissioner Cannon MOVED TO APPROVE Oregon's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention from the state of Oregon.

Action Item

Approval of a Project to Assess Options for Adding Gillette College to Wyoming's Community College Funding Allocation Model

Colleen Falkenstern presented a proposed project, requested by the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC), to assess the implications of adding Gillette College to Wyoming's community college funding allocation model after it transitions to an independent institution. Falkenstern explained that the funding model allocates state appropriations among Wyoming's community colleges and relies on historical metrics such as credit-hour production and credentials conferred. Because Gillette College has operated as a branch campus and is transitioning to an independent institution, questions have arisen about how the funding formula should reflect historical data and what effects adding a new institution could have on funding allocations for other colleges. The proposed project would analyze these issues and develop options for the WCCC to consider. The WCCC would fund the project. The request for approval included adding the project to the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) unit FY 2027 Workplan and authorizing staff to pursue a contract with the WCCC.

Commissioner Begich MOVED TO APPROVE a project to assess options for adding Gillette College to Wyoming's Community College funding allocation model. Commissioner Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention from the state of Wyoming.

Discussion Item

Budget Update

Ashley Clark reported that, because WICHE is still early in FY 2027, year-to-date activity remains limited. Revenues and expenditures tracked as expected, and no significant budget concerns were identified. She noted that the FY 2026 audit was nearing completion and had progressed smoothly, with no major concerns reported. Clark also reported that WICHE continued to maintain a strong reserve position and indicated that a more comprehensive budget update would be provided later in the fiscal year.

Discussion Item

November 2026 Commission Meeting Update and Agenda

President Michelau reviewed the agenda for the November 2026 Commission Meeting, including how themes and topics identified through Commissioner listening sessions informed agenda development. She also reviewed the planned legislative roundtable discussion and its objectives.

Information Item

Update on the President's Employment Agreement

Chair Millner reported that, as part of discussions on the presidential evaluation and compensation process, the Commission was considering transitioning from the current letter-of-agreement approach to a formal employment agreement. She noted that the work is in its early stages and that a draft framework is expected to be presented at the November Commission meeting to help guide future discussions and development.

Other Business

Chair Millner called for additional business. There was none.

Adjournment

The September 2026 Executive Committee adjourned at 4:01 p.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Thursday, November 5, 2026

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. | Westminster Ballroom I-II

Opening Remarks

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

Land Acknowledgment

Commissioner Jim Chavez (CO), Executive Director, Community College of Denver Foundation and Governmental Affairs

Introduction of New Commissioners, Staff, and Guests

2-2

On the Horizon

Leading in the West: Governors' Perspectives on the Road Ahead

In a conversation with WICHE President Demarée Michelau, Jack Waldorf will share insights on the issues shaping governors' agendas across the West. Drawing on his work with the Western Governors' Association, he will discuss emerging priorities in workforce development, health care, economic vitality, and higher education, including the role postsecondary education plays in supporting rural communities and state workforce needs. The conversation will provide context for the Commission's discussions on the future of postsecondary education in the West.

Speaker

Jack Waldorf, Executive Director, Western Governors' Association

Reminder to Caucus on the Selection of 2027 Committee Members

Biographical Information

Speaker



Jack Waldorf, Executive Director, Western Governors' Association

Jack Waldorf became the sixth Executive Director of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) in January 2023 where he oversees the organization's efforts to support and advance bipartisan priorities on behalf of the Governors from the 22 Western most states and territories.

Prior to joining WGA, Waldorf led the federal advocacy activities for the University of Colorado (CU) System which is comprised of four campuses across Colorado's Front Range. Before joining the CU System, he served in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives where he focused on policies related to education, healthcare, transportation, among other issues. He holds a master's degree in public administration from CU Denver and a bachelor's degree in political science from CU Boulder. He lives in Erie, Colorado, with his wife and three sons, and their black labrador.

New Commissioners



DJ Campbell

DJ Campbell serves as Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Sanford Health, the nation's largest rural healthcare system, a role he has held since 2020. In this position, he serves on Sanford Health's enterprise HR executive team, helping shape workforce and people strategies supporting more than 60,000 employees

across 26 states and over 500 locations.

Campbell attended Bismarck State College and holds both bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration. In addition to serving as the Vice Chair on the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, he currently serves as Chair of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, and board member for Make-A-Wish North Dakota, The Greater North Dakota Chamber Workforce Policy Committee, and the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences.



Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer

Dr. Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer began her role as Chancellor of the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) in 2023. UAS is a regional, liberal arts university with campuses in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka, coastal communities situated in Alaska's magnificent Tongass National Forest. As Chancellor, Palmer provides strategic

leadership in fulfilling the UAS mission, including budget development, academic planning and program assessments, student and enrollment services, administrative services, and community relations. Under her leadership, UAS has focused on integrating experiential, place-based learning in all of its offerings and building upon its strengths in marine biology, environmental science, mariculture, and maritime training. She is also deeply committed to the preservation and growth of Indigenous northwest coast languages, arts, and culture at UAS.

Before her appointment as Chancellor, she served for 22 years as Professor of Biology, Faculty Senate President, Faculty Trustee, and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at Colorado

Mesa University, in Grand Junction, CO. Most recently, she served as Vice President at Front Range Community College (FRCC), which is part of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) as the chief executive of the Boulder County Campus and as interim chief executive of the Larimer County Campus.

Palmer holds a doctorate in Zoology from Washington State University as well as a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Colorado State University. As a marine biologist, she specializes in the natural histories, molecular genetics, and evolution of tardigrades (water bears) and polychaetes (seaworms). She is also an alumna of the Colorado Governors Fellowship, Harvard University's New Presidents' Seminar, and Oxford University's Women Transforming Leadership Programme. She and her husband live in the capital city of Juneau, where they enjoy spending time outdoors hiking, backpacking, kayaking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.



C. Scott Wo

Dr. C. Scott Wo is a third-generation owner and executive of C. S. Wo & Sons, Ltd., his family's home furnishings company, which was founded in Hawai'i in 1909. He also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Finance and Management at Columbia Business School in New York City.

Wo currently serves as Lead Independent Director of First Hawaiian, Inc. (NASDAQ: FHB), Chair of the University of Hawai'i Foundation, and a member of the Advisory Board for the American Red Cross Pacific Islands Region.

A dedicated community leader, Wo has held numerous nonprofit leadership positions, including Finance Chair of The Queen's Health System, Investment Chair and Treasurer of Aloha United Way, Board Chair and Treasurer of the American Red Cross Pacific Islands Region, and President of the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council.

Wo earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA from Columbia Business School, and a doctorate from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.



Michelle Johnson

Dr. Michelle Johnson is the Director of Nursing Education for the Nevada Board of Nursing. She oversees all RN, LPN, and CNA programs for the Board of Nursing and is editor of Nevada Nursing News. In addition, she is the chair of the Education Advisory Committee for the Nevada State Board of Nursing. She is the 2023 recipient of the Nevada Nurses Foundation's "People's Choice Award" for Director of Nursing of the Year. She has worked as a Chief Nurse Administrator for Hawai'i Pacific University as well as the Chair of Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Programs there. Prior to that she was an Assistant Program Director of the online MSN Nursing Education track at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. She also served as an assistant professor at Nevada State University for 7 years. Recently she served on the Board of Directors for the Down Syndrome Organization of Southern Nevada. She has been an educator for 28 years, a pediatric nurse practitioner for 30 years, and an RN for 34 years. She has worked in Neonatal ICU, School-Based Health/Adolescent Medicine, Pediatric Sickle Cell and primary care pediatrics. She earned her BSN from the University of Michigan, her master's degree in child health nursing from Georgia State University, a post-master's certificate in Nursing Education from Wayne State University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Phoenix.

Plenary Session I

The Story of the West: Postsecondary Trends, Pressures, and Choices Ahead

Thursday, November 5, 2026

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Plenary Session I

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. | *Westminster Ballroom I-II*

The Story of the West: Postsecondary Trends, Pressures, and Choices Ahead

The West is facing a defining moment for postsecondary education. Across the region, higher education is asked to do more, often with fewer resources, and under widely varying conditions. Demographic shifts, changing enrollment patterns, affordability pressures, workforce needs, and questions about public value are converging in different ways across WICHE states, territories, and freely associated states. The implications are especially pronounced in rural and remote communities, where access and institutional capacity remain persistent challenges.

Enrollment remains central to the story, but it is not the whole story. The more pressing question is whether postsecondary systems are positioned to serve the learners and communities of the West in the coming years. Some indicators point to progress, while others reveal uneven outcomes and resources, growing financial strain, and persistent gaps across different populations, places, ages, income levels, and student pathways. Taken together, these patterns show why the Western context must be understood as both a shared regional story and a collection of distinct state, territorial, and community experiences.

Against that backdrop, the opening plenary session will help Commissioners look across the trends shaping postsecondary education in the West and consider what they may mean for the region's future. The session will examine how demographic and enrollment change intersects with affordability and institutional capacity, while also considering the implications for workforce development, behavioral health, and student mobility. The session will pay particular attention to the realities of rural, remote, and Pacific communities. It will also explore how technology and evolving modes of delivery, including digital and distance education, may reshape how students access learning and how institutions operate. Using these trends as a foundation, the speakers will explore what the Western postsecondary landscape could look like in the years ahead and invite Commissioners to consider how the region might prepare for emerging needs and opportunities. By pairing a candid look at the region's challenges with examples of strength and innovation, the session will set the stage for the rest of the Commission meeting and for forward-looking conversations about where regional collaboration could add value.

Introduction

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

Presenters

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Biographical Information

Introduction



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, 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, ExcelinEd Policy Leaders Network member, and chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Higher Education Task Force.

Born in Kentucky, and raised in Tennessee, Sen. Millner's academic journey includes a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee, a master's from Texas State University, and a doctorate from Brigham Young University. She is distinguished as an emeritus professor of health administration and served as president of Weber State University from 2002 to 2012. Under her 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 and life science industries and developing state strategy in energy and critical minerals. In addition, she serves on the Intermountain Health and Merit Medical corporate boards.

Presenters



Van Davis

In 2025, Dr. Van Davis became the Executive Director at WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and the Vice President, Digital Learning at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Previously, he joined WCET in 2021 as its chief strategy officer. Davis oversees all strategic and operational responsibilities of WCET's membership, the State Authorization Network (SAN) that assists institutions with interstate compliance, and Every Learner Everywhere, which advocates for successful academic outcomes for all postsecondary education students through advances in digital learning.

Davis has over 25 years of experience in higher education as a faculty member, academic administrator, state policymaker, and edtech leader. He holds a master's degree and a doctorate in 20th century U.S. history with an emphasis in civil rights from Vanderbilt University and a bachelor's degree in history from Southwestern University. Prior to joining WCET and WICHE, Davis served as principal at Foghlam Consulting, Associate Vice President at Blackboard Inc., Director of

Innovation at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and a faculty member and academic administrator at several public and private universities with historically underrepresented student populations. His areas of expertise include artificial intelligence policy, federal and state distance education policy, degree completion initiatives, competency-based education, the cost and price of distance education, and the future of higher education and digital learning.

Davis lives in Colorado with his beloved wife, Lisa, and their cat, Kody. When not working, he collects Lego models and dreams of the day he can complete his Western U.S. camping trip.



Patrick Lane

Dr. Patrick Lane is the Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). In this role, he oversees a range of work focused on improving access to and excellence in postsecondary education through sound public policy and research. This portfolio of work includes efforts to improve the value of postsecondary education, address students' behavioral health needs, increase affordability, and ensure robust regional collaboration. He previously was WICHE's director of data initiatives leading efforts to improve linkages between state data systems. Prior to this role, he coordinated WICHE's efforts on adult learners and improving postsecondary access for low-income students. He came to WICHE after spending several years working in education policy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Lane completed a doctorate in public affairs at the University of Colorado Denver in 2015.

Roundtable Discussions Session I

Thursday, November 5, 2026

10:45 a.m. – Noon

Roundtable 1

*Moving from Strategy to
Implementation: Building the
Infrastructure of Student Success*

Roundtable 2

Legislative Signals from the West

Roundtable Discussions – Session I

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 10:45 a.m. – Noon

Roundtable 1 – Moving from Strategy to Implementation: Building the Infrastructure of Student Success

Strategic Priority Alignment: Access & Success; Innovation; Value & Accountability |

Cotton Creek I

Student success remains one of the most important tests of whether postsecondary systems are meeting the needs of learners, communities, and states. This session will focus on lessons learned from implementing the systems and supports students depend on and what it takes to move those efforts from promising ideas or isolated initiatives into coordinated, durable practice. Commissioners will examine what states, systems, and campuses are learning as they move from policy goals to campus-level implementation.

Commissioners will also learn from leaders participating in WICHE’s two collaborative networks of chief academic officers and senior academic leaders from two- and four-year institutions, system offices, and state agencies across the WICHE region: the Western Academic Leadership Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders. The discussion will emphasize the implementation lessons that matter for state policy: what has helped states partner effectively with campuses, where promising strategies have fallen short, and what infrastructure must be in place for student success initiatives to produce stronger outcomes.

Commissioners will be invited to compare lessons across states and systems, with particular attention to how regional organizations, state agencies, and institutional leaders can identify implementation barriers earlier and support approaches that are adaptable to different state and territorial contexts.

Facilitator

Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, Programs and Services, WICHE

Panelists

Kari Brown-Herbst, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, Laramie County Community College
Gwen Sharp, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education

Roundtable 2 – Legislative Signals from the West

Strategic Priority Alignment: Workforce & Society; Innovation; Value & Accountability; Access & Success | *Cotton Creek II*

Legislators bring an important perspective on the issues gaining attention in statehouses, the questions policymakers are asking, and the pressures shaping postsecondary education policy across the West. Building on discussions from WICHE’s Legislative Advisory Committee annual meeting, this roundtable will help Commissioners better understand what legislators are focused on now, what they are hearing from constituents and colleagues, and where state policymakers may need clearer information, cross-state examples, or trusted analysis. With topics ranging from dual enrollment to college athletics, legislators will share what they are thinking about in their states, how these issues are showing up in legislative conversations, and where WICHE’s convening, research, and translation role could help support better-informed state discussions

Facilitator

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

Panelists

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

Commissioner Gerry Pollet (WA), Representative, Washington State Legislature

Biographical Information

Roundtable 1 Facilitator



Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development

Dr. Nicholas Fuselier is a higher education scholar and practitioner with nearly 15 years of professional experience in a range of areas across postsecondary education. Since 2025, Fuselier has served as the Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). His work primarily supports current and emerging senior academic leaders on two- and four-year campuses across the WICHE region. Prior to his time at WICHE, Fuselier earned tenure as a faculty member in the College of Education at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. He also spent several years working as a student affairs professional, working in several areas including first year experience, college access programs, and community engagement. Fuselier earned a doctorate in higher education from the University of North Texas, a master's degree in student affairs in higher education from Texas State University, and a bachelor's of interdisciplinary studies from the University of New Orleans.

Roundtable 1 Panelists



Kari Brown-Herbst, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, Laramie County Community College

Dr. Kari Brown-Herbst has held a variety of roles at Laramie County Community College (LCCC) since 2009, currently serving as Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. Previous positions held at the college include faculty; Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching; and Interim Vice President. As the chief academic officer, Brown-Herbst provides guidance for the college's academic support services and executive oversight to new program development, ensuring alignment between the college and the region it serves. Her work as a peer reviewer for the Higher Learning Commission helps her position her actions at LCCC with consideration for current trends and proven successes in higher education. Brown-Herbst represents the college in statewide associations to include the Academic Affairs Council, the task force for the Wyoming Education Attainment Executive Council, and the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP). She further serves on the Executive Committee of the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, the Board of HERDI Innovate, the Western Academic Leadership Academy Faculty, and the Structured Pathways Commission of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

Brown-Herbst has a doctorate in education with an emphasis in instructional technology from the University of Wyoming, a Master of Arts in Educational Technology from Marian College, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Kalamazoo College. She enjoys the outdoors especially cycling and gardening. She and her husband, Glenn, have three sons and nine grandchildren, all of whom bring her immense pride.



Gwen Sharp, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education

Dr. Gwen Sharp is the Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), where she provides statewide leadership on academic policy, student success, and institutional research. She is a member of the Western Academic Leadership Forum Executive Committee at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), representing Nevada. Sharp came to this role after nearly two decades at Nevada State University, most recently as interim provost. Earlier roles included vice provost for faculty affairs and research and associate dean of liberal arts, sciences, and business. Her research focuses on long-term institutional planning in the context of demographic change. Sharp earned a doctorate in sociology and Master of Science in Rural Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Oklahoma. A tenured full professor of sociology, she received the American Sociological Association's Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award in 2015.

Roundtable 2 Facilitator



Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

Dr. Demarée K. Michelau is President of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), where she leads the organization's work to advance educational access and excellence across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy. In that role, she works with Western states, Pacific Island jurisdictions, postsecondary institutions, and regional and national partners to strengthen higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life. Before becoming president, Michelau served as WICHE's Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, contributing to the organization's policy and research agenda and leading externally funded initiatives. She is the author of numerous publications and brings deep expertise in higher education policy, governance, strategic planning, postsecondary attainment, transfer, affordability, and workforce issues. She also serves as a commissioner for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and on the boards of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), the Pacific Northwest Gigapop (PNWGP), and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC). Earlier in her career, she held positions with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and former Colorado Congressman David Skaggs. Michelau earned her bachelor's degree in public law from Northern Illinois University and her master's and doctoral degrees in political science from the University of Colorado Boulder.

Roundtable 2 Panelists



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, 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, ExcelinEd Policy Leaders Network member, and chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Higher Education Task Force.

Born in Kentucky, and raised in Tennessee, Sen. Millner's academic journey includes a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee, a master's from Texas State University, and a doctorate from Brigham Young University. She is distinguished as an emeritus professor of health administration and served as president of Weber State University from 2002 to 2012. Under her 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 and life science industries and developing state strategy in energy and critical minerals. In addition, she serves on the Intermountain Health and Merit Medical corporate boards.



Commissioner Gerry Pollet (WA), Representative, Washington State Legislature

Rep. Gerry Pollet has served in the Washington State Legislature since December 2011. Rep. Pollet is an attorney and faculty member at both the University of Washington School of Public Health and Western Washington University. Rep.

Pollet serves on the postsecondary education, education, appropriation and rules committees. Rep. Pollet was deeply involved in developing and passing the Washington College Grant, accompanied by dedicated funding, to provide one of the nation's broadest need-based aid programs. He was the author of a program responding to the critical shortage of teachers in Washington, including a grant program to pay tuition for low-income students seeking to be teachers in underserved areas. Rep. Pollet has been honored several times as the "Legislator of the Year" for his work to improve affordable access to higher education and improved student success. He is the House sponsor of "The Washington Promise," for free community college tuition.

Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | Cotton Creek II

Committee Members

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

Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer (AK)
Ellen Junn (CA)
Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
C. Scott Wo (HI)
Dean Fisher (ID)
Maryrose Beasley (MT)
Michelle Johnson (NV)
Brent Sanford (ND)
Lisa Skari (OR)
Ashley Wenger (SD)
Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
Patricia Jones Horton (UT)
John Carmichael (WA)
Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Agenda

Presiding

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

Staff

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE
Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access Programs, Programs and Services, WICHE
Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, Programs and Services, WICHE
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation, Programs and Services, WICHE

Action Item



Approval of October 12, 2026, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

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Commission Priorities for the Programs and Services FY 2028 Workplan	
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Connecting Workforce Needs, Institutional Partnerships, and State Investment: In May 2026, the committee began discussing how the Programs and Services (PAS) unit can better align with regional workforce trends. That conversation continued during the October 2026 PAS Committee Meeting. To provide additional context, staff will share Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) data related to available healthcare fields, the programs that currently participate (and the sector they are in), where students are enrolling, and the number of sponsored seats for each state.

Staff will discuss with the committee the following:

- What additional data would sharpen their understanding?
- How should staff involve certifying officers?
- What resources would be most effective for Commissioners?

Continuing the Conversation on Leveraging Prior Projects: Staff have previously worked with external researchers on regional course sharing, block transfer and student success, rural student re-engagement, and workforce trends. Across WICHE, staff also bring expertise in prior learning assessment, artificial intelligence, leadership development, and behavioral health. To support timely, strategic responsiveness to the higher education landscape, staff would like Commissioner input on one or more of the topics below:

Leadership Across Postsecondary Education:

- Where do Commissioners see the greatest leadership development needs for colleges, universities, and state system offices?
- What gaps are emerging in developing agile teams and team members?
- What programs could WICHE offer to address today's postsecondary environment?

Adjusting the Practices of Student Access Programs:

- How might WICHE revisit the long-standing practice of excluding academic programs listed under the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) from PSEP participation?
- What changes, if any, would better support workforce needs and student access?

Student Attrition Between K-12 and Postsecondary:

- How can WICHE help states better understand student pathways, mobility, and credit for prior learning?
- What support would be most useful for advancing opportunities for Veteran and military-connected students, caregivers, and surviving family members?

Other Business

Adjournment

Action Item

Approval of October 12, 2026, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Todd Haynie (AZ), Committee Vice Chair
 Robert Shireman (CA), *proxy for Ellen Junn*
 C. Scott Wo (HI)
 Dean Fisher (ID)
 Maryrose Beasley (MT)
 Lisa Skari (OR)
 Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
 Patricia Jones Horton (UT)
 Joseph Schaffer (WY)

Committee Members Absent

Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair
 Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer (AK)
 Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
 Michelle Johnson (NV)
 Brent Sanford (ND)
 Ashley Wenger (SD)
 John Carmichael (WA)

Staff Present

Malerie Barnes, Director of Student Access Programs, Programs and Services
 Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
 Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning, and Development, Programs and Services
 Onnika Hanson, Administrative Assistant III, Programs and Services
 Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation, Programs and Services

Guests

Patty Porter, Director, Nevada Office of WICHE

Call to Order

Committee Vice Chair Todd Haynie presided and called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Staff called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Action Item

Approval of the May 18, 2026, Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Patricia Jones Horton MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes, and Commissioner Maryrose Beasley SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Discussion Item

Review of Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions Doctor of Optometry Program for PSEP Participation in Light of Accreditation Status

Staff briefed the committee on Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions' request for its Doctor of Optometry program to participate in the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).

Staff noted that the Rocky Mountain University program had not yet graduated its first class and currently holds accreditation with conditions from the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE), while WICHE policy requires participating programs to hold full professional accreditation.

Committee members acknowledged the regional need for an additional optometry program but advised staff to apply the existing PSEP eligibility requirements. Members indicated that the university could be reconsidered after the accreditation concerns were resolved.

No formal action was taken.

Discussion Item

Alignment with Workforce Trends (Continued from May 18, 2026)

Staff presented an overview of declining high school graduate numbers and related regional workforce trends. The committee received information on workforce shortages and emerging needs in five areas: supply chain and industrial capacity; healthcare and behavioral health; technology, cybersecurity, and data; energy and natural resource management; and agriculture.

Committee members emphasized that workforce demand does not necessarily align with student interest and advised providing students — beginning in K-12 — and adult learners with clearer information about career options, wages, preparation, costs, and available programs.

In response to committee questions, staff explained that preliminary analysis of PSEP growth raised questions about the influence of student choice, program availability, and program location on WICHE's future areas of focus. Staff also noted that cost and location strongly influence student choice, particularly for adult learners.

Members recommended examining regional data to identify shared workforce gaps, comparing employer demand with student interest, and emphasizing durable skills, such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and intergenerational communication, alongside technical skills. Members requested opportunities to share or learn more about state experience with Workforce Pell implementation, an update on WICHE's behavioral health internship program, and further discussion of proposed accreditation and earnings-tracking requirements and return-on-investment considerations.

No formal action was taken.

Adjournment

Commissioner Beasley MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jones Horton SECONDED the motion. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

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. No institutions left WUE this year.

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, and by participating in college fairs in Colorado, New Mexico, California and Nevada. Additionally, the SAP team created a recruitment toolkit for WUE institutions to use throughout their recruitment cycle.

Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)

For AY 2025-26, WRGP has helped 3,030 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. No institutions left WRGP this year.

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) this academic year totaled \$16 million.

The SAP team added eight PSEP programs in recent months: four in occupational therapy, one in pharmacy, one in physical therapy, one in osteopathic medicine, and one in physician assistant. Of note, one newly added program is a proprietary institution. Staff are unclear about expectations for participation by proprietary institutions, given the institutional eligibility policy that requires "limited proprietary" participation.

One institution inquired whether WICHE may consider allowing institutions to participate in both WRGP and PSEP in the same field. Currently, fields may be offered either under WRGP or PSEP, but not both. Given changes to graduate student borrowing, institutional concerns about changes in student enrollment behavior, and ongoing healthcare workforce shortages, staff are interested in receiving Commission feedback on this proposal, as it may allow students to pursue high-demand healthcare fields at a greater discount. Although the practice has been to offer a field in either WRGP or PSEP, staff have not found a specific bylaw or policy to that effect.

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 after it becomes fully accredited and graduates its first cohort around 2030.

Certifying Officers

Over the last calendar year, SAP staff have held quarterly calls with state 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 was held in Laramie, Wyoming, on May 27-29, 2026. The group's 50th meeting will be held on the Kohala Coast of Hawai'i on June 7-9, 2027. A select group of VMAC members and state Certifying Officers have formed a rankings working group that plans to re-evaluate the collaborative ranking process for PSEP veterinary medicine applicants. The aim of this working group is to better balance state interests with admissions best practices as students are selected for PSEP funding in what is a very competitive professional health field.

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 chief academic officers and other 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 challenges facing higher education do not stop at the boundaries between two-year and four-year institutions, and neither should the conversations about solutions. This is why the Alliance and the Forum are partnering to host a joint meeting in 2027. The Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting will be held from April 14-16, 2027, at Metropolitan State University in Denver, Colorado. The theme is "Honoring Our Mission, Shaping Our Future."

The Alliance has 75 members, including 67 institutions and eight related systems. The Forum has 54 members, including 50 institutions and 11 related systems. The Alliance and Forum have completed their membership renewal cycles and continue to engage members throughout the year. For example, in partnership with the Policy Analysis and Research unit, Academic Partnerships staff have initiated a monthly policy call series for college and university chief academic officers (CAOs), which is exclusively for Alliance and Forum members to discuss emerging federal and state policy changes and their implications for their campus communities. Additionally, staff are working with a contractor to make revisions to the Alliance and Forum governance structures in an effort to expand the two networks impact in the region.

Western Academic Leadership Academy

This year, WICHE celebrates the 11th cohort of the Western Academic Leadership Academy. Since the Academy's inception, 178 participants from Alliance and Forum membership institutions have gathered in Boulder, Colorado, to kick off their year of professional development, which includes face-to-face meetings, webinars, and faculty mentoring. Drawing participants from the Forum and

the Alliance, 20 aspiring academic leaders were selected to participate in the 2026-27 Academy. This cohort will have its final session and a formal graduation ceremony in Denver, Colorado, at the 2027 Academic Partnerships Annual Meeting.

WICHE Institute for Leaders in the Humanities

The WICHE Institute for Leaders in the Humanities (formerly referred to as the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities) was originally funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation awarded in 2022. The Mellon Foundation awarded an additional \$1.5 million grant in August 2026 to go towards continuing the program for another four years. This 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. 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. With the renewed funding from the Mellon Foundation, three additional cohorts of fellows will go through the program over the next four years. Additionally, as a result of this work and learning about the needs of leaders in the humanities, staff launched an exploratory humanities deans community of practice in March 2026. Staff will continue to host quarterly calls in which humanities deans across the region can connect, collaborate, and share resources.

Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success

Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success, an anonymously funded initiative 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 delivered 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; in Boulder, Colorado, in September 2025; in Chicago, Illinois, in May 2026; 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, the creation of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for submission to the State Higher Education Policy Center (SHEPC) IRB Review Board, the analysis of focus group data, and the writing of final deliverables that will be presented to the Mellon Foundation by November 2026.

Cost-Savings Partnerships Update

MHECare Student Health Solutions

Through the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC), postsecondary institutions in the WICHE region can access student health solutions, including fully insured school-sponsored health plans through UnitedHealthcare StudentResources (UHCSR). Institutions may use MHEC's competitively solicited contract with confidence, knowing it was established through a comprehensive request-for-proposal process. UHCSR offers injury and sickness plans for domestic and international students, emergency medical travel services, vision and dental plans, and coverage for risk groups such as study abroad and special summer programs. Currently, no WICHE institutions leverage these contracts, but staff are considering ways to increase the visibility of this benefit.

MHEC Technology Contracts

Through WICHE's partnership with MHEC, educational and governmental entities across the West can access competitively solicited technology contracts that support quality, cost-effectiveness, and administrative efficiency. In fiscal year (FY) 2025, these cooperative purchasing agreements generated more than \$9 million in cost savings for postsecondary institutions, K-12 systems, local and state governments, and related nonprofits. By participating in this shared purchasing framework, institutions can leverage collective buying power and reduce procurement burden.

To better understand the needs of higher education procurement professionals in the WICHE region, staff have invited participation in a procurement and cost-savings community of practice. The group meets quarterly by videoconference to support shared learning, identify regional needs, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

WICHE Group Property Insurance

WICHE continues to serve as the regional point of contact for two insurance programs available to institutions that formerly participated in MHEC's Master Property Program. Through a group property insurance program, five independent institutions can leverage their collective value to secure lower property insurance premiums. WICHE also facilitates fine arts and terrorism insurance for those five institutions, as well as one large research institution and one state higher education system.

Performance, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge Toolkit

WICHE has initiated the Performance, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge (PEAK) Toolkit project in partnership with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). The project is in its early implementation phase, with WICHE and NACUBO working through roles and responsibilities, contractor agreements, and memoranda of understanding for participating institutions and state systems. Staff also noted the need to extend the deadline for the call for participation, which required a small adjustment to the timeline but will not impact project deliverables.

Informed by findings from Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success, the project addresses a recurring challenge identified by participating institutions: the hidden implementation, interoperability, and maintenance costs associated with commercially available technology solutions.

Through this collaboration, WICHE and NACUBO are developing resources to assist higher education institutions in identifying hidden costs, assessing impact, and strengthening cross-institutional relationships throughout the procurement lifecycle. The project is intended to support institutional decision-making amid enrollment and fiscal pressures by promoting greater clarity, coordination, and evidence of value in technology investments.

Discussion Item

Professional Student Exchange Program: Institutional Sector, Program Usage, and State and Territory Investment

During the May 18, 2026, Programs and Services Committee meeting, commissioners requested a report on state- and territory-level information regarding student participation and investment in the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). In the same timeframe, WICHE staff received numerous inquiries from academic programs – largely from private institutions – to join PSEP as educational partners. As the number of participating programs grew, WICHE staff noted the increasing amount of FTE necessary to administer PSEP across so many programs, the rapid proliferation of private healthcare programs (in the same fields), and whether currently available programs meet or exceed PSEP-funded student demand.

The report compiled by the Student Access Programs team and shared with you today addresses Commissioners' request for state- and territory-level data and explores questions about PSEP usage and institutional sector. There are four primary findings in this report:

- Participating professional programs are located largely on the coast and in Arizona, with more than a quarter of all PSEP programs hosted in California alone.
- Though California hosts the highest number of programs, Arizona attracts the highest number of students (29%, or 164 of the 567 PSEP-funded students), many of whom are enrolled at Midwestern University for Dentistry, Optometry, Osteopathic Medicine, Podiatry, and Veterinary Medicine.
- There are 146 professional healthcare programs currently in the PSEP portfolio: 64 public (43.8%), 77 private non-profit (52.7%), and 5 private for-profit (3.4%).
- Many participating programs do not enroll any students: 66 of the 146 programs (45%) had no PSEP student enrollments for AY 2026-27.
 - This is mostly consistent across institutional sector.
 - This is not consistent across fields: Allopathic Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, and Physician Assistant programs sit empty at much higher rates than other fields. Of note, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Pharmacy, and Physician Assistant are among the fields with multiple requests to join PSEP over the past several months.

Given the data provided in the PSEP report, WICHE staff drafted the following discussion questions:

- As you consider the programs available to PSEP students (geography/location, field, sector, and number of programs), are there any gaps or concerns that you can identify based on the needs of your state or territory?
- Several fields appear to have more programs available than students to fill them. With more programs comes greater choice for students, but the cost may be that administrative quality suffers at programs that interact less frequently with WICHE. Do the benefits of student choice outweigh the challenges of administering PSEP across so many programs?

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. | Cotton Creek I

Committee Members

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair

Tom Begich (AK)

Chad Sampson (AZ)

Robert Shireman (CA)

JB Holston (CO)

Wendy Hensel (HI)

Vacant (ID)

Llew Jones (MT)

Patricia Charlton (NV)

Bill Soules (NM)

DJ Campbell (ND)

Michael Dembrow (OR)

Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)

Gerry Pollet (WA)

Mike Smith (WY)

Agenda

Presiding

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

Staff

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

Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Caitlyn Glaser, Research Analyst, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Lisa Kirchherr, Administrative Assistant III, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Action Item

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Discussion Items

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WICHE Federal Policy Update – Accreditation	
General Fund Workplan Staffing Levels – Current and Proposed Categories	6-19
Update on Unit Activities	

Other Business

Adjournment

Action Item

Approval of May 18, 2026, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Ann Millner (UT), Chair, *proxy for Geoffrey Landward*

Tom Begich (AK)
 Chad Sampson (AZ)
 JB Holston (CO)
 Jennifer White (ID)
 Llew Jones (MT)
 Patricia Charlton (NV)
 Bill Soules (NM)
 Danita Bye (ND)
 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

Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair
 Geoffrey Landward (UT), Committee Vice Chair
 Robert Shireman (CA)
 Wendy Hensel (HI)
 Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)

Other Commissioners Present

Barbara Damron (NM), Immediate Past Chair

Staff Present

Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and Vice President, Digital Learning
 Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research
 Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA , Policy Analysis and Research
 Lisa Kirchherr, Administrative Assistant III, Policy Analysis and Research
 Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
 Demarée Michelau, President
 Linc Nesheim, Chief Technology Officer
 Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner 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 18, 2026, Policy Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Millner directed committee members to the minutes from the May 18, 2026, meeting in the agenda book and requested any corrections. The minutes of May 18, 2026 were approved as distributed.

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

Chair Millner asked Patrick Lane to provide a summary of the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Workplan details. Lane reminded Commissioners that approving the Workplan is one of the Commission's primary duties at the May meeting and described the Workplan categories. He highlighted two projects added to the Workplan with President Demarée Michelau's approval: one project funded by Michelson 20MM Foundation to conduct a landscape scan related to textbook pricing transparency policies and a second project funded by Strada Education Foundation to support outreach to states about the State Opportunity Index survey.

Two projects have shifted categories on the Workplan: parts of the Proposed Work on short-term and nondegree credentials have been funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and will move forward. WICHE, with funding from Lumina Foundation through a partnership with Jed Foundation, will be convening a national meeting with the other regional compacts on behavioral health in postsecondary education in June 2026.

Lane provided updates on several ongoing projects, including that WICHE's work on open educational resources (OER) has been funded for an additional two years and the unit's engagement with Wyoming in support of the Wyoming Innovation Partnership will also be extended through FY 2027.

Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron described the healthcare workforce calls hosted by WICHE and their importance before asking where they were located in the Workplan. Lane pointed to the peer-to-peer calls listed under Ongoing Activities.

A Commissioner asked whether WICHE had considered work on prison education issues, noting substantial activity in this space. Lane noted that WICHE has pursued projects in the past but had not undertaken a major effort in this area, and another Commissioner suggested that it would help states if WICHE could identify what is and is not working in prison education. Additional comments about dual credit were made, including:

- The North Dakota legislature has a deep interest in dual credit policy and research.
- Utah has a large dual credit program and there is great interest in Utah.
- Distinctions between dual and concurrent enrollment are important but not always recognized in state discussions.
- There are many assumptions about the impact and potential savings, but more information is needed.

Chair Millner concluded the discussion on dual credit by reiterating that it appears to be a priority for the region and asked if WICHE has potential funding for the work.

Lane reported that WICHE may be a subgrantee on an upcoming project that would not cover everything that WICHE seeks to do on this topic, but that it would be a starting point.

Additional discussion included interest in institutional financial stress testing and potential programmatic reviews. Lane noted that these topics could align with WICHE's proposed work on college closures and could include consideration of shared services and operational efficiencies. These issues are discussed regularly in the chief academic officers' peer-to-peer calls that WICHE

hosts and that the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) has developed financial stress test models that have been used in some states.

Commissioner Chad Sampson MOVED TO APPROVE a recommendation that the Committee of the Whole approve the PAR Workplan section. Vice Chair Frankie Eliptico SECONDED the motion. The motion was approved.

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

Lane provided background on the process for the action item and summarized previous discussions of the PAR Committee and the Executive Committee and described the modified proposal, which would split information requests into those related to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) related items, in which case staff will share information throughout the process with Commissioners. The non-SARA requests will be treated in the same way they have been throughout WICHE's history. There was clarification regarding the notification elements, which should specify that notification is limited to the Commissioners of the state in question, and not the whole Commission.

A Commissioner asked for clarification that the notification elements should specify that notification is limited to the Commissioners of the state in question, and not the whole Commission. Another Commissioner supported the approach and the process involved.

Commissioner Begich MOVED TO APPROVE the recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve WICHE's Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State Legislation. Commissioner Pollet SECONDED the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Items

2026 Legislative Advisory Committee Update

Chair Millner opened discussion regarding the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) and asked participating committee members to provide perspective. Commissioner Begich reported finding it very useful as his entry point to WICHE. Commissioner Bill Soules commented that it has been useful for legislators to attend the LAC meeting and share new perspectives about higher education with their colleagues. Commissioner Pollet said that Washington's LAC members have found it very valuable and the state can point to legislation and budget investments that have resulted from these meetings. Commissioner Dembrow agreed with others' statements, saying that topics from the LAC meetings when he served regularly surfaced in legislation in subsequent years.

Commissioner Bye asked about the process for nominating LAC members, noting that North Dakota has implemented term limits. Christina Sedney described the process for appointing LAC members through each state's Executive Committee member and highlighted that states all have different approaches to nominating members.

Sedney then described the upcoming meeting and potential topic areas for discussion, including dual credit, athletics, the K-12-to-higher ed-to-workforce pipeline, artificial intelligence, and accreditation.

Chair Millner noted that it could be helpful for staff to help forge connections among Commissioners and LAC members. A Commissioner asked if any Commissioners reach out to LAC members or set up meetings with them, and one Commissioner described that he sets up individual meetings with LAC members. Lane committed to WICHE staff making a point of hosting informal meetings of LAC members and Commissioners when visiting a state.

A Commissioner inquired how WICHE would prioritize the topics on the list given that they were all important in his view. Staff appreciates guidance on prioritization, but suggested that some may be areas for further engagement. Another Commissioner suggested that some topics could be subjects for interim webinars open to both Commissioners and LAC members, and that this would help with engagement throughout the year.

A Commissioner inquired whether WICHE does any work governing professional board development. Staff have been thinking that there may be opportunities for WICHE to provide some general information about higher education to policymakers. President Michelau informed the committee that WICHE has facilitated retreats for institutional boards as needed, and Chair Millner noted the important differences between orientation and information shared after individuals have served in these capacities for some time. She would like staff to think about ways WICHE could support some deeper professional development opportunities. President Michelau acknowledged the gap and will continue to think about ways to engage.

WICHE's Efforts Demonstrating the Value of Higher Education in the West

Lane shared background on how staff was integrating the value of higher education across numerous projects, including efforts on completion approaches in the region, annual publications like *Tuition and Fees*, and work on open educational resources. He provided a series of questions, including ones showing flat tuition and fees at public institutions in the last decade and declines in the cost of course materials, partly due to open educational resources. It was noted that many of these data points do not make it into legislative discussions, such as the one on declining costs of course materials.

Information Items

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) Policy Modification Process Update

Molly Hall-Martin gave an update on the SARA policy process, and Lane reminded the committee of how WICHE has set up its processes for exercising its role in considering policy proposals. Hall-Martin's update included a description of one proposal staff consider problematic because it would potentially impact Tribal nations, but no Tribal consultation took place.

Tuition and Fees, Appropriations, and Financial Aid in the West, AY 2025-26: Trends and Implications

Colleen Falkenstern provided background on the publication and described its two annual editions. The May edition includes information on state appropriations and financial aid, as well as enrollment data due to its importance in finance discussions. This edition also includes a deeper examination of the value of higher education. Staff clarified that the report is released publicly, including to the LAC members, during the Commission meeting.

Falkenstern then provided an update on WICHE's participation in a federal grant awarded to MDRC for the National Center for Improving Rural Postsecondary Education. She explained that WICHE's component of the project focuses on strengthening the rural nursing workforce through work with institutions in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming to identify effective strategies for supporting nursing education and workforce needs in rural communities. During discussion it was noted that states face varying rural workforce challenges, including those unique to Alaska. WICHE intends to continue work in this area.

Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Action Item

Recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to Approve a Project Related to the Wyoming Community College Commission's Funding Allocation Model

Summary

The Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) has requested that WICHE provide a proposal to assess its Funding Allocation Model, which uses various metrics to divide the state's allocation among institutions. If the project is approved by the WICHE Commission and WCCC elects to move forward with the effort, WICHE would partner with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and engage in a series of site visits and consultations with institutional leadership, WCCC staff, and other key state stakeholders to examine the current strengths and weaknesses of the model and whether the current economic, demographic, and educational contexts warrant consideration of adjustments. The work would be funded by WCCC.

Relationship to WICHE Mission

This effort would support a WICHE state in enacting sound public policy to further its efforts to provide high-quality postsecondary education to its residents.

Background

Community colleges in Wyoming receive appropriations through the state's general fund that are divided among institutions through a formula that takes into account some institutional costs, local revenue, and other enrollment, progression, and completion metrics. WCCC is considering whether changes to the model are warranted due to changing economic and demographic contexts in the state, along with the shifts in postsecondary education since previous adjustments were made. WCCC has asked WICHE to develop a proposal for gathering and analyzing the necessary qualitative and quantitative data to help WCCC move forward in its consideration.

Description and Rationale

WICHE's efforts would likely involve substantial consultation with institutional leaders, WCCC staff, and other stakeholders in the state to understand how the model is currently meeting institutional and student needs and areas where it may be falling short. This qualitative data would complement a more quantitative analysis of the model, showing how future trends would impact the division of state appropriations among institutions.

This effort would have some overlap with a project recently approved by WICHE's Executive Committee through which WICHE is assessing options for incorporating an additional college into the current model.

WICHE believes a comprehensive approach involving substantial interaction with relevant stakeholders is necessary to both understand existing strengths and weaknesses of the model and develop workable alternative approaches.

Staff and Fiscal Impact

Staff have developed a preliminary budget of \$220,000 for this effort, which would support approximately .5 FTE (as well as the costs to secure the services of NCHEMS) over the course of the project.

Action Requested

Staff are requesting that the Policy Analysis and Research Committee recommend that the Committee of the Whole approve the project.

Discussion Item

Legislative Advisory Committee Fall 2026 Meeting

AC Hotel Bozeman Downtown, 110 North Tracy Avenue, Bozeman, Montana 59715

Monday, September 14, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 a.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom</i>	Breakfast
8:30 – 9:30 a.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom</i>	Welcome and Introductions
9:30 – 10:45 a.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom</i>	<p>Proactively Reconsidering the Postsecondary Landscape</p> <p>States are confronting unprecedented shifts in demographics, workforce needs, fiscal realities, and federal priorities. In response, legislators and higher education leaders are taking a fresh look at how postsecondary institutions collaborate, adapt, and contribute to state goals. This session will highlight how states are working to align postsecondary systems with state priorities and build more responsive, resilient institutions for the future.</p> <p>Moderator Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Ben Cannon, Executive Director, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission • Commissioner Geoffrey Landward, Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education • Commissioner Ann Millner, Chair, and Senator, Utah State Legislature • Senator Rob Wagner, Oregon State Senate
10:45 – 11:00 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom</i>	<p>Building Effective Outcomes-Based Funding Models for Postsecondary Education</p> <p>As states across the West continue to explore outcomes-based funding models, this session will offer a deep dive into the legislative considerations of model elements. Presenters will review the available evidence on outcomes-based funding's impact, describe models used across the region, and explore key questions for legislative consideration using a case study approach.</p> <p>Moderator Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner Patricia Charlton, Senior Vice President, Finance and Administration, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities • Connor Jorgensen, Principal Analyst, Legislative Finance Committee, New Mexico Legislature
12:15 – 1:15 p.m. <i>Benchmark</i>	Lunch

1:15 – 2:30 p.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom</i>	Workforce Pell in Practice: Implementation and Next Steps <p>The expansion of the federal Pell Grant to short-term programs went into effect this past July, putting states in the unprecedented position of determining whether or not their programs meet a host of federally mandated requirements for eligibility. The session will include examples of state processes to date and a discussion of what role legislators might play going forward.</p> <p>Moderator Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, National Conference of State Legislatures • Tiffany Sanderson, President, Lake Area Technical College • Madeleine Thompson, Acting Executive Director, Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
2:30 – 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 – 4:15 p.m. <i>Bridger Ballroom and Saddle Board Room</i>	LAC Roundtable Discussions <p>Legislators will participate in small group discussions led by WICHE staff to identify shared legislative priorities across four topics. These conversations will inform a report to the WICHE Commission on LAC members' top areas of focus in policy domains relevant to WICHE's core operations.</p> <p><i>Behavioral Health Workforce</i></p> <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonya Horn, Director of Research and Evaluation, Behavioral Health Program, WICHE • Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE <p><i>Federal Policy</i></p> <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin Reid, Federal Affairs Advisor, National Conference of State Legislatures • Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE <p><i>Artificial Intelligence</i></p> <p>Facilitator</p> <p>Van Davis, Executive Director, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and Vice President, Digital Learning, WICHE</p> <p><i>Workforce Solutions</i></p> <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE • Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE
6:00 – 7:30 p.m. <i>AC Lounge</i>	Dinner <p>LAC members, speakers, and their guests are invited to join an optional group dinner.</p>

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Bridger Ballroom

Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Bridger Ballroom

Beyond the Playing Field: The Future of Athletics in Postsecondary Education

College athletics is undergoing profound change, driven by evolving case law, a growing patchwork of state policies, the uncertain prospect of federal action, and new models for student-athlete compensation and participation. These developments are reshaping institutional finances and the student experience in ways that extend far beyond athletics programs themselves. This session will examine how these changes are affecting campuses, discuss the implications for postsecondary education policy, and consider the long-term role of athletics within public higher education.

Moderator

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

Speakers

- David Kaufman, Partner, Thompson Coburn LLP
- Brock Tessman, President, Montana State University
- Tom Wistrill, Commissioner, Big Sky Conference

10:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Break

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Bridger Ballroom

Exploring Dual Enrollment: Program Design, Evidence, and Open Questions

Legislators have invested millions of dollars in dual and concurrent enrollment, offering secondary students the opportunity to earn state-subsidized college credit while in high school. However, the unique structure of each state's programs and the challenges of tracking long-term outcomes mean that many questions still remain regarding the most effective approaches to program design and funding strategy. The session will engage legislators in a conversation about what we know and what we still need to learn about dual enrollment in the West.

Moderator

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

Speakers

- Commissioner JB Holston, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Lisa Johnson, Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, North Dakota University System
- Amy Williams, Executive Director, National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

11:45 a.m. – Noon

Bridger Ballroom

Final Reflections

Participant List

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Discussion Item

WICHE Data Resources

The Policy Analysis and Research unit maintains and curates several data resources as part of its core responsibilities, which are activities supported by the General Fund. These include the *Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West*, *Benchmarks: WICHE Region*, *Tuition and Fees in the West* series, and *Knocking at the College Door*. These data resources are built on the Policy Analysis Research Database (PARC), WICHE's database for collecting, storing, and using publicly available data. The Commission previously funded PARC through a reserve allocation.

The unit is assessing these resources and how they can best serve WICHE's mission and support states, territories, and freely associated states in the West. Input is sought from the Policy Analysis and Research Committee on the ways that WICHE's vast array of publicly available data can best meet the region's needs.

While the *Fact Book* and *Benchmarks* had distinct purposes, some of that utility has converged with the advent of data dashboards and the ability to present data dynamically.

Staff will briefly explain these resources before facilitating a discussion of state and regional needs focusing on the following questions:

1. For your state, territory, or freely associated state, what data needs are there for your own locale? For comparators?
2. Would state-specific data pages be a useful tool, and if so, what metrics would be most helpful to include?
3. Can WICHE curation of IPEDS, Census, and other publicly available data be of use for your state, territory, or freely associated state?
4. What other considerations are there as staff consider how best to use available data in support of the organization's mission and the region?

Information Item

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement: Policy Modification Process Update

Background

In June 2022, the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) adopted a new policy modification process. This process was driven and developed in large part by members of the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and WICHE staff, with strong support from the WICHE Commission. This process allows any interested party to submit proposed policy modifications that would change SARA policy. To be adopted, a policy proposal must be approved by all four regional compacts, through a decision process of their choosing, and then approved by the NC-SARA Board.

The WICHE Commission adopted a process whereby the W-SARA RSC would review all proposals and carry WICHE's decisional authority for most policy proposals. Especially controversial or impactful proposals would — based on the determination of the president in consultation with WICHE officers and the chair of the policy analysis and research committee — be brought before the WICHE Commission for consideration.

The W-SARA RSC also develops policy proposals and this year submitted eight possible changes for consideration by the other compacts and NC-SARA. These proposals would have raised standards for institutional participation, added reasons states could take action against institutions, allowed the application of education-specific consumer protection laws to out-of-state institutions in certain instances, and addressed issues related to institution location determination and field trips. The proposal aligning reasons for denial of initial participation with reasons for removal was the only proposal approved by all four RSCs.

In total, 33 proposals were submitted by various stakeholders including RSCs, state agencies, SARA working groups, NC-SARA staff, UPCEA, institutions, the Century Foundation, and SAN and WCET. One proposal was withdrawn as a result of significant overlap with another proposal. The four RSCs reviewed 32 proposals, with nine receiving approval from all four RSCs.

Proposals Approved by All Four Regional Compacts

PMP26-0797: Clarification of Teach Out Plans Submission (Institutional Closures Working Group: Teach Out Plans Subcommittee)

This proposal was a technical clarification made to reduce redundancy related to the applicability for institutions that do not participate in Title IV programs created by a proposal approved in the 2025 cycle.

PMP26-0798: Data Submission by Participating Institutions (NC-SARA Staff)

This proposal clarifies that procedures related to data submission by SARA-participating institutions are outlined in the Data Reporting Handbook rather than in the SARA Policy Manual. It also adds a notification requirement for any changes made to data reporting requirements to ensure institutions have sufficient notice.

PMP26-0799: SARA Definition (Regional Compact Presidents and NC-SARA President)

This proposal drops the “s” from State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements in the definition of SARA in the SARA Policy Manual to provide consistency with the Unified State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement.

PMP26-0800: 8.2.e. Policy Review Cycle (SARA PMP Cycle Review Working Group)

This proposal amends policy language related to the policy modification process to change the policy modification cycle from annually to biannually, occurring in odd-numbered years beginning in 2027.

PMP26-0801: 8.2.j. Exigent Circumstances (SARA PMP Cycle Review Working Group)

This proposal amends the Exigent Circumstances language related to the Policy Modification Process to clarify the criteria a policy proposal must meet to be reviewed outside the regular policy modification cycle and outlines the review and approval process for proposals drafted under exigent circumstances.

PMP26-0802: 3.7.b Appeals Process (Removal of Implementation Date) (NC-SARA Staff)

This proposal removes the historic implementation date and changes the verb tense to appropriately align with the policy’s effective status.

PMP26-0805: SARA Policy Manual – Non-Substantive Changes (NC-SARA Staff)

This proposal is the annual proposal to make changes related to formatting, grammar, and consistency in language use throughout the SARA Policy Manual.

PMP26-0809: 3.1.d. – Reasons for Denial (W-SARA RSC)

This proposal aligns language in the initial eligibility review process with language in the institutional removal process to allow a State Portal Entity (SPE) to deny an institution’s application for participation based on certain criteria. Due to a previously approved proposal, a SPE could have removed an institution from participation for the noted criteria but could not deny initial participation based on those criteria, creating a structure in which they would have to approve, then remove the institution rather than deny them up front. This proposal closes that loop.

PMP26-0823: State Renewal Options (SAN, WCET, and The Century Foundation)

This proposal adds more structure and procedure to the state renewal process, creating an option for a regional compact to place a state on provisional status in the event a state is found to be out of compliance with SARA policy, mirroring the structure in place for institutions.

Information Item

General Fund Workplan Staffing Levels – Current and Proposed Categories

As part of managing unit capacity, staff are reassessing staffing effort levels associated with general fund responsibilities. The table on the left is the staffing effort currently presented in the agenda book. The table on the right is a possible reorganized presentation of those responsibilities, plus other activities that staff currently undertake. Commissioner feedback is welcome.

Current Format

Project	Staff FTE
<i>Benchmarks: WICHE Region</i>	0.025
Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)	0.25
Peer-to-peer Virtual Convenings	0.15
<i>Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West</i>	0.025
State Policy and Data Profiles	0.2
<i>Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West</i>	0.025
WICHE Insights	0.1
WICHE Policy Webinar Series	0.1

Proposed Approach

Project	Staff FTE
Data Resources	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PARD</i> Management • <i>Benchmarks: WICHE Region</i> • <i>Regional Fact Book</i> 	
Reports, Publications, and Outreach	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tuition and Fees in the West</i> • <i>Policy Insights</i> • Webinars 	
Technical Assistance	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to Queries • Minor Regional Support • Testimony and Presentations • Peer-to-Peer Calls 	

Plenary Session II

State Strategies for Sustaining and Strengthening Postsecondary Education

Thursday, November 5, 2026

2:45 – 4:00 p.m.

Plenary Session II

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 2:45 - 4:00 p.m. | Westminster Ballroom I-II

State Strategies for Sustaining and Strengthening Postsecondary Education

The opening plenary established a shared understanding of the Western postsecondary context. This session shifts from that regional frame to the choices states are making within their own circumstances. Through examples from California, Hawai'i, and North Dakota, Commissioners will explore how leaders in three markedly different settings are working to sustain and strengthen postsecondary education for the future.

California, Hawai'i, and North Dakota differ significantly in scale, geography, demographics, system structure, fiscal conditions, and public needs. Those differences provide a useful basis for examining how context influences the priorities leaders set, the strategies they pursue, and the tradeoffs they face.

Each state case study will begin with the challenges or opportunities leaders are working to address, then explore the direction they are pursuing, how the state's context is shaping their thinking, and what they are learning as the work develops. Using this shared frame will allow Commissioners to compare the approaches taking shape, the conditions influencing them, and the questions leaders are continuing to work through.

Rather than identifying a single model for success, the facilitated discussion will draw out the lessons emerging from these efforts, the questions they raise for other Western states and territories, and the elements that may merit further consideration in different contexts. The conversation will also surface where shared learning or regional collaboration could support state and institutional decision-making.

Moderator

Anne Trujillo, Retired News Anchor, Denver7 (KMGH) and Trustee, Adams State University

Panelists

Commissioner Brent Sanford, Commissioner, North Dakota University System

Christopher Ferguson, Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives, California Community Colleges

Commissioner Wendy Hensel, President, University of Hawai'i System

Biographical Information

Moderator



Anne Trujillo, Retired News Anchor, Denver7 (KMGH) and Trustee, Adams State University

Anne Trujillo spent her career as a journalist in Denver, Colorado, covering issues of importance to Coloradans. After leaving the television news business, Trujillo chose to focus on her passion of making education accessible to all and joined the Adams State University Board of Trustees.

Trujillo has won multiple Emmy awards for her work as a broadcast journalist. Her reporting, writing, and anchoring skills have been recognized by the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) where she is also a member of the elite NATAS Silver Circle for her years of work in the industry. She was also one of the founders of the Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

Trujillo still makes her home in Littleton, Colorado, where she grew up and is a graduate of Littleton High School and has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Colorado Boulder.

Panelists



Christopher Ferguson, Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives, California Community Colleges

Christopher (Chris) Ferguson serves as Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives at the California Community Colleges. He oversees the Finance and Facilities Planning Division, the Government Relations Division and will support strategic technological initiatives. Additionally, he will advise and assist the chancellor on related fiscal and policy matters, and oversee federal and state funds, including funds for student housing and emergency grants, among other duties.

Prior to the chancellor's office, Ferguson served as the program budget manager for all education systems at the California Department of Finance. He has more than 16 years of experience working with program budgets and has been responsible for budgetary expenditures of more than \$100 billion in K-12 and higher education funding. He was a primary developer of the Student-Centered Funding Formula and played an important role in the development and implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, the Strong Workforce Program, higher education budgetary proposals and compacts with the University of California and California State University. He has an expert level of understanding roles and responsibilities within the California state government with respect to budgeting and policy development.

Ferguson earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Riverside and a master's degree from Wichita State University.



Commissioner Wendy Hensel, President, University of Hawai'i System

Wendy F. Hensel serves as the President of the University of Hawai'i (UH) System, providing strategic leadership across its 10 campuses to drive innovation, educational equity, and academic excellence. Since assuming office in January 2025, she has spearheaded transformative initiatives advancing student success, launched high-impact workforce-aligned degree programs, elevated the research enterprise statewide, and modernized operations. Hensel pioneered the Direct2UH program to expand access to higher education across Hawai'i and launched a \$123-million strategic investment initiative to support a common standard of care across the UH System. She has championed both responsible innovation in artificial intelligence through policy, community education, and strategic partnerships as well as the advancement of the university's mission as a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning, where Indigenous culture, values, and knowledge thrive alongside global academic and research excellence.

Prior to leading the University of Hawai'i, Hensel served as Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost at The City University of New York (CUNY) — the nation's largest urban public university system — as well as the provost and dean of the college of law at Georgia State University. A nationally recognized legal scholar, she earned her Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Harvard Law School and her bachelor's degree with highest honors from Michigan State University, where she was both a Harry S. Truman Scholar and intern at the U.S. Supreme Court.



Commissioner Brent Sanford, Commissioner, North Dakota University System

Brent Sanford was born and raised in Watford City, North Dakota. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of North Dakota with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1994. He is a certified public accountant. He worked as an auditor and consultant for Eide Bailly LLP from 1994 through 2002 and then became the chief financial officer of Transwest Trucks in Denver, Colorado. He moved back home to Watford City in 2004, purchasing and operating his third-generation family-run car dealership. He increased sales each of the first 10 years in business with unique approaches based on the rural economic conditions. He was elected to the Watford City Council in 2006 and became mayor in 2010. Watford City became the fastest growing community in America from 2010 to 2020. Most of the growth occurred during the incredible early days of the Bakken oil boom from 2010 to 2014. With his leadership, the community focused on infrastructure investment and community development to address the rapid growth including investing in the historic Main Street area, new retail, new housing, affordable housing, new schools, new community center, new healthcare, new daycare, and new airport investments.

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

On December 20, 2022, Sanford announced his resignation as lieutenant governor, effective January 2, 2023, to return to the private sector and spend more time with his family. Sanford has continued in his passion for progress in North Dakota through his newest venture, Sanford Consulting LLC, assisting various organizations with innovative workforce and energy solutions. In January 2025, Sanford was named the interim president of Bismarck State College and on September 23, 2025, Sanford was named Commissioner of the North Dakota University System. Sanford and his wife, Sandi, have three children and reside in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Issue Spotlight

National Convening on Postsecondary Mental Health: Implications for the West

Friday, November 6, 2026

8:00 a.m.

Issue Spotlight

Friday, November 6, 2026 | 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. | *Lake House*

National Convening on Postsecondary Mental Health: Implications for the West

Informed by lessons from WICHE's recent national convening on postsecondary mental health, this focused segment will explore the role of student mental health in student success, educational attainment, workforce development, and state policy priorities in the West. Commissioners will consider what it means to build policy with students, not just for them; how states and systems can move beyond isolated programs toward coordinated infrastructure; and where data, workforce pathways, federal funding changes, artificial intelligence, and cross-sector partnerships may shape WICHE's role and next steps.

Speakers

Tonya Horn, Director of Research and Evaluation, Behavioral Health Program, WICHE
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

Biographical Information

Speakers



Tonya Horn, Director of Research and Evaluation, Behavioral Health Program, WICHE

Dr. Tonya Horn is the Director of Research and Evaluation for the Behavioral Health Program at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). She received her master's and doctorate degrees in social work from the University of Minnesota. Horn specializes in using participatory research methods to engage communities who are most impacted by problems to identify solutions. Her work also focuses on using data to drive behavioral health systems improvement. Prior to joining WICHE, Horn was an assistant professor at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she led the development of new workforce training programs in integrated behavioral health care and treatment of co-occurring disorders.



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

Dr. Patrick Lane is the Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). In this role, he oversees a range of work focused on improving access to and excellence in postsecondary education through sound public policy and research. This portfolio of work includes efforts to improve the value of postsecondary education, address students' behavioral health needs, increase affordability, and ensure robust regional collaboration. He previously was WICHE's director of data initiatives leading efforts to improve linkages between state data systems. Prior to this role, he coordinated WICHE's efforts on adult learners and improving postsecondary access for low-income students. He came to WICHE after spending several years working in education policy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Lane completed a doctorate in public affairs at the University of Colorado Denver in 2015.

Roundtable Discussions Session II

Friday, November 6, 2026

8:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Roundtable 3

*Rural Health Transformation:
Workforce, Access, and Regional
Collaboration*

Roundtable 4

*Planning for Disruption: Continuity and
Resilience in Higher Education*

Roundtable Discussions – Session II

Friday, November 6, 2026 | 8:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Roundtable 3 – Rural Health Transformation: Workforce, Access, and Regional Collaboration

Strategic Priority Alignment: Workforce & Society; Access & Success; Innovation; Value & Accountability | *Cotton Creek I*

Rural communities across the West are facing converging healthcare challenges, including workforce shortages, fragile behavioral health systems, limited clinical training capacity, hospital and provider instability, and uneven access to education and care. With new federal Rural Health Transformation resources available to states for a limited period, many state leaders are considering how to design workforce strategies that create lasting capacity rather than one-time investments.

Drawing on Idaho's Rural Health Transformation plan, this roundtable will examine how one Western state is using time-limited federal investments to address rural workforce shortages, expand access to care, and strengthen healthcare systems for the long term. Following the state example, a postsecondary leader will consider what the plan requires from state colleges, universities, and clinical training partners; which education and training strategies are most likely to build durable rural health pipelines; and where institutions and states could collaborate across the region to expand clinical capacity, strengthen faculty and program delivery, and improve workforce data. The conversation will also consider how state and postsecondary partners can work together to strengthen rural health workforce development.

As WICHE begins work with interested states through the Western Rural Health Transformation Network, Commissioners will use the state examples to consider where shared workforce challenges or emerging opportunities may benefit from cross-state learning and regional collaboration. Their perspectives will help WICHE identify issues to explore further with the state leaders and implementation teams participating in the network. The roundtable will also consider how lessons from this work may be useful across the broader WICHE region, including territories and freely associated states that face similar rural, remote, and behavioral health workforce challenges even where eligibility for specific federal funding differs.

Facilitator

Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

State Presenter

Amy Brumfield, Systems Initiatives Director, Office of the Idaho State Board of Education

Postsecondary Respondent

Charlie Yingling, Dean, Orvis School of Nursing, University of Nevada, Reno

Roundtable 4 – Planning for Disruption: Continuity and Resilience in Higher Education

Strategic Priority Alignment: Innovation; Access & Success; Workforce & Society; Value & Accountability | *Cotton Creek II*

Disruptions are no longer exceptional events for Western postsecondary systems. Wildfires, extreme weather, typhoons affecting the Pacific, cyberattacks, public health emergencies, campus violence, and other crises can interrupt instruction, student services, research, housing, operations, and community partnerships with little warning. For institutions across the West, the question is not only how to respond during a crisis, but how to plan for continuity before disruption occurs.

This roundtable will focus on what institutions are learning about risk mitigation, continuity planning, and crisis communications across different types of disasters and disruptions. Commissioners will consider how responses differ for natural disasters, manmade disasters, cyber incidents, and public health emergencies, including what happens when institutions rely heavily on digital learning and the disruption itself affects technology systems. The discussion may draw on examples such as wildfires affecting Oregon institutions, disaster response and recovery in the Pacific, and continuity planning lessons from campus violence at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

The session will also examine what role a regional compact can play in helping the West prepare. Commissioners will be invited to consider where shared planning, peer learning, policy guidance, data, communications support, or cross-state coordination could help institutions strengthen resilience while keeping students, employees, and communities at the center. The conversation may also surface how existing regional tools, including WICHE's student access and cost-savings programs, can support continuity and flexibility when disruptions affect institutional capacity, student mobility, or access to needed programs.

Facilitator

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

Panelists

Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair, and Interim President, Northern Marianas College

Kate Hausbeck Korgan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

André Le Duc, Vice President and Chief Resilience Officer, University of Oregon

Biographical Information

Roundtable 3 Facilitator



Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research, 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, addressing healthcare workforce issues, better 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-Columbia and a master's degree in higher education from the University of Denver.

Roundtable 3 State Presenter



Amy Brumfield, Systems Initiatives Director, Office of the Idaho State Board of Education

Dr. Amy Brumfield is the System Initiatives Director at the Idaho State Board of Education. She ensures Idaho's public education system collaborates to serve the needs of a vast, diverse state. She drives strategic planning and accountability with a current focus on strengthening the rural health workforce and graduate medical education. Brumfield will take on any project that makes the world kinder and smarter.

Roundtable 3 Postsecondary Respondent



Charlie Yingling, Dean, Orvis School of Nursing, University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Charles T. Yingling, DNP, FNP-BC, FAAN, FAANP, is Dean and Professor of the Orvis School of Nursing at the University of Nevada, Reno, which is Nevada's flagship land grant university. A nationally recognized nurse leader and family nurse practitioner, his work focuses on strengthening the healthcare workforce through academic-practice partnerships, nurse practitioner education, rural and community health, and innovative models of clinical training. Yingling has led numerous state and federally funded initiatives to expand access to care, develop nursing and advanced practice nursing pipelines, and address workforce shortages across Nevada and the broader West. His scholarship and leadership center on preparing a practice-ready workforce while advancing health equity and improving access to care in underserved communities.

Roundtable 4 Facilitator



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

Dr. Raymonda “Ray” Burgman Gallegos is Vice President, Programs and Services at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) where she leads regional initiatives that expand student access, strengthen collaboration among postsecondary institutions and their leaders, and help colleges and universities operate more effectively. Her portfolio includes regional tuition savings programs, leadership networks for chief academic officers, academic leadership development, and multi-state partnerships supporting institutional operations. This work gives her a broad perspective on how leaders can sustain educational continuity, coordinate across organizations, and respond strategically when disruptions affect campuses and the students they serve. Previously, Burgman Gallegos spent eight years as director of programs and research at HERS, a nonprofit focused on leadership development for women and gender-diverse leaders in higher education. She also held administrative roles at DePauw University in Indiana and New College of Florida and was a tenured professor of economics and management at DePauw. She earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from New College of Florida and a doctorate in economics from the University of Florida.

Roundtable 4 Panelists



Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair, and Interim President, Northern Marianas College

Frankie Eliptico is the Interim President at Northern Marianas College (NMC), capping nearly two decades of leadership at the institution. He has previously held the role of interim president for three years, guiding the institution through some of its most difficult years, including recovery from the devastation brought by Super Typhoon Yutu and the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. He has led efforts to secure more than \$100 million that is now helping to rebuild the NMC campus with state-of-the-art buildings. His work on institutional marketing and branding efforts has been recognized nationally, and he was named Communicator of the Year in the District VI (Western U.S.) region of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations.

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



Kate Hausbeck Korgan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dr. Kate Hausbeck Korgan is a sociologist and the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), where she recently spent 15 months serving as the acting executive vice president and provost. Korgan's portfolio includes UNLV Global, Academic Partnerships, Undergraduate Education, Career Services, Lifelong Learning, Academic Effectiveness and Programs, Teaching and Learning Innovation, the Sands Institute for Chinese Language and Culture, and Enrollment Management. Through creative problem-solving, strong team building, leading-edge programming, campuswide collaboration, a commitment to digital transformation, and strategic alignment of resources and initiatives, Korgan promotes innovation and excellence among faculty, staff, and students. She believes in the power of transformative educational experiences to empower students' academic and career success, promote social mobility, and generate workforce pipelines that fuel economic development and community impact. In her free time, Korgan is an entrepreneur who co-founded and owns a hospitality company with her husband. She enjoys travel, photography, design, politics, writing and reading, cooking, entertaining, and relaxing with her family, friends, son Jonah, and fur babies: Elvis the English lab, Bowie the goldendoodle, and Molly the cat.



André Le Duc, Vice President and Chief Resilience Officer, University of Oregon

André Le Duc is a nationally recognized leader in organizational resilience, emergency management, and enterprise risk management. He serves as the University of Oregon's Vice President for Safety and Risk Services and Chief Resilience Officer, the university's first position of its kind. He also co-directs the Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments and founded the Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network, a national consortium dedicated to advancing resilience across higher education. His work focuses on developing high-performing teams and organizations that thrive in uncertainty and rapid change. His expertise includes risk management, organizational resilience, crisis leadership, and collaborative governance.

At the University of Oregon, Le Duc oversees the Safety and Risk Services division, which includes police, environmental health and safety, emergency management, risk management, and GIS services. He chairs the Strategic Enterprise Risk Management and Compliance Committee and established the university's first All-Hazard Incident Management Team, serving as Agency Administrator and as a Type III Incident Commander. He led the university's COVID-19 response, the longest activation in its history. Previously, De Luc founded the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience, an applied research center focused on building disaster-resilient communities across Oregon. He holds degrees in planning, geography, and environmental policy, and is a graduate of FEMA's National Emergency Management Executive Academy. Outside of work, he enjoys hiking, camping, and kayaking with his family in the mountains and along the Pacific Northwest coastline.

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Friday, November 6, 2026

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Committee of the Whole – Business Session

Friday, November 6, 2026 | 10:15 – 11:30 a.m. | Westminster Ballroom I-II

Agenda

Call to Order

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

 **Approval of May 5, 2026, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes** 10-3

Report of the Chair and the President

10-13

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Demarée Michelau, President

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Review of Action Items of the Executive Committee Between May 2026 and November 2026

10-17

Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Chair

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Commissioner Nathan Lukkes (SD), Committee Chair

 **Approval of a Project Related to Wyoming Community College Commission's Funding Allocation Model** 6-8

Report of the Programs and Services Committee

Commissioner Patricia Sullivan (NM), Committee Chair

Report of the Legislative Advisory Committee

Commissioner Gerry Pollet (WA)

Report of the Behavioral Health Advisory Council

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

Report of the WCET Executive Council

Commissioner Fred Lokken (NV)

Report and Recommended Action of the Audit and Risk Committee

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Committee Chair

 **Acceptance of the FY 2026 Audit and Financial Statements**

Recommended Action of the Nominating and Governance Committee

Commissioner Barbara Damron (NM), Committee Chair

 **Election of 2027 Commission Officers** 10-27

Discussion Item	
Update on WICHE’s Budget	10-30
Information Items	
Non-General Fund Reserves for Fiscal Year 2027	10-34
Contract Signatory Authority and Delegation Under WICHE Bylaws	10-37
Remarks by Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Outgoing WICHE Chair	
Remarks by Incoming WICHE Chair	
Reminder to Submit Selection of 2027 Committee Members	10-39
Other Business	
Adjourn Committee of the Whole – Business Session	

Meeting Evaluation

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/November2026CommMtg>



Thank you for your feedback!

Action Item

Approval of May 5, 2026, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Commissioners 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)
 Todd Haynie (AZ)
 Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
 Robert Shireman (CA)
 Jim Chavez (CO)
 JB Holston (CO)
 Kate Siegel Shimko (CO)
 Terrence George (HI)
 Wendy Hensel (HI)
 David Lassner (HI)
 Dean Fisher (ID)
 Maryrose Beasley (MT)
 Llew Jones (MT)
 Patricia Charlton (NV)
 Fred Lokken (NV)
 Bill Soules (NM)
 Patricia Sullivan (NM)
 Michael Dembrow (OR)
 Lisa Skari (OR)
 Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD)
 Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam)
 Geoffrey Landward (UT)
 Patricia Jones Horton (UT)
 John Carmichael (WA)
 Joseph Schaffer (WY)
 Mike Smith (WY)

Commissioners Absent

Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer (AK)
 Chad Sampson (AZ)
 Ellen Junn (CA)
 Jennifer White (ID)
 Clay Christian (MT)
 Cathy Dinauer (NV)
 Kyle Davison (ND)

Danita Bye (ND)
 Brent Sanford (ND)
 Ben Cannon (OR)
 Nathan Lukkes (SD)
 Larry Tidemann (SD)
 Kalani Kaneko (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/RMI)
 Gerry Pollet (WA)
 Fred Baldwin (WA)

Staff Present

Sherri Artz Gilbert, Senior Director, Operations and Membership Administration, WCET
 Malerie Barnes, Director, Student Access Programs, Programs and Services
 Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services
 Ashley Clark, Vice President, Finance and Administration
 Cherie Curtin, Senior Outreach Coordinator, Programs and Services
 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
 Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research
 Nicholas Fuselier, Director of Academic Partnerships, Learning and Development, Programs and Services
 Amanda Gentz, Postdoctoral Psychology Fellow, Behavioral Health Program
 Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research
 Lisa Kirchherr, Administrative Assistant III, Policy Analysis and Research
 Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research

Demarée Michelau, President
Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health
Linc Neisheim, Chief Technology Officer
Megan Raymond, Senior Director, Membership and Programs, WCET

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and Research
Melanie Sidwell, Vice President, Communications
Olivia Tufo, Manager, Regional Collaborative Procurement Solutions, Programs and Services

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Action Item

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

Chair Millner asked for any additions or corrections to the minutes. There were none, and she declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Report of the Chair and Report of the President

The Report of the Chair and Report of the President were included in the May 2026 agenda book. Chair Millner highlighted activities and developments since November 2025, including the Commissioner listening sessions, which saw strong participation from delegations across the region. She thanked Commissioners for their participation and noted that the sessions provided valuable insights into the priorities and challenges facing member states and institutions. Key themes included workforce development, adapting to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), financial pressures and long-term sustainability, and the effects of enrollment and demographic shifts. Chair Millner emphasized data-informed decision-making and reaffirmed WICHE's role in providing data, research, and resources to help WICHE states and institutions address these issues.

Chair Millner also reviewed the Executive Committee's ongoing strategic planning and governance assessment efforts, including proposed bylaw revisions, streamlining committee responsibilities, clarifying oversight roles, and refining committee structures to support consistent governance processes. Refinement work includes consideration of a proposed Governance and Nominating Committee and an Audit and Risk Committee.

In addition, Chair Millner reported on the new Executive Compensation Subcommittee of the Executive Committee, which reviewed compensation and benefits for the WICHE President and Senior Leadership Team using benchmarking data from comparable organizations in size, work, and impact in the higher education sector. The subcommittee consists of Chair Millner, Vice Chair Frankie Eliptico, Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron, Commissioner Clayton Christian, and Commissioner Ben Cannon.

During President Demarée Michelau's report, she also thanked Commissioners for participating in the spring 2026 listening sessions and noted that the feedback gathered was helping inform WICHE's priorities and Workplan.

President Michelau provided an update on Arizona's membership authorization, reporting that legislation to continue the state's participation in WICHE for an additional 10 years had advanced and was awaiting final action by the governor. She also reported on efforts to address funding challenges affecting Pacific Island membership. Through support from regional partners and the Government of Guam, annual dues were secured for FY 2026, and additional grant funding was anticipated to support future participation.

President Michelau updated the Commission on WICHE's digital accessibility efforts, noting that many states and institutions were navigating new accessibility requirements to ensure online content and digital resources are accessible to all users. WICHE has achieved compliance with federal requirements, and staff will continue efforts to maintain compliance and monitor future regulatory changes.

Chair Millner and President Michelau thanked Commissioners and partners for their ongoing support and active engagement in advancing WICHE's mission.

Report and Recommended Action of the Executive Committee Between November 2025 and May 2026

Chair Millner presented a report on the Executive Committee's business. Her report summarized Executive Committee activities between November 2025 and May 2026. Highlights included:

- **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) renewals:** The committee approved renewals of Alaska, Hawai'i, and Nevada.
- **Governance and Policy Development:** The committee continued review of the Commission committee structure, directed staff in the preparation of proposed bylaw amendments for Commission consideration, and provided additional guidance on the proposed policy on information requests related to state legislation before advancing it through the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) committee review process.
- **Financial Oversight and Planning:** The committee received staff-prepared budget updates and FY 2027 budget development, discussed salary and dues planning, and continued oversight of executive compensation philosophy and related policy development research project.
- **Program and Partnership Actions:** The committee approved partnership and program initiatives, including support for a Nevada Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) pilot, and endorsement of a national Career Technical Education (CTE) initiative focused on expanding learner opportunity and workforce pathways called "The Connected Path: A Shared Vision for Opportunity and Empowerment."

Report on the President's Evaluation

Chair Millner reported that the officers and Executive Committee completed the President's evaluation process, which included a self-evaluation, staff feedback, Commissioner input, and conversations with President Michelau about the feedback. Based on that review, the Executive

Committee recommended retaining the President’s current duties and approved a salary increase. Chair Millner also reported that officers were developing a compensation philosophy and related evaluation policy to provide greater consistency and clarity in the presidential evaluation process as officer leadership transitions over time.

Report and Recommended Action of the Policy Analysis and Research Committee

Committee Vice Chair Geoffrey Landward (UT) presented a report of the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee. The committee reviewed the PAR unit Workplan, including initiatives related to short-term credentials, behavioral health in postsecondary education, prison education, and dual and concurrent enrollment. The committee discussed emerging opportunities and state-led innovations that could inform future work and voted to recommend approval of the PAR unit Workplan to the Committee of the Whole.

Committee Vice Chair Landward reported that the committee voted to recommend approval of WICHE’s Policy for Responding to Information Requests Related to State Legislation to the Committee of the Whole. The proposed policy underwent multiple rounds of review and refinement and received feedback from both the Executive Committee and the PAR Committee. Discussion focused on balancing WICHE’s longstanding practice of providing objective, confidential assistance to state stakeholders with the need for formal guidance on responding to requests for information, research, and analysis related to state legislation. The policy formalizes existing practices and outlines procedures for legislative requests, including those involving WICHE’s unique role in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA).

The committee also discussed potential themes and topics for the September 2026 Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting and opportunities to strengthen engagement between Commissioners and LAC members. The committee received updates on ongoing policy and research initiatives related to higher education affordability, student success and behavioral health, as well as open educational resources, SARA policy modifications, regional data on tuition and fees, state appropriations and financial aid, and rural nursing workforce initiatives.

On behalf of the PAR Committee, Vice Committee Chair Landward recommended approval of the FY 2027 Workplan Section pertaining to the Policy Analysis and Research unit and MOVED TO APPROVE WICHE’s Policy for Responding to Information Requests Pertaining to State Legislation. Chair Millner did not require a SECOND. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Report and Recommended Action of the Programs and Services Committee

Committee Vice Chair Patricia Sullivan presented a report of the Programs and Services (PAS) Committee. The committee discussed opportunities to better align WICHE’s programs and services with regional workforce trends. The committee will schedule an additional meeting before the November 2026 Commission Meeting to continue the workforce discussion and a review of Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) enrollments and return-for-service policies by state.

The PAS Committee voted unanimously to recommend the Committee of the Whole approve the 2027-28 and 2028-29 Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) support fees. The recommendation included a 4.5% support fee increase in selected professional fields, standardization

of support fees across program structures beginning with students entering in 2027-28, and a revised occupational therapy support structure aligned with master's and doctoral degree pathways.

The committee reviewed the FY 2027 PAS Workplan for approval by the Committee of the Whole. Staff introduced a project called “Productivity, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge (PEAK): A Practical Approach to Technology Return on Investment” for approval to be included in the Workplan. This project is to be developed in partnership with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and will include the development of a toolkit and methodologies to help higher education institutions assess technology investments, identify hidden costs, measure outcomes, and improve technology procurement practices.

On behalf of the PAS Committee, Committee Vice Chair Sullivan recommended approval of the FY 2027 Workplan Section pertaining to the Programs and Services unit. She MOVED TO APPROVE the 2027-28 and 2028-29 Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) support fees. Chair Millner did not require a SECOND. There was no discussion. The motions passed.

Report of the Behavioral Health Oversight Committee

Commissioner Rodney Jacob reported on Behavioral Health Program activities, highlighting management of 43 funding agreements across FY 2026 and FY 2027 and several initiatives supporting workforce development, behavioral health services, and suicide prevention. Updates included completion of a Hawai'i Early Intervention Services rate study, continued success of the Together With Veterans program serving 38 rural communities across 11 WICHE states and territories, expansion of Behavioral Health Aide training programs in the Pacific jurisdictions, and new funding agreements in multiple states. Commissioner Jacob also highlighted the success of WICHE-affiliated psychology internship programs, noting that many participants remain in the communities where they train, contributing to workforce retention throughout the region. He concluded by noting an upcoming advisory council convening in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Report of the WCET Executive Council

Commissioner Fred Lokken reported on recent activities and accomplishments of WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, the State Authorization Network (SAN), and Every Learner Everywhere, noting continued growth in membership and engagement across all three networks. Highlights included the development of new resources related to artificial intelligence (AI) literacy and governance, online learning quality, state authorization compliance, student success, and digital learning practices.

The report also highlighted several collaborative initiatives and partnerships, including grant-funded work to improve belonging for online students, accessibility-focused programming, and joint professional development opportunities. Every Learner Everywhere received additional grant funding from the Gates Foundation to expand its work supporting institutions in digital learning and adaptive courseware implementation.

Current and upcoming areas of focus include Artificial Intelligence (AI) literacy and governance, accessibility, distance education research and policy, global compliance, and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. Registration is underway for WCET's 2026 Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Action Item

Approval and Adoption of Proposed Amendments to the WICHE Bylaws

The WICHE Bylaws were last updated on May 21, 2019. Chair Millner presented proposed bylaw amendments, noting that the details were in the May 2026 Commission Meeting agenda book. The proposed amendments included:

Update Mission Statement to Reflect Commission Action in Section 1. Organization and Section 2 Mission

To change the language

*“The member states and Pacific Island members of the Commission work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all **citizens** of the West”*

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”.*

Clarify and Redefine the Committee Structure

- **Transition from the “Nominating Committee” to “Nominating and Governance Committee.”** Continue to oversee the annual nomination of Vice Chair and provide a forum to review governance practices, consider board development needs, and support leadership succession planning.
- **Transition from the “Audit Committee” to “Audit and Risk Committee.”** Audit-related responsibilities would remain, with additional responsibilities for risk assessment and management.
- **Clarify the Executive Committee’s responsibility to include Finance Committee responsibilities.** During intervals between the Commission’s biannual meetings, the Executive Committee may exercise all the powers of the Commission. Additional responsibilities would include serving as the Commission’s Finance Committee to carry out financial oversight and responsibilities delegated by the Commission.

Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger MOVED TO APPROVE the approval and adoption of the proposed amendments to the WICHE bylaws. Commissioner Maryrose Beasley SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) Operating Guidelines

President Michelau recommended updating and revising the Behavioral Health Oversight Council operating guidelines. The update would align the guidelines with the council’s role and operations. The proposed revisions included changing the body’s name from the Behavioral Health Oversight Council to the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) to more accurately reflect its advisory function, clarifying governance responsibilities, updating the requirements for membership and the council’s responsibility for coordinating activities, sharing information, and providing a forum for

regional collaboration. The overall goal was to strengthen the council's value as a regional advisory body for council members and the Commission.

Commissioner Tom Begich MOVED TO APPROVE the BHAC operating guidelines to align the policy and council's role in advisory and governance responsibilities and align membership, and operational expectations with current practice. Commissioner Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the FY 2027 Salary and Benefit Recommendations

President Michelau presented the FY 2027 salary and benefit recommendations, including a 3.5% salary pool increase based on performance evaluations. The Executive Committee reviewed the recommendation, which aligned with the proposed operating budget, the FY 2027 dues increase, and regional compensation trends. She noted the recommendation supports competitiveness, retention, and organizational stability. She commended staff for their exceptional work during the year.

Vice Chair Eliptico MOVED TO APPROVE the salary and benefit recommendations. Commissioner Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget – General and Non-General Fund Budgets

Ashley Clark reviewed the FY 2026 budget outlook and presented the proposed FY 2027 budget to the Committee of the Whole. Through March 2026, the FY 2026 revenues were projected to exceed expenses because indirect cost reimbursements and interest income were higher than anticipated. She noted that the Legislative Advisory Council (LAC) meeting and Administrative Services costs exceeded budget projections because of record meeting attendance and costs associated with the Chief Financial Officer transition. Non-General Fund operations were performing well, supported by successful grant funding and strong program activity.

For FY 2027, Clark reported that interest income was expected to remain strong, revenues were projected to balance expenditures, and grant funding growth was expected to offset potential reductions in federal funding.

Commissioner Patricia Jones Horton MOVED TO APPROVE the FY 2027 Operating Budget (General and Non-General Fund Budgets), and Commissioner David Lassner SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Dedicated Reserve Levels for Non-General Fund Activities

Clark continued with the presentation of the recommended FY 2027 reserve levels for Non-General Fund activities supported by grants, contracts, fees, memberships, and other Non-General Fund revenues. The recommendation set reserve levels based on each funding source and its associated financial risk. She noted that the proposed reserve levels remain unchanged from those approved for FY 2026.

Commissioner Terrence George MOVED TO APPROVE the dedicated reserve levels for Non-General Fund activities. Commissioner Todd Haynie SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Annual Dues for FY 2028 and FY 2029 Biennium

President Michelau recommended setting annual dues at \$186,000 for FY 2028 (a 3.33% increase) and \$192,000 for FY 2029 (a 3.25% increase). She noted that the proposed increases were gradual and designed to support WICHE's organizational capacity while remaining predictable for WICHE states and Pacific jurisdictions.

Commissioner Goeppinger MOVED TO APPROVE the annual dues for FY 2028 and FY 2029 biennium. Commissioner Michael Meotti SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Acceptance of the FY 2025 Single Audit Reports

WICHE was required to conduct a FY 2025 Single Audit because it expended more than \$750,000 in federal funds during FY 2025. The Single Audit includes an examination of compliance with the federal program requirements in addition to the financial statements. The WICHE external auditor, Forvis Mozars, could not complete the Single Audit concurrently with the primary financial statement audit because the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) delayed issuing the FY 2025 Compliance Supplement. In November 2025, the Commission accepted the primary financial statement separately and asked that the Single Audit be brought forward for acceptance once the Compliance Supplement was issued and the overall audit work was complete. Clark reported that the FY 2025 audit resulted in no findings or material issues. She noted that the Audit Committee had reviewed the audit reports. She reaffirmed WICHE's commitment to sound internal controls, compliance, and fiscal accountability. The Audit Committee reviewed the Single Audit reports and voted to recommend the Committee of the Whole approve and accept the FY 2025 Single Audit reports.

Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron MOVED TO ACCEPT the FY 2025 Single Audit reports. Commissioner Meotti SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the FY 2027 Workplan

President Michelau presented the action item to approve the FY 2027 Workplan. She noted that the Programs and Services (PAS) Committee and the Policy Analysis and Research (PAR) Committee reviewed their respective FY 2027 unit Workplans in their committee reports and recommended approval to the Commission. The proposed Workplan also included the Behavioral Health Program and WCET unit Workplans. She then highlighted the FY 2027 strategic priorities, explaining that while the priorities remain unchanged, the accompanying descriptions were refined based on feedback from listening sessions and evolving stakeholder perspectives across the region. The revisions were intended to reflect WICHE's current approach and priorities better while maintaining

continuity in the organization’s overall direction. She noted that the Executive Committee had reviewed the updated descriptions and that they more accurately communicate WICHE’s objectives for the coming year and beyond.

Commissioner Kate Siegel Shimko MOVED TO APPROVE the FY 2027 Workplan. Commissioner Begich SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of the Conflict of Interest Policy for the WICHE Commission

President Michelau reviewed the Conflict of Interest policy, emphasizing its role in promoting transparency, sound governance, and clear expectations for Commissioner service. She noted that Commissioners are required to complete and sign a conflict-of-interest disclosure form every two years.

Commissioner Robert Shireman MOVED TO APPROVE the Conflict of Interest policy as presented. Commissioner Lisa Skari SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

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

President Michelau presented the affirmation of the Code of Ethics policy for Commissioners, the President’s office, and staff, noting that the codes complement the Conflict of Interest policy and set expectations for ethical conduct and service. She reported that the codes remain substantively unchanged from those previously approved, with one terminology update replacing “member states” with “participating states.” The revision aligns organizational language and is reflected in the reference when addressing conflicts between an individual’s personal interests and the interests of WICHE, its participating states, or Pacific Island jurisdictions. She noted that new Commissioners, the President, and staff must sign the Code of Ethics policy to indicate compliance. The Commission approved the Code of Ethics as presented.

Commissioner Begich MOVED TO APPROVE the affirmation of the Codes of Ethics policy for the WICHE Commission, President, and staff. Commissioner Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Information Item

Contract Signatory Authority and Delegation Under WICHE Bylaws

President Michelau presented an informational report regarding contract signatory authority and delegation under WICHE’s bylaws. She noted that primary contract signatory authority resides with the President, with delegation permitted under the bylaws. She emphasized that WICHE follows a deliberate process for delegating signature authority and explained that, under the bylaws, the Commission would receive delegated authority as an information item at each meeting and in future agenda materials.

The Signatory thresholds are as follows:

- **Project Managers:** Contracts under \$25,000
- **Vice Presidents:** Contracts under \$100,000
- **President:** Contracts over \$100,000

Other Business

No other business was presented or discussed

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Report of the Chair and the President

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

Greetings, Commissioners:

Welcome to Westminster, Colorado! We are looking forward to spending time together in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. The past six months have been active, and we are pleased to share several highlights in a few key areas.

Strengthening Governance

One of Chair Millner's key priorities has been strengthening WICHE's approach to executive evaluation and compensation. Building on the executive compensation study initiated under Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron (NM), Chair Millner convened an Executive Compensation Subcommittee to examine the findings and develop policy recommendations. After several months of work, the subcommittee presented the following recommendations, which were approved by the Executive Committee:

- Executive Compensation Philosophy
- Executive Peer Organization Policy
- Rebuttable Presumption of Reasonableness Policy
- President Performance Evaluation Policy
- Revision of the WICHE Bonus Policy

Still on the horizon is the development of a contract with the President that will be ready for implementation in FY 2027.

In addition, Chair Millner led a series of bylaw changes to make WICHE's committee structure more responsive to organizational needs. The Commission expanded the Audit Committee's responsibilities to include organizational risk and the Nominating Committee's responsibilities to include governance matters. The Immediate Past Chair will continue to serve as a member of both committees but will no longer chair them.

These changes strengthen governance and enhance the Commission's ability to fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities.

Regional and National Engagement

During the past six months, WICHE leadership and staff continued to engage with national foundations, federal agencies, higher education associations, state policymakers, and workforce leaders.

Through national convenings and direct engagement with policymakers and philanthropic organizations, WICHE elevates regional priorities and identifies opportunities that support our Western states and Pacific jurisdictions. The examples below reflect engagement by the President's office, while staff across WICHE continue to provide national and regional leadership in student success, digital learning, workforce development, behavioral health, policy analysis, and research.

- State Higher Education Executive Officers' Annual Meeting (Washington, D.C.)
- Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting (Bozeman, Montana)
- Meeting with Gates Foundation Project Officer (San Diego, California)
- Wyoming Health Insurance Task Force Hearing (Cheyenne, Wyoming)
- Strada Education Foundation Board Retreat (Nashville, Tennessee)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Board Meeting (Seattle, Washington)
- Together With Veterans Annual Summit (Denver, Colorado)
- Lumina Foundation Achieving College Affordability Convening (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- Lumina Foundation State Policy Retreat (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Supporting Priorities of the West

A core component of WICHE's mission is responding to the needs of its states and Pacific jurisdictions. During the past six months, staff provided technical assistance, policy analysis, facilitation, research, and strategic planning support across the region. The examples below represent only a portion of this work.

In Wyoming, staff worked with Commissioners, legislators, and higher education leaders to help ensure that the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) remains as effective as possible in meeting the state's healthcare workforce needs. WICHE also engaged state leaders on veterinary education and related workforce priorities. WICHE also continued its engagement with Wyoming through the Rural Health Transformation initiative. Working with state and local partners, the comprehensive efforts support communities as they strengthen healthcare workforce pipelines, improve access to care, and develop locally driven strategies that address the unique challenges facing rural and frontier areas.

Separately, WICHE and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) are working with the Wyoming Community College Commission on two projects: one examining the state's overall community college funding model and the other assessing options for incorporating Gillette College into that model. This work will provide state leaders with analysis to inform decisions about community college funding.

In Arizona, the WICHE Behavioral Health Program assessed statewide training needs for court-ordered treatment services for individuals with serious mental illness. More than 290 responses informed a practical, role-specific training model designed to improve consistency, collaboration, and person-centered care.

In Washington state, the WICHE Behavioral Health Program assessed organizational and leadership needs for the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery and identified opportunities to improve communication and effectiveness. The partners are discussing a second phase of organizational and workforce development. In Washington state, WICHE also worked with Commissioners and state partners to address questions regarding WICHE's status under the Western Regional Education Compact and its ability to enter into contracts and perform other activities on behalf of the state. While these questions arose in Washington, the issue has implications for every WICHE state and Pacific Island member. Under the compact, WICHE is an agency of each participating state, which

allows the organization to support state priorities through grants, contracts, partnerships, and other activities.

Fundraising Highlights

WICHE continues to strengthen and diversify its portfolio of grants, contracts, and philanthropic support. During the past six months, staff cultivated relationships with national foundations, government agencies, and other funding partners while pursuing opportunities aligned with WICHE's strategic priorities. Recent awards demonstrate funders' confidence in WICHE as a trusted regional partner and will advance courseware implementation, humanities leadership, behavioral health systems improvement, workforce development, and state policy innovation. Examples include:

- \$4.98 million from the Gates Foundation to support courseware implementation
- \$1.5 million from the Mellon Foundation for the WICHE Institute for Leaders in the Humanities
- \$596,038 from The Pew Charitable Trusts to help states integrate short-term credentials into their broader postsecondary education strategies
- \$256,000 agreement with the Washington Health Care Authority to provide guidance, staff training, and practical tools that strengthen the agency's behavioral health work

Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives

WICHE continues to identify emerging issues and opportunities that will shape the future of higher education, workforce development, and public policy in the West. Through strategic partnerships, applied research, and program innovation, WICHE helps participating states and Pacific Island members anticipate change and respond to evolving regional needs.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an area receiving increasing attention. Through WCET and Every Learner Everywhere, WICHE is providing national leadership on the development of resources, frameworks, and professional learning opportunities that support responsible AI adoption in teaching, learning, student support, and institutional operations. These efforts help institutions move beyond experimentation and develop thoughtful approaches that advance student success while addressing questions related to policy, governance, and implementation.

WICHE's work in AI gained additional momentum this year when Every Learner Everywhere was invited to submit proposals for institutional and intermediary AI readiness assessments. If funded, the projects would help higher education organizations evaluate their capacity to adopt and sustain AI in support of student success.

Leadership Transition

Leadership transitions provide an opportunity to recognize extraordinary contributions while preparing organizations for the future. WICHE has focused significant attention on continuity within the Behavioral Health Program and preparation for its next chapter. Earlier this year, Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health announced his retirement effective December 31, 2026, and WICHE launched a national search for the successor. The transition plan prioritizes continuity in the program's work, partnerships, and grant activities, positions the next leader for success, and engages staff and stakeholders throughout the search process. Dennis has led the WICHE Behavioral Health Program since 2001 and has been a national leader in rural mental health,

behavioral health workforce development, and systems improvement. Under his leadership, the program has grown in visibility, impact, and national relevance while expanding WICHE's partnerships across the West and Pacific region. We are deeply grateful for Dennis's extraordinary service to WICHE and his lasting contributions to the field.

Looking Ahead

As WICHE looks ahead, we remain focused on supporting the evolving needs of participating states and Pacific jurisdictions while strengthening the organization for the future. Priorities for the coming months include completing the search for WICHE's next Vice President, Behavioral Health, implementing recently adopted governance reforms, expanding partnership and fundraising opportunities, and responding to emerging issues in higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health across the West.

Effective stewardship requires leaders to think beyond their own tenure. As President, one of my highest priorities has been to leave WICHE stronger than I found it, and Chair Millner has shared that commitment throughout her term as Chair. Together, we have focused on ensuring that WICHE has the governance, leadership capacity, financial strength, and organizational resilience necessary to serve the region well into the future.

We are grateful for the leadership and engagement of our Commissioners, the dedication and expertise of staff, the guidance of Commission leadership, and the many partners who make this work possible. Their collective commitment enables WICHE to serve the region effectively and prepare for the opportunities and challenges ahead. We look forward to continuing this important work together.

Review of Action Items of the Executive Committee Between May 2026 and August 2026

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Seattle, Washington – May 18, 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

Tom Begich (AK)
Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
Robert Shireman (CA)
Jim Chavez (CO)
David Lassner (HI)
Jennifer White (ID)
Llew Jones (MT) *proxy for Clayton Christian*
Fred Lokken (NV)
Danita Bye (ND) *proxy for Kyle Davison*
Ben Cannon (OR)
Ashley Wenger-Slaba (SD) *proxy for Larry
Tidemann*
Michael Meotti (WA)
Mike Smith (WY) *proxy for Fred Baldwin*

Committee Members Absent

Clayton Christian (MT)
Kyle Davison (ND)
Larry Tidemann (SD)
Fred Baldwin (WY)

Staff Present

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

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:46 a.m. Laura Ewing called the roll and a quorum was confirmed.

Action Item

Approval of May 18, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Chair Millner requested any corrections to the minutes of the March 31, 2026, Executive Committee meeting. No corrections were requested. Chair Millner approved the minutes as submitted.

Closed Session

Commissioner Tom Begich MOVED that the Executive Committee enter closed session at 7:52 a.m. to conduct President Demarée Michelau's annual performance evaluation and to discuss and approve the President's FY 2027 performance goals, objectives, and expectations for the new fiscal year. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. The motion carried. During the closed

session, the Executive Committee approved the President's compensation and approved her FY 2027 performance goals and objectives, as presented. Chair Millner adjourned the closed session at 8:40 a.m.

Adjournment

The Executive Committee adjourned the meeting at 8:41 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Approved Video Conference – August 18, 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
 Tom Begich (AK)
 Kathleen Goeppinger (AZ)
 Jim Chavez (CO)
 Terrence George (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)

Committee Members Absent

Robert Shireman (CA)

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
 Colleen Falkenstern, Director of Evidence
 and Strategic Initiatives, Policy Analysis and
 Research
 Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy
 Analysis and Research
 Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and
 Research
 Demarée Michelau, President
 Melanie Sidwell, Vice President,
 Communications
 Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA, Policy
 Analysis and Research

Guests

Joe Thiel, Interim Deputy Commissioner for
 Academic, Research, and Student Affairs,
 Montana University System

Call to Order

Chair Ann Millner called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. Laura Ewing called the roll, and a quorum was confirmed.

Information Item

Announcement of New Commissioners

Chair Millner announced newly appointed Alaska Commissioner Aparna Dileep-Nageswaran Palmer, Chancellor of University of Alaska Southeast; Hawai'i Commissioner C. Scott Wo, Lead Independent

Director of First Hawaiian Bank; and Nevada Commissioner Michelle Johnson, Director of Nursing Education for the State of Nevada.

Action Item

Approval of May 18, 2026, Executive Committee Videoconference Meeting Minutes

Chair Millner requested any corrections to the minutes of the May 18, 2026, Executive Committee meeting. No corrections or amendments were requested. Chair Millner declared the minutes approved as submitted.

Action Item

Approval of Expansion of WICHE's Support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership

Colleen Falkenstern presented the action item and reported that the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) has transitioned from the Wyoming Governor's Office to the Wyoming Heritage Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization affiliated with the Wyoming Business Alliance. The item was presented as a request to approve an expansion of WICHE's existing authorized support for the Wyoming Innovation Partnership. The project is a part of the rural health transformation program block grant awarded to all states. The Wyoming Business Alliance has asked WICHE to expand its role to support the workforce development component of Wyoming's Rural Health Transformation Program, which the Wyoming Department of Health recently approved. Currently, WICHE provides project management and technical assistance to support statewide alignment of higher education and workforce development in Wyoming under a contract with the Wyoming Community College Commission, recently extended through December 31, 2027; WICHE will continue its existing support under this contract.

The proposed expansion with WIP would span five years and focus on project management, program development and implementation, and reporting. The program supports workforce training and capacity-building efforts in emergency medical services, healthcare, and behavioral health fields across Wyoming.

Falkenstern noted a proposed first-year budget of \$200,000 to support staff, their travel, and indirect costs, with future annual budgets to be developed in coordination with the Wyoming Business Alliance. The project would be staffed by a Senior Project Manager in the Policy Analysis and Research unit with oversight from Falkenstern and Patrick Lane, and administrative support.

Commissioner Terrence George MOVED TO APPROVE the expansion for WICHE's support of the WIP and the work with the rural health transformation program block grant, and Commissioner Fred Baldwin SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval to Establish and Administer the Western Rural Health Transformation Network and Seek State Participation

Patrick Lane presented the action item, which would add a new project to the Policy Analysis and Research FY 2027 Workplan. This project would establish a network — the Western Rural Health and Transformation Network — to support state efforts related to rural healthcare workforce development. The proposed network would be funded through participation fees and would focus

on helping states implement workforce development activities associated with the federal Rural Health Transformation Program.

He noted that state agencies, higher education organizations, and workforce partners have expressed interest in a forum to share strategies, address common implementation challenges, and support grant administration efforts. WICHE has successfully used a similar model in the past through its support of states participating in the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program.

If approved, staff will conduct outreach to interested states to assess needs and determine the network's structure. Potential activities include regular virtual meetings, in-person convenings, technical assistance related to program implementation and reporting requirements, and the development of promising practices and state approaches. Participation fees to fund the project would be established based on the level of support and services provided. There is a proposed fee of \$25,000 per state, with a goal to work with eight participating states. To market the program network, staff will conduct outreach to state agencies administering the Rural Health Transformation grants and may also ask Commissioners to help identify and connect with key stakeholders who could benefit from participating in the network.

Lane said the proposed network would support states over the Rural Health Transformation Program's anticipated five-year implementation period.

Proposed Staffing:

- A Senior Project Manager would support the work, with responsibilities shared between this initiative and WICHE's expanded support of the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP).
- Oversight of Policy Analysis and Research unit leadership.

During the committee discussion, a committee member supported WICHE's role in this area but noted that states already have access to numerous no-cost opportunities for collaboration and technical assistance. Further, would states, particularly those with limited administrative capacity, be willing or able to pay to join an additional network when similar resources may already be available through other organizations and initiatives? Lane acknowledged that staff would avoid duplicating existing efforts and noted that the proposed outreach process would help assess state needs and interest. Some requests for this type of support had already been received and that any network developed would seek to address unmet needs rather than replicate existing resources.

Vice Chair Frankie Eliptico noted that, although the U.S. territories experience many of the same rural healthcare access and workforce challenges as eligible states, they are not eligible to participate in the Rural Health Transformation Program. Territories are excluded based on their status rather than their level of need, and he intends to advocate for legislative changes that would extend eligibility to the U.S. territories. Commissioner Eliptico also expressed appreciation for WICHE's advocacy and support on issues affecting the territories.

Immediate Past Chair Barbara Damron MOVED TO APPROVE that staff establish and administer the Western Rural Health Transformation Network and add the project to the FY 2027 Policy Analysis and Research section of the Workplan. Commissioner Kathleen Goeppinger SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of a Project Titled *Dual Insights – Creating a National Institutional Benchmarking Service for Dual Enrollment*

Falkenstern presented a proposed three-year project to strengthen dual enrollment and dual credit policy and practice across participating states. Ascendium would fund the project, and Education Strategy Group (ESG) would lead it, with WICHE partnering alongside the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). She noted that the project aligns with the Commission's longstanding interest in dual enrollment and dual credit and is intended to support state efforts through data, benchmarking, and shared learning. She requested approval to add the project to the FY 2027 PAR Workplan.

Key elements of the project include:

- Convene a cohort of Western states and serve as a liaison between participating states and the national project team.
- Identify key state-level research questions and policy priorities related to dual enrollment and dual credit in collaboration with participating states and project partners.
- Establish shared benchmarks, metrics, and definitions to support consistent measurement and comparison across participating states.
- Develop a data collection and benchmarking system using aggregated institutional-level data.
- Facilitate data-to-action workshops to help states interpret findings and apply them to improve student outcomes, policy, and practice.
- Convene a small cohort of Western states, with opportunities for expanded participation in later phases of the project.
- Share findings, best practices, and policy insights more broadly through publications and other resources to benefit states across the region.

During discussion, a committee member asked how participating states would be selected for the project. Falkenstern responded that an initial project activity will be developing a readiness assessment, conducted in collaboration with ESG and SREB, to evaluate states' data capacity and readiness to participate. The selection process is still being developed but WICHE will be involved in identifying participating states.

Vice Chair Eliptico MOVED TO APPROVE a project titled *Dual Insights — Creating a National Institutional Benchmarking Service for Dual Enrollment*, and Commissioner Tom Begich SECONDED the motion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Montana's Renewal Application to Continue Membership in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) through W-SARA

Molly Hall-Martin presented the details of Montana's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Montana has 13 participating institutions: 10 public, three private/not-for-profit, and one for-profit. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Montana's SARA institutions enrolled 1,424 distance education students through SARA, and 6,924

students located in Montana were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. The agency serving as the Montana State Portal Entity (SPE) made no changes. The state reported no SARA-qualifying complaints during the renewal period, and no institutions changed ownership. One institution, Montana Bible College, was denied initial participation due to its Financial Responsibility Composite (FRCS) score.

Hall-Martin said that two institutions were placed on provisional status:

- Dawson Community College because it is under a cash management agreement with the U.S. Department of Education. The institution did not seek renewal, and its participation expired on March 14, 2025.
- Apollos University was on provisional status because it was on provisional or probationary status, or the equivalent, with its institutional accreditor. The institution closed in December 2024, and pursuant to Board of Regents policy, the State received the student records.

During the renewal period, Montana removed The University of Providence due to reporting an ineligible FRCS score. W-SARA staff and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) deemed Montana to be compliant with SARA policy and recommended the state for renewal.

Immediate Past Chair Damron MOVED TO APPROVE Montana's SARA renewal application. Commissioner Fred Lokken SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Action Item

Approval of Utah's Renewal Application to Continue Membership in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) through W-SARA

Molly Hall-Martin presented the details of Utah's State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) renewal application. Utah has 19 participating institutions: eight public, five private/not-for-profit, six for-profit, and one new institution since the last renewal. According to the most recent SARA data available (fall 2024), Utah's SARA institutions enrolled 192,096 distance education students through SARA, and 17,182 students located in Utah were enrolled in distance education from SARA institutions in other SARA member states/territories. Hall-Martin reported that during the renewal period, the Utah Administrative Code for SARA was updated to reflect Department of Commerce Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) surety requirements, changing from head count to gross tuition revenue and increasing the surety amounts. Additionally, DCP made regulatory changes to the Utah Postsecondary and State Authorization Act. The irrevocable letter of credit has been removed as a surety option, and UT-SARA is working with its counsel to revise the administrative code to align with SARA surety requirements.

Hall-Martin reported that during Utah's renewal period, there were two institutions placed on provisional status:

- Rocky Mountain University in October 2024 due to a Financial Responsibility Composite (FRCS) score between 1.0 and 1.5, as well as being placed on Heightened Cash Monitoring (HCM) by the US Department of Education. A calculation by the Department on the Institution's most recent audited financial statements yielded an FRCS of 1.7. Department documentation confirmed that the institution no longer needed to comply with HCM reporting. The institution was removed from provisional status and returned to good standing.

- Maestro University was placed on provisional status due to a December 2025 change of ownership. The Utah State Portal Entity (SPE) placed enrollment restrictions on the institution, disallowing new SARA enrollments until it could calculate an FRCS score for the new parent company. The institution was given 90 days to provide verifiable documentation of an eligible score; otherwise, it would be removed from participation. Additionally, in early August 2026, the institution was placed on show cause with its accreditor.

During the renewal period, the Utah SPE received four SARA-qualifying complaints, all referred by other SARA member states. The institution resolved two complaints through its complaint process. One referred complainant never contacted the Utah SPE to file their complaint formally. The institution resolved the final complaint in its favor after the student failed to respond to repeated attempts by the SPE to reach a resolution.

Hall-Martin reported that W-SARA staff found Utah to be fully compliant with SARA policy, and the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) unanimously recommended them for renewal.

Chair Millner MOVED TO APPROVE Utah's SARA renewal application. Commissioner George SECONDED the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed with one abstention from the state of Utah.

Discussion Item

Budget Review

Ashley Clark provided a budget report, noting that FY 2026 concluded substantially stronger than budgeted and that FY 2027 is progressing well. She highlighted strong revenue performance, healthy reserve balances, and the ongoing FY 2026 audit, which is advancing smoothly.

- FY 2026 ended with revenues approximately \$626,000 above budget and a surplus of approximately \$516,000.
- Strong revenue performance was driven by indirect cost reimbursements and interest income.
- Beginning FY 2027 reserves are projected at approximately \$6.83 million, with all reserve categories fully funded.
- WICHE has begun tracking in-kind contributions, such as donated event space, in its financial reporting.
- FY 2027 is tracking in line with the adopted budget, with revenues and expenditures generally aligning with projections through the first month of the fiscal year.
- Most FY 2027 dues have been received; dues from Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, and Utah remain outstanding.
- The FY 2026 audit is underway and progressing smoothly.

Following the budget report, President Michelau provided an update on agency revenue, grant activity, and membership renewals. She reported that dues collections are progressing as expected, highlighted several significant grant awards WICHE received, and noted strong renewal rates across key membership programs:

- WICHE received a \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to support a regional leadership development program focused on senior humanities faculty.
- WICHE received a \$4.9 million award from the Gates Foundation to support courseware implementation through the Every Learner Everywhere (ELE) initiative.
- WICHE received approximately \$600,000 from The Pew Charitable Trusts to support state capacity-building efforts related to the strategic integration of short-term credentials within postsecondary education systems.
- WICHE secured a \$256,000 award to strengthen its behavioral health initiatives. President Michelau acknowledged Commissioner Michael Meotti for his assistance in securing the agreement.
- Renewals remain strong for the Western Academic Leadership Forum (95%) and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (87%).

During discussion, Commissioners noted WICHE's strong financial position and discussed opportunities to strategically invest reserve funds in ways that support the organization's long-term priorities and mission. The discussion focused on reserve management, investment policies, and appropriate reserve levels.

- Commissioners discussed whether sustained budget surpluses and reserve growth may present opportunities for strategic investments.
- President Michelau reported that staff is working to formalize a comprehensive reserve policy and plan to bring recommendations forward to the Commission for review.
- Commissioners expressed interest in reconvening the Investment Committee to review reserve and investment-related policies and provide recommendations to the Commission.
- Commissioners recommended benchmarking WICHE's reserve levels and policies against comparable nonprofit organizations to help determine appropriate reserve targets and guide future decision-making.
- Immediate Past Chair Damron, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, said that the Audit and Risk Committee will add to their committee agenda to review reserve policy considerations and provide recommendations for further discussion to the Commission.

Discussion Item

November 2026 Commission Meeting Update and Agenda

President Michelau reported planning is underway for the November 2026 Commission Meeting, themed "Choices Ahead: Shaping Postsecondary Education for the West," with a focus on major trends and pressures affecting higher education. Based on feedback from Spring 2026 listening sessions with Commissioners, the draft agenda includes a roundtable discussion intended to strengthen connections between the Commission and the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) and create opportunities for more meaningful legislative input. Commissioners were encouraged to provide feedback to President Michelau on the draft agenda.

Discussion Item

Executive Compensation Study

Chair Millner reported that the Executive Compensation Work Group is developing a comprehensive framework addressing executive compensation, including presidential evaluation, compensation policies, governance processes, and the potential use of an employment contract rather than a letter of agreement. The group is also considering recommendations for the Executive Committee and Commission to support long-term organizational consistency. The Work Group expects to present draft documents for review at a future meeting. Chair Millner thanked the Officers, Commissioner Cannon, and Commissioner Christian for their contributions to the work group's efforts.

Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

Adjournment

Chair Millner adjourned the meeting at 4:01 p.m.

Action Item

Election of 2027 Commission Officers

Summary

WICHE bylaws state that the chair and the vice chair shall be elected at the Commission meeting in the fall and serve for one year or until their successors are elected. In September 2026, the Nominating and Governance Committee, comprised of Committee Chair Barbara Damron (NM), with Commissioners Robert Shireman (CA), Rodney Jacob (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/Guam), and Larry Tidemann (SD), invited Commissioners to submit nominations for the 2027 vice chair position. Consistent with their charge, the committee considered all nominations and selected a candidate to recommend for vice chair. Under WICHE tradition, the vice chair generally assumes the chair position in the year following their term of service.

In reviewing the nominations, the Nominating and Governance Committee considered geographic representation, professional affiliation, and the range of backgrounds and perspectives. After careful consideration, the committee is pleased to recommend the following slate of officers to the Commission for approval:



Chair – Commissioner Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Interim President, Northern Marianas College

Frankie Eliptico is the Interim President at Northern Marianas College (NMC), capping nearly two decades of leadership at the institution. He has previously held the role of interim president for three years, guiding the institution through some of its most difficult years, including recovery from the devastation brought by Super Typhoon Yutu and the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. He has led efforts to secure more than \$100 million that is now helping to rebuild the NMC campus with state-of-the-art buildings. His work on institutional marketing and branding efforts has been recognized nationally, and he was named Communicator of the Year in the District VI (Western U.S.) region of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations.

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



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

Fred Lokken has been a faculty member and administrator at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) since 1991. Currently a tenured professor of political science, Lokken previously served as an administrator for 20 years and was the dean of WebCollege. He was chair of the Nevada Distance Education Directors Group for seven years. Since 2004, he has served as a board member of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), where he has served as chair-elect, chair twice, and now as the organization's senior advisor. He has authored the annual ITC National Distance Learning Survey of Community Colleges for more than 20 years, as well as a weekly national column and eNews digest on distance learning and education technologies since 2015. Lokken serves as the ITC government affairs specialist and co-chairs the ITC National AI Affinity Group. In 2025, he received the ITC National Lifetime Achievement Award. Lokken served as chair of the Coalition of Affiliated Councils (COAC) of the AACC for seven years. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, a master's degree in comparative/international politics from Washington State University, and was a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia in international relations/comparative politics.



Immediate Past Chair – Commissioner Ann Millner (UT), Senator, Utah State Legislature

Sen. F. Ann Millner represents Senate District 5, encompassing parts of Davis, Morgan, and Weber counties in Utah. Elected to the Senate in 2015, she serves as chair of the Economic Development and Workforce Services Committee, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, 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, ExcelinEd Policy Leaders Network member, and chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Higher Education Task Force.

Born in Kentucky, and raised in Tennessee, Sen. Millner's academic journey includes a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee, a master's from Texas State University, and a doctorate from Brigham Young University. She is distinguished as an emeritus professor of health administration and served as president of Weber State University from 2002 to 2012. Under her 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 and life science industries and developing state strategy in energy and critical minerals. In addition, she serves on the Intermountain Health and Merit Medical corporate boards.

Action Requested

Approval of the slate of officers for 2027 as presented by the Nominating and Governance Committee.

Discussion Item

Update on WICHE's Budget

Fiscal Year 2026

In May 2025, the Commission approved a balanced FY 2026 General Fund budget, with revenues budgeted at \$4,234,024 and expenditures at \$4,233,000. Actual revenues totaled \$4,861,534, while actual expenditures totaled \$4,344,758, resulting in a year-end surplus of \$516,776. Revenue exceeded budget by \$627,510, or 14.8%, primarily because indirect cost reimbursements were \$422,975 above budget and interest income was \$213,660 above budget. Expenditures exceeded budget by \$111,758, or 2.6%, with the largest unfavorable variances in Administrative Services and Policy Analysis and Research, partially offset by lower-than-budgeted expenses in Commission, Miscellaneous General Fund, and President's Office. Administrative Services exceeded budget in part because WICHE retained an interim chief financial officer to ensure continuity between the CFO's retirement and the hiring of the Vice President, Finance and Administration. The variance also reflects maintenance of and investments in the IT infrastructure supporting WICHE's finance systems, including an analysis of the architecture, which are accounted for within Administrative Services. The accompanying General Fund report provides additional detail. The Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary also shows that all WICHE program areas generated excess revenue, except for PSEP and Communications. The PSEP and Communications programs are fully funded by the General Fund and therefore show no gain or loss in the Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary.

Overall, WICHE ended FY 2026 in a strong financial position. The General Fund began the year with reserves of \$6,316,108. After adding the FY 2026 surplus, year-end reserves totaled \$6,832,878. Of this amount, \$539,280 is designated as the minimum reserve, equal to 12% of budgeted expenditures; \$449,400 is designated for unexpected shortfalls, equal to 10% of budgeted expenditures; \$850,000 is reserved to support accounts receivable; and \$150,000 is reserved for the president's strategic objectives. The remaining \$4,844,198 is available for future designation by the Commission. These amounts are presented in the General Fund Budget Comparing FY 2026 with FY 2027.

Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2027

The FY 2027 General Fund budget, approved by the Commission in May 2026, includes projected revenues of \$4,494,000 and expenditures of \$4,493,998, resulting in a planned surplus of \$2. Compared with FY 2026 actual results, the budget assumes lower indirect cost reimbursements and interest income, while member dues increase by \$88,000, or 3.2%. All states and the Pacific Island membership have paid their FY 2027 dues. Budgeted expenditures are \$260,998, or 3.4%, above FY 2026 actual expenditures, with the largest increases in Commission Expense, the Student Access Program, and the President's Office. Because WICHE is still relatively early in FY 2027, year-to-date activity remains limited. Revenues and expenditures are generally tracking as expected, and no significant budget concerns have emerged at this stage.

The FY 2026 audit was completed and proceeded smoothly. Finance and Administration anticipates a temporary increase in consulting expenses to provide coverage during a staff absence, as well as continued strategic work on the IT infrastructure supporting WICHE's financial systems; this will be

monitored along with other budget activity. Program managers will continue to monitor revenue and expenditures and make adjustments as necessary. WICHE staff will submit preliminary FY 2028 budgets to the Executive Committee in February 2027 and the complete proposed FY 2028 budgets to the full Commission in May 2027.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
General Fund Budget

Comparing FY 2026 with FY 2027

Revenue and Expenditures

FY 2026					FY 2027				
	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2026 Actual	Actual 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 Actual	
Revenue									
4102 Indirect Cost Reimbursements	\$1,246,000	\$1,668,975	\$422,975	33.9%	\$1,338,000	\$92,000	7.4%	(\$330,975)	-19.8%
4104 Indirect Cost Sharing-WICHE	(\$618,000)	(\$611,091)	\$6,909	-1.1%	(\$618,000)	\$0	0.0%	(\$6,909)	1.1%
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	\$983,660	\$213,660	27.7%	\$870,000	\$100,000	13.0%	(\$113,660)	-11.6%
4560 SHEPC excess rents	\$20,000	\$0	(\$20,000)	-100.0%	\$0	(\$20,000)	-100.0%	\$0	
4600 Other Income	\$24,024	\$26,124	\$2,100	8.7%	\$24,000	(\$24)	-0.1%	(\$2,124)	-8.1%
4625 In-Kind Contributions		\$1,867	\$1,867			\$0		(\$1,867)	-100.0%
Total Revenue	\$4,234,024	\$4,861,534	\$627,510	14.8%	\$4,494,000	\$259,976	6.1%	(\$367,534)	-7.6%
Expenditures									
0102 Student Access Program	\$527,512	\$530,502	\$2,990	0.6%	\$581,885	\$54,373	10.3%	\$51,383	9.7%
0104 Policy Analysis & Research	\$520,549	\$591,226	\$70,677	13.6%	\$536,164	\$15,616	3.0%	(\$55,062)	-9.3%
0105 Communications & Public Affairs	\$465,181	\$458,604	(\$6,577)	-1.4%	\$483,365	\$18,184	3.9%	\$24,761	5.4%
0106 Programs & Services	\$131,735	\$147,318	\$15,583	11.8%	\$135,687	\$3,952	3.0%	(\$11,631)	-7.9%
0110 President's Office	\$724,660	\$705,466	(\$19,194)	-2.6%	\$746,097	\$21,437	3.0%	\$40,631	5.8%
0111 Commission Expense	\$415,229	\$339,876	(\$75,353)	-18.1%	\$426,404	\$11,175	2.7%	\$86,528	25.5%
0112 Administrative Services	\$987,391	\$1,158,050	\$170,659	17.3%	\$1,167,026	\$179,635	18.2%	\$8,976	0.8%
0115 Miscellaneous Gen. Fund	\$351,422	\$316,258	(\$35,164)	-10.0%	\$306,292	(\$45,130)	-12.8%	(\$9,966)	-3.2%
0116 Program Development	\$25,750	\$0	(\$25,750)	-100.0%	\$25,000	(\$750)	-2.9%	\$25,000	
0131 LAC Meeting	\$83,571	\$97,458	\$13,887	16.6%	\$86,078	\$2,507	3.0%	(\$11,380)	-11.7%
Total Expenditures	\$4,233,000	\$4,344,758	\$111,758	2.6%	\$4,493,998	\$260,998	6.2%	\$149,240	3.4%
Surplus (Deficit) for the Fiscal Year	\$1,024	\$516,776	\$515,752		\$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%	\$4,844,198	\$459,350	10.5%	\$459,350	10.5%
Reserves at Beginning of Year	\$6,316,108	\$6,316,108	\$0	0.0%	\$6,832,878	\$516,770		\$516,770	
Reserves Dedicated during Year									
6 Deficit (Surplus) for the Fiscal Year above	(\$1,048)	(\$516,770)	\$515,722		(\$2)	(\$1,046)	99.8%	(\$516,768)	100.0%
Reserves Dedicated during the Fiscal Year	(\$1,048)	(\$516,770)	\$515,722		(\$2)	(\$1,046)		(\$516,768)	
Reserves at End of Year	\$6,317,156	\$6,832,878	\$515,722		\$6,832,880	\$515,724			

(a) FY 2026 dues: \$174,500 and FY 2027 dues: \$180,000. Set May 2024.

(b) Minimum reserve is 12% of Budgeted Expenses. Set May 2000.

(c) Unexpected Shortfall reserve is 10% of Budgeted Expenses. To be used only if anticipated funding does not materialize. Set May 2007.

(d) Reserve amount needed for accounts receivable until payments are received for contracted work. Set February 2016.

(e) Authorization given to the President to dedicate up to \$150K each year for the President's Strategic Objectives. Set February 2019.

Program Area Revenue and Expense Summary for FY 2026

	Programs & Services	Policy Analysis	PSEP	Behavioral Health	WCET	Communications & Public Affairs
Revenue						
Membership Dues and Fees	\$ 1,083,856	\$ 666,174		\$ 238,080	\$ 2,020,046	
Conference Registration Fees	\$ 46,431			\$ 16,595	\$ 237,775	
Grants and Contracts	\$ (150,671)	\$ 807,222		\$ 8,102,460	\$ 2,892,458	
Interest	\$ 11,242				\$ 115,550	
Miscellaneous Income		\$ 1,683			\$ 6,400	
General Fund Allocation	\$ 146,712	\$ 590,322	\$ 519,052			\$ 449,731
Total Revenue	\$ 1,137,570	\$ 2,065,401	\$ 519,052	\$ 8,357,135	\$ 5,272,228	\$ 449,731
Expenses						
Salaries	\$ 487,485	\$ 827,184	\$ 324,978	\$ 3,422,681	\$ 1,577,421	\$ 229,694
Benefits	\$ 183,272	\$ 322,044	\$ 126,129	\$ 1,273,626	\$ 583,089	\$ 88,888
Audit, Legal & Consulting	\$ 117,160	\$ 146,879	\$ 1,677	\$ 1,962,832	\$ 1,082,250	\$ 76,874
Subcontracts	\$ 55,025	\$ 71,490			\$ 802,178	
Travel	\$ 202,550	\$ 296,236	\$ 21,359	\$ 624,047	\$ 280,121	\$ 12,278
Printing and Copying	\$ 722	\$ 2,805	\$ 1,216	\$ 6,059	\$ 794	\$ 893
Rent	\$ 31,257	\$ 60,816	\$ 13,882	\$ 114,444	\$ 30,900	\$ 16,893
Computer/Network	\$ 36,317	\$ 67,170	\$ 33,483	\$ 192,837	\$ 117,070	\$ 14,183
Communications	\$ 4,543	\$ 10,540	\$ 2,389	\$ 35,829	\$ 16,445	\$ 3,333
Supplies and Expense	\$ 16,782	\$ 24,925	\$ 5,389	\$ 162,349	\$ 32,185	\$ 5,736
Marketing	\$ 6,073			\$ 404	\$ 34,014	\$ 9,332
Depreciation						
Indirect Costs (General Admin)	\$ 134,333	\$ 151,190		\$ 478,098	\$ 246,388	
Credits for other programs	\$ 7,081			\$ 952	\$ 38,934	\$ 500
Total Expenses	\$ 1,282,600	\$ 1,981,279	\$ 530,502	\$ 8,274,158	\$ 4,841,789	\$ 458,604
Excess Revenue (Loss)	\$ (145,030)	\$ 84,122	\$ (11,450)	\$ 82,977	\$ 430,439	\$ (8,873)

Information Item

Non-General Fund Reserves for FY 2027

Background

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

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

Therefore, Commission policy states that dedicated reserves for Non-General Fund activities — categorized into minimum reserve, reserve for unexpected shortfalls, and program development — shall be reported to the Commission at the November meeting upon official close of the fiscal year and approved by the Commission for the upcoming fiscal year as part of the WICHE annual budget at the May meeting. Further, reserves in excess of this approved amount revert to the General Fund reserve. In May 2026, the Commission approved the FY 2027 budget and the formula for determining the FY 2027 target reserves for Non-General Fund accounts. The following pages provide a summary of the FY 2027 reserves for the Non-General Fund accounts.

FY 2027 WICHE Unit Reserves

		Actual	Calculated
WCET			
	FY27 Budget approved May 2026 (Core Programs)	\$ 6,896,487	
20%	Minimum Reserve	\$	1,379,297
20%	Unanticipated Expenses	\$	1,379,297
10%	Program Development	\$	689,649
	FY27 Allowed Reserve	\$	3,448,244
	 FY27 Budget approved May 2026 (SAN)	 \$ 808,846	
20%	Minimum Reserve	\$	161,769
50%	Unanticipated Expenses	\$	404,423
30%	Program Development	\$	242,654
	FY27 Allowed Reserve	\$	808,846
	<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	\$	4,257,090
 WCET			
	FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 1,825,174	
	FY 2026 Reserve Designations		
	WCET Outreach and Research for SAN	\$ (278,398)	
	WCET Innovations Research	\$ (150,000)	
	Future Fellows	\$ (25,000)	
	SAN Digital Comm Specialist	\$ (75,000)	
	WCET Marketing	\$ (75,000)	
	Accessibility Reserve	\$ (50,000)	
	Annual Meeting Refresh	\$ (40,000)	
	WCET Tech Enhancement	\$ (80,000)	
	FY 2026 Excess Revenue	\$ 430,438	
	FY 2027 Total Available Reserve	\$ 1,482,214	
	<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	\$ 2,774,876	
 Policy			
	FY27 Budget approved May 2026 (Core Programs)	\$ 818,808	
0%	Minimum Reserve	\$	-
N/A	Unanticipated Expenses	\$	125,000
25%	Program Development	\$	204,702
	FY27 Allowed Reserve	\$	329,702
	 FY27 Budget approved May 2026 (W-SARA)	 \$ 580,352	
100%	Minimum Reserve	\$	580,352
0%	Unanticipated Expenses	\$	-
0%	Program Development	\$	-
	FY27 Allowed Reserve	\$	580,352
	<i>FY 2026 Total Allowed Reserve</i>	\$	910,054
 Policy			
	FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 704,680	
	FY 2026 Reserve Designations	\$ -	
	FY 2026 Excess Revenue	\$ 84,122	
	FY 2027 Total Available Reserve	\$ 788,802	
	<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	\$ 121,252	

FY 2027 WICHE Unit Reserves

	Actual	Calculated
Programs and Services		
FY27 Budget to be approved May 2026 (Joint Purchasing)	\$ 635,645	
20% Minimum Reserve		\$ 127,129
50% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 317,823
30% Program Development		\$ 190,694
FY27 Allowed Reserve		\$ 635,645
 FY27 Budget to be approved May 2026 (Academic Leadership)	 \$ 271,711	
20% Minimum Reserve		\$ 54,342
50% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 135,856
30% Program Development		\$ 81,513
FY27 Allowed Reserve		\$ 271,711
 FY27 Budget to be approved May 2026 (Remaining Programs)	 \$ 264,137	
0% Minimum Reserve		\$ -
N/A Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 125,000
25% Program Development		\$ 66,034
FY27 Allowed Reserve		\$ 191,034
<i>FY 2026 Total Allowed Reserve</i>		<i>\$ 1,098,390</i>
 Programs and Services		
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 1,460,308	
FY 2026 Reserve Designations		
Grant Bridge Funding & Development	\$ (30,000)	
Academic Partnership & Development	\$ (20,000)	
PSEP Assessment & Review	\$ (50,000)	
PEAK Project	\$ (479,709)	
FY 2026 Excess Revenue	\$ (145,029)	
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 735,570	
<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	<i>\$ 362,820</i>	
 Behavioral Mental Health		
FY27 Budget to be approved May 2026	\$9,072,212	
20% Minimum Reserve		\$ 1,814,442
20% Unanticipated Expenses		\$ 1,814,442
10% Program Development		\$ 907,221
FY26 Allowed Reserve		\$ 4,536,106
 Behavioral Mental Health		
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 3,407,516	
FY 2026 Reserve Designations		
Serving WICHE States	\$ (277,675)	
Staff Development	\$ (206,024)	
Marketing & Website	\$ (40,000)	
Research Project 1	\$ (75,069)	
Research Project 2	\$ (96,912)	
Campus Mental Health	\$ (50,000)	
FY 2026 Excess Revenue	\$ 82,977	
FY 2026 Total Available Reserve	\$ 2,744,813	
<i>Additional Allowed (or Excess) Reserve</i>	<i>\$ 1,791,293</i>	

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 WICHE exercises this authority operationally.

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.”

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 (HR). 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



2027 WICHE Commission Committee Assignments

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

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

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



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

State/Pacific Jurisdiction: _____

Executive Committee: _____

Programs and Services Committee: _____

Policy Analysis and Research Committee: _____

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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

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

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

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 WICHE's 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's 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's 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.

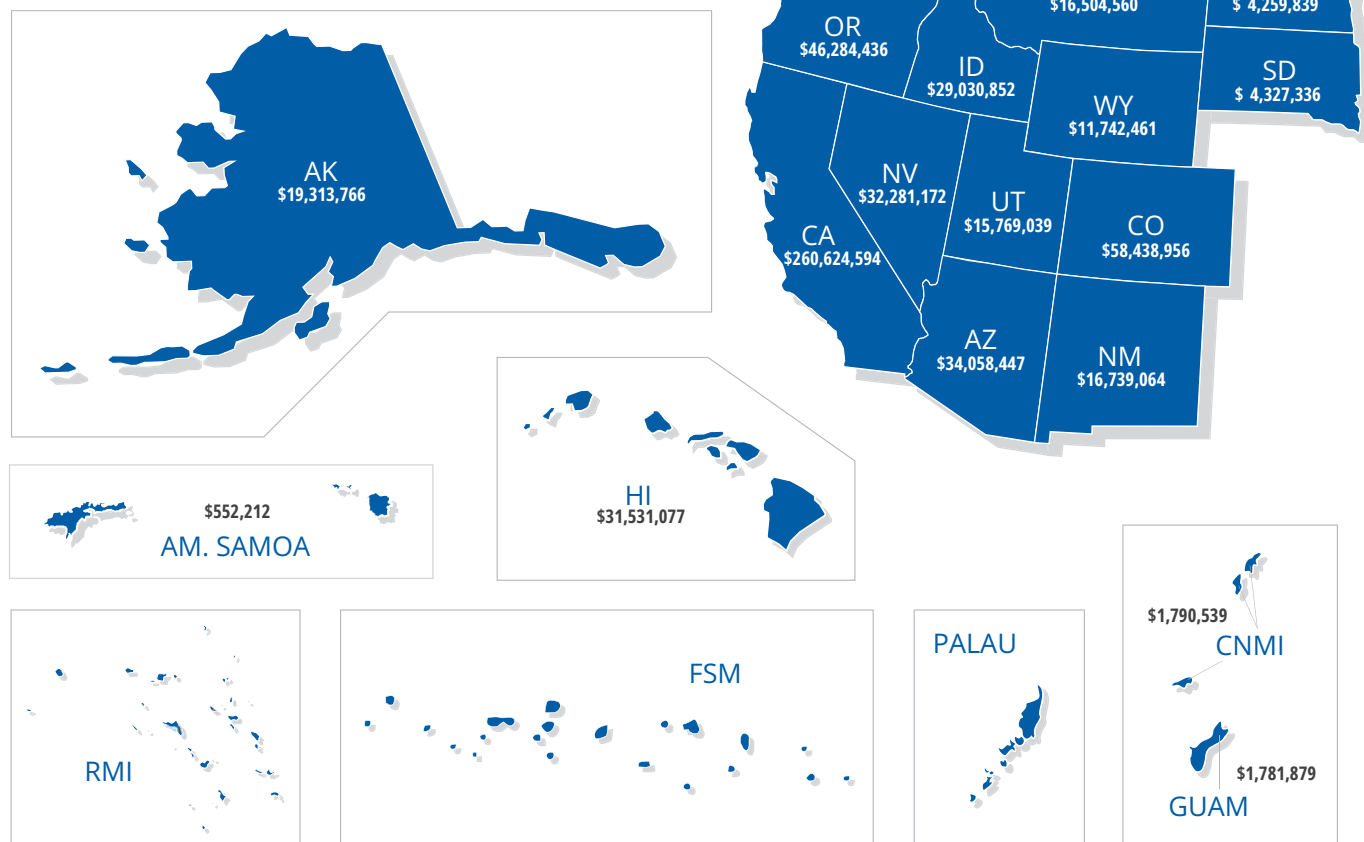
Data and Policy Resources Policymakers and campus leaders can explore WICHE's data and policy resources to better understand what's happening at home and across the West. These resources provide reliable state-level and regional insights to help make informed, strategic decisions that strengthen postsecondary 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.

Total Student Savings in the West

\$703,291,081 through WICHE's Student Access Programs AY 2025–26



WICHE Commission *October 2026*

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Aparna Dileep-
Nageswaran Palmer
VACANT

ARIZONA

Kathleen Goeppinger
Todd Haynie
Chad Sampson

CALIFORNIA

Ellen Junn
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COLORADO

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JB Holston
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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
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
In-State Professional Healthcare Program (Pilot Program for NV Residents Only)	A/F, A/S, W/S, V/A	Nevada only	General Fund/ Student Access Programs Approximately \$2500 per year	.004 7/26 – 6/31	Nevada Office of WICHE
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
Productivity, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge (PEAK): A Practical Approach to Technology Return on Investment	A/F, V/A	Western	Non-General Fund/Cost-savings Partnerships \$479,709	.65 7/26 – 6/28	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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 **In-State Professional Healthcare Pilot Program** in Nevada increases access to in-state professional healthcare education (in occupational and physical therapy) for Nevada residents while potentially reducing the cost of their education. Participating students will attend an approved program at either the University of Nevada Las Vegas or the University of Nevada Reno. Additionally, the program provides WICHE staff with an opportunity to assess intrastate access needs and evaluate the viability of this approach as a broader regional strategy. The Nevada pilot includes two cohorts, beginning in fiscal years 2028 and 2029, with student support spanning six overlapping academic years.

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.

Building on WICHE's Cost-savings Partnerships and Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success initiatives, **Productivity, Effectiveness, Adoption, and Knowledge (PEAK): A Practical Approach to Technology Return on Investment** would help institutions make more effective technology investments by identifying hidden costs, assessing impact, and improving decision-making across the procurement lifecycle. In partnership with institutions across the West and the National Association of College and University Business Officers, WICHE would develop and test a practical toolkit designed for broad use. This work would strengthen institutional capacity and support more strategic use of resources.

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.

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 PARD enables the PAR unit to provide more detailed and relevant information specific to each WICHE state and Pacific Island jurisdiction. Staff will work with agency and institutional staff from across the region to determine how this resource could be structured to be most beneficial.

Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West annually provides comprehensive data about the tuition and fee rates published by public higher education institutions in the WICHE region, including changes in tuition and fee rates over the past one-, five-, and 10-year periods. In addition to total tuition and fees, the report displays the average mandatory fees for each institution, state, and Pacific Island jurisdiction, over the past one, five, and 10 years, as well as what proportion of total tuition and fees they represent. WICHE also annually provides a second analysis examining the implications and state finance and financial aid trends.

The **WICHE Insights** series consists of periodic briefs 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 Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)** is a voluntary agreement among states designed to establish comparable standards for U.S. states, territories, and freely associated states regulating postsecondary distance education. SARA expands access to

postsecondary educational opportunities while ensuring meaningful consumer protections. WICHE coordinates and oversees the membership of SARA states in the West through the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA). WICHE collaborates with the other regional compacts and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) to provide national coverage and ensure consistency in the agreement's implementation.

Current Activities – Projects and Initiatives

*Continuing (or new) work supported by grants, contracts, or fees.
All work in this category is considered high priority.*

Focus: **A/F** Affordability & Finance **A/S** Access & Success **W/S** Workforce & Society **I** Innovation **V/A** Value & Accountability

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
Increasing Access, Affordability, and Equity Using OER: A National Consortium	A/F, A/S, I, V/A	U.S.	\$553,000	0.95 10/24 – 10/26	Hewlett Foundation, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB
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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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.

Postsecondary Professional Development for Policymakers: Oftentimes, policymakers – including members of state and institutional boards, legislators, and others – can be thrust into roles without a thorough grounding in the vast complexities of state, federal, and local policy that affect postsecondary education. Building on work developing content for the Legislative Advisory Committee, the PAR Unit will identify opportunities to share existing resources and potentially develop new approaches where gaps exist to support new policymakers.

Prison Education Programs: With new requirements and federal financial aid available for prison education programs, there are new opportunities for state policies and practices in this area. Effective programs in this area would likely produce high value to the state through reduced recidivism. The PAR unit will work to identify ways to support growing state efforts in this area through research and communities of practice.

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.

WCET

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 wctetMIX 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 wctetMIX 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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	U.S.	Funder TBD	0.25 3 years	External consultant and WCET members

Project	Focus	Priority	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	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
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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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
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

Project	Focus	Geo Scope	Funding	Staff FTE / Timeline	Partners
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 (AAAP) State Opioid/Tribal Opioid Response (SOR/TOR) Technical Assistance: The WICHE BHP is partnering with the AAAP 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 (TWV), 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 TWV program has been implemented in 38 rural communities, 32 of which have completed their three-year commitment to the program. The TWV 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
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

WICHE Commission

The WICHE Commission oversees the development of WICHE programs and ensures that the Western Regional Education Compact is carried out for the benefit of the residents of the West. WICHE's 48 Commissioners, who are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and U.S. Pacific territories and the presidents of the freely associated states, are leaders in higher education; they include state higher education executive officers, college and university presidents, legislators, business and community leaders, and other key partners. * Executive Committee member

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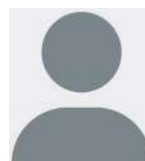
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Approved Future Commission Meeting Dates and Locations

Date	Location
May 3-4, 2027	Albuquerque, 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

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 Frankie Eliptico (U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States/CNMI), Vice Chair
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 Robert Shireman (CA)
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October 2026

WICHE Organization



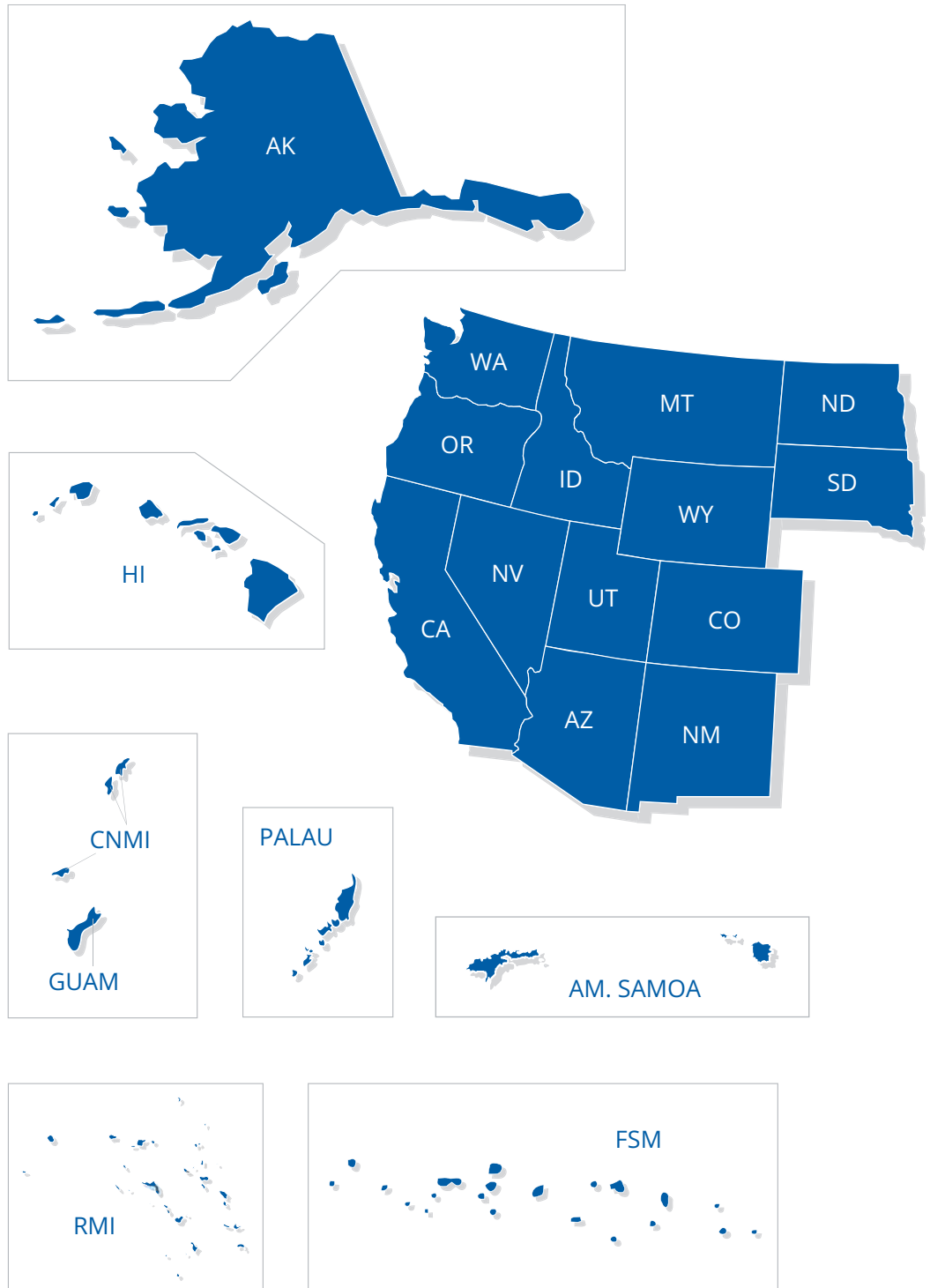
WICHE Region

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
 Mariana 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
BHAC	WICHE 's Behavioral Health Advisory Council	
BMGF	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	EDUCAUSE	educause.edu
ELE	Every Learner Everywhere	everylearnereverywhere.org
EPI	Educational Policy Institute	educationalpolicy.org
ETS	Educational Testing Service	ets.org
Excelencia	Excelencia in Education	edexcelencia.org
FORHP	Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (HRSA)	hrsa.gov/rural-health
FORUM	Western Academic Leadership Forum	wiche.edu/collaboration-leadership/western-academic-leadership-forum/
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Center	ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/federally-qualified-health-centers
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations	gdpr.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
NCCC	National Consortium for College Completion	
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics	nces.ed.gov
NCHEMS	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems	nchems.org
NCPR	National Center for Postsecondary Research	postsecondaryresearch.org
NCSL	National Conference of State Legislatures	ncsl.org

NEASC-CIHE	New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education	neasc.org
NEBHE	New England Board of Higher Education	nebhe.org
NGA	National Governors Association	nga.org
NIH	National Institutes of Health (HHS)	nih.gov
NILOA	National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment	learningoutcomeassessment.org
NIMH	National Institute of Mental Health (HHS-NIH)	nimh.nih.gov
NLA/SLA	New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability	newleadershipalliance.org
NPEC	National Postsecondary Education Cooperative	nces.ed.gov/npec
NPRM	Notice of Proposed Rule Making	fcc.gov/general/rulemaking-fcc
NPSAS	National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey	nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas
NRHA	National Rural Health Association	ruralhealthweb.org
NSC	National Student Clearinghouse	studentclearinghouse.org
NSSE	National Survey on Student Engagement	nsse.indiana.edu
NWCCU	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	www.nwccu.org
OCE	Online Course Exchange (WICHE)	wiche.edu/oce
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	www.oecd.org
OER	Open Educational Resources	wiche.edu/open-educational-resources-in-the-west-to-advance-college-affordability
OLC	Online Learning Consortium	onlinelearningconsortium.org
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment	oecd.org/pisa
PESC	Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council	pesc.org
PPIC	Public Policy Institute of California	ppic.org
PSEP	Professional Student Exchange Program	wiche.edu/psep
RMAIR	Rocky Mountain Association for Institutional Research	rmair.org
S-SARA	Southern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement	sreb.org/state-authorization-sara
SACSCOC	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges	sacscoc.org
SAN	State Authorization Network	wcetsan.wiche.edu
SBAC	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium	www.smarterbalanced.org
SCUP	Society for College and University Planning	scup.org
SFARN	Student Financial Aid Research Network	pellinstitute.org/sfarn.shtml
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association	sheeo.org
<i>SHEEO Offices in the West:</i>		
ABOR	Arizona Board of Regents	abor.asu.edu
ACPE	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education	acpe.alaska.gov/
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	wpscha.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 Westminster, Colorado, and for your continued leadership as Commissioners. Your expertise, perspectives, and collaboration help advance postsecondary education and workforce development across the West. There are no simple answers, but there is value in coming together to ask better questions, share what is working, and learn from one another. As we consider the choices ahead, our time together creates an opportunity to look at the changes shaping our region: from demographic and enrollment shifts, affordability and student success, economic and employer needs, and the distinct characteristics that define the West. Together, we can consider how our states and institutions are responding, where challenges remain, and where regional collaboration can make a difference.

See you in May 2027, when we meet again in Albuquerque, New Mexico!

– Demi Michelau, WICHE President