



NewsCap

A bimonthly newsletter from the leading regional agency serving higher education throughout and beyond the American West



DACA, free speech, campus mental health were key topics at WICHE Nov. meeting

Though WICHE's Fall Commission Meeting occurred in a Denver hotel, it never strayed far from the topic of higher education—or its delivery. Four feet behind the rear wall of the meeting's SpringHill Suites Denver conference space was a Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU) classroom wing housing its [academic hospitality program](#), integrated with the hotel in order to foster student/industry interaction.

MSU Denver President [Janine Davidson](#) gave attendees a warm welcome, then moderated a panel on the higher education implications of proposed changes to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. "Those in higher education leadership must recast the DACA issue as one of education and workforce for our country," advised panelist and legal advocate Thomas Saenz. "You all know [these undocumented students] are going to fill the workforce needs of our country."

An address by noted scholar and Colorado state historian [Patricia Limerick](#) explored the lineage and contexts in which college campuses recall and honor controversial personalities and historical events. "You could hypothesize that putting historic figures on high pedestals, and turning them into metal, is the best way to kill interest in them," Limerick said. "Curiosity just withers."

Dennis Mohatt, WICHE vice president of behavioral health, and Charles Smith, SAMHSA regional administrator, drew attention to campus mental health issues. Mohatt reinforced to attendees, "The age of onset for most serious mental illnesses exactly coincides with the age range that is our primary target for higher education. That's when these things emerge. And they emerge when they are on campus."

Amid the business proceedings from the 48-member commission's biannual meeting, attendees also toured MSU highlights including its new aerospace engineering sciences building and the historic venue that hosts [MSU's brewing sciences program](#) (yup... that would be a pub).

[Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper](#) visited on the meeting's final day to tout Colorado's innovations in cybersecurity education and workforce development, rap a few stanzas (really!) from the [hit musical *Hamilton*](#), and inspire commissioners to continue collaborating to bolster the West's regional strengths. "You can build a legacy that can last decades beyond your service," Hickenlooper said.

[View WICHE's Flickr Album from the meeting.](#)

WICHE to launch two major initiatives thanks to Lumina Foundation support

Nearly \$1.4 million in grant awards from Indianapolis-based [Lumina Foundation](#) will enable two substantial WICHE projects to commence this month. A \$990,000 three-year grant will help WICHE's programs and services team develop a network of Native-Serving Institutions to help close attainment gaps for American Indians and Alaska Natives. And a \$400,000 two-year grant enables WICHE's policy and research team to establish a task force in partnership with selected Western states to develop broadly applicable evidence-based strategies to close postsecondary education attainment gaps.

In the coming months, we will illuminate more about these exciting WICHE initiatives.

Montana higher-ed chief elected to chair WICHE commission

We congratulate [Clayton Christian, who was elected chair](#) of WICHE's commission at its November meeting. Christian has been Montana's commissioner of higher education since 2012 and has chaired the state's board of regents. North Dakota State Sen. [Ray Holmberg](#) was elected to serve as WICHE's vice chair. Also, WICHE welcomes new commissioner [Chester "Chet" Burton](#), chief financial officer of the Nevada System of Higher Education and former president of Western Nevada College.

Reading room: Annual Report, Tuition and Fees, Legislative Update

WICHE's [2017 Annual Report](#) summarizes the breadth and depth of WICHE's work to increase access and affordability in higher education, nurture interstate collaboration, and promote sound public policy. New this year, it includes a summary of audited financial data for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017.

WICHE's annual [Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West: 2017-18](#), released Nov. 10, found that tuition/fees for resident undergraduates at Western public colleges and universities increased 4 to 4.3 percent last year. Though steeper than seen in immediate recent years, these increases are modest compared with those between 2007-08 and 2011-12. WICHE this year debuted a longitudinal view of undergraduate student fees: In six of 15 WICHE states, these fees jumped over 100 percent this past decade, but sharp fee cuts in California and South Dakota led to an aggregate fee decrease in the region.

[2017 Higher Ed Legislative Activity in the West: What You Need to Know](#), released Nov. 15, sheds light on key trends affecting higher education in Western state legislatures. Last session, higher education budgets in energy-dependent states continued to shrink, while those in other Western states grew robustly. High on legislative agendas were student-centric cost and value concerns, with an emphasis on "free-college" programs and credential attainment. And bills focused on data and governance were among ways legislators grappled with the productivity and effectiveness of public higher education.



wcet

Ed-tech leadership, innovation honored at WCET's annual meeting

One of the nation's predominant postsecondary education technology gatherings occurred Oct. 25-27 as the [WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies \(WCET\)](#) hosted its [29th annual meeting](#) in Denver. Kicking off with a thought-provoking presentation on sensory capabilities by Mike Hess, founder and executive director of the Blind Institute of Technology, WCET program sessions spanned over 50 topics ranging from game-based learning, to the lifespan of instructional technologies, to fostering greater support for women in STEM fields.

At the meeting, faculty members [Bucky Dodd](#) of the University of Central Oklahoma and [Peter P. Smith](#) of the University of Maryland University College were honored with two of WCET's primary annual awards for individual achievement: the Richard Jonsen Award and the Sally M. Johnstone Award, named after (respectively) a former WICHE executive director and WCET's founder. Check out our meeting recap on the [WCET Frontiers blog](#).



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WCET leads dialogue on controversial WGU federal audit

Speaking of [WCET Frontiers](#), this blog has been on the pulse of recent debate about the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General recommendation that the nonprofit online Western Governors University (WGU) be forced to pay back more than \$700 million in federal financial aid for failing to ensure "regular and substantive interaction" between faculty and students.

What constitutes "adequate" faculty-student interaction in distance and competency-based education? That was the focus of a Nov. 16 [WCET webcast](#) in which panelists discuss the government recommendation, WGU's response, and the implications for the growing field of competency-based education in which WGU is considered a major player.



Interstate Passport ramps up outreach

Interstate Passport, a WICHE-based program that facilitates seamless transfer of general education lower-division credits across state lines, [launched a new website](#) and a nationwide outreach campaign directed toward students, media outlets, and college and university leaders.



Mental Health VP named to treatment-provider advisory board

Dennis F. Mohatt, WICHE vice president for behavioral health, has been appointed to the national advisory committee for the [Mountain Plains Addiction Technology Transfer Center](#), which seeks to accelerate implementation of evidence-based practices in a recovery-oriented system of care.

You heard it from WICHE



"By graduating more first-generation and minority students ... you are helping to strengthen our democracy. That sounds big and lofty, but that's exactly what you are doing. Don't ever underestimate your role in being able to make that happen."

WICHE President Joe Garcia, addressing College Board senior leaders and early-career financial aid officers Oct. 16 in Denver

"In higher ed... everyone from the chancellor to the newest freshman has quite an array of personal technology devices that he or she brings with them every day. There has to be an actionable agenda on the part of the university to leverage these things for research, teaching and learning."

WCET Executive Director Mike Abbiatti in an Oct. 11 Inside Higher Ed story on Apple's new partnership with Ohio State University



On the road: Selected WICHE-led presentations

- WICHE President [Joe Garcia](#) at [Complete College America](#), Nov. 29-30 in New Orleans; and at the [National Conference of State Legislatures' cross-state consortium on occupational licensing](#), Dec. 4-6 in Tucson
- Pat Shea and Jane Sherman on the [Interstate Passport](#), at the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges](#), Dec. 2-5 in Dallas; and the [New England Board of Higher Education](#), Jan. 19 in Worcester, Mass.
- Sarah Leibrandt and Patrick Lane on the [Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange](#), Oct. 26 at the WCET Annual Meeting in Denver
- Demaree Michelau on changing demographics and how institutional leaders can respond, at the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#) meeting, Oct. 25 in San Diego; and on the role of states in postsecondary e-learning at [WCET's annual meeting](#)

Save these dates!

- April 18-20, 2018, for the annual meeting of the [Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders](#) in Seattle
- April 25-27, 2018, for the annual meeting of the [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#) in Vancouver, Wash.
- May 7-8, 2018, for the spring WICHE Commission meeting, in Bozeman, Mont.
- June 5-6, 2018, for the WCET Leadership Summit, in Newport Beach, Calif.

WICHE's leadership

Joseph A. Garcia, president
Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET
John Lopez, special assistant to the president and chief administrative officer, and director, W-SARA

Demarée Michelau, vice president, Policy Analysis and Research
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Dennis Mohatt, vice president, Behavioral Health
Jeremy Simon, director of strategic communications