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The bimonthly newsletter from WICHE serving  
Western states, students, and institutions for 66 years

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## Notes from the President

### What Does the Future Hold for Higher Education?

One of the best aspects of being the president of WICHE is having the opportunity to travel around the region and talk to people, hearing about their priorities, successes, concerns, and just generally what's on their mind. One thing that many people seem to be wondering is what does that future hold for higher education? Over the last couple of months, I've had the pleasure of listening to [Dr. Bryan Alexander](#) (twice), a futurist who digs deep into data to get glimpses into the answer to this question. Other folks come at this question from various perspectives, but time and time again, people keep trying to peek around the corner about what's to come. And there's a lot to see.

We know from WICHE's own data that demographics are shifting, and they will continue to do so. While there is anticipated growth in student populations in the West and in the South, the Midwest and the Northeast are already facing significant challenges as their student populations are declining. Technology is changing our classrooms in new and exciting ways through tools like adaptive learning, and WICHE is excited to be part of this transformation. Specifically, [WCET](#) serves as the intermediary for the [Every Learner Everywhere](#)



*Demarée Michelau*

[Network](#) that is working to strengthen digital learning in postsecondary institutions with a particular focus on improved outcomes for vulnerable populations. But technology also impacts how higher education does business. It helps us become more efficient and allows us to see high-level data trends we might not have otherwise seen. And, today we can even dial in on early indicators of whether a student is likely to succeed in a course so that we can intervene in appropriate ways.

And, our attitudes are evolving as well. While it seems that the public's attitudes may be drifting more toward a politicized view of higher education in ways we have not seen in recent memory, we are also seeing an expansion of how we recognize learning. Higher education is increasingly willing to recognize all types of learning, regardless of how it was obtained. With efforts like WICHE's [Interstate Passport®](#) Network, this new era of recognizing competency as opposed to seat time has great promise for increasing postsecondary attainment, addressing affordability, and reducing postsecondary attainment gaps. And importantly, it can change people's lives for the better by being a pathway to economic advancement.

So, while we certainly have our challenges ahead of us in higher education, as we peek around the corner about what the future holds, I am hopeful that higher education will be proactive, and not reactive, lead and not be led, and learn our history so that we can be smartly set our course for a successful future.

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## The future of higher education highlighted at Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting



WICHE's [Legislative Advisory Committee \(LAC\)](#) held its annual meeting in Portland, Ore., on Sept. 12-13. Discussion focused on the future of higher education and how legislators and administrators can work together on the challenges that lie ahead.

Participants included lawmakers from around the region, some of which serve on the WICHE Commission. They heard from speakers on such topics as using data to shape policy, crafting sustainable infrastructure, and building effective partnerships between legislators and higher education leaders.

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## WICHE Behavioral Health Program initiatives showcased at national conference on rural mental health services

The 2019 annual conference of the [National Association for Rural Mental Health \(NARMH\)](#) gave WICHE's [Behavioral Health Program \(BHP\)](#) the opportunity to share with a



wider audience its growing expertise in management, data collection, and innovation in behavioral health service delivery systems. NARMH is the premier mental health association dedicated to the needs of America's rural and frontier citizens.

The gathering, held Aug. 26-29 in Santa Fe, N.M., offered clinicians, administrators, researchers, policymakers, and other attendees a variety of opportunities to share information and lessons learned, build networks, and hear the perspectives of rural residents and advocates. To capitalize on those opportunities, WICHE BHP held two of its annual Western-state stakeholder meetings, in conjunction with NARMH, at the conference.

In addition, WICHE BHP, as co-lead with the University of North Dakota of the new federally funded [Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center](#), partnered with three other regional tech transfer centers to offer several training sessions on augmenting the skills and capacity of the behavioral health workforce in rural areas.

A highlight of the conference was an evening reception featuring a flamenco performance – sponsored by WICHE BHP – of the Spanish Broom, an Albuquerque dance troupe.



*Dennis Mohatt, vice president, WICHE Behavioral Health and co-director, Mental Health Technology Transfer Center; and Rebecca Helfand, program director, WICHE Behavioral Health, presenting at the 2019 annual conference of the National Association for Rural Mental Health*

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## Nation's tribal colleges exploring shift from textbooks to open educational resources

Textbook costs of up to \$800 a semester are a burden for all college students, but can be a crippling obstacle to success for the 35,000 Native Americans enrolled in U.S. tribal colleges and universities (TCUs).

That issue was front and center at the [annual meeting of the nation's 37 TCUs](#), held July 28-Aug. 1 on the campus of Salish Kootenai Tribal College in Polson, Mont. In a plenary-session presentation, Tanya Spilovoy, director for open policy at the [WCET \(the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies\)](#), laid out the case for eliminating textbooks in favor of open educational resources (OER), which a growing number of TCUs are currently exploring.

OER comprises teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license. In



*Tanya Spilovoy, WCET director for open policy, and Carrie Billy, CEO of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium*

addition to cost savings for students, Spilovoy noted, the use of OER unlocks the potential to design courses and programs that reflect the rich cultural heritage of individual tribal communities. Her presentation included an overview of research suggesting that the use of OER yields positive academic outcomes, particularly for part-time and Pell-eligible students, as well as those traditionally poorly served by higher education.

Spilovoy leads WCET's [Z Initiative](#), which focuses on the policy, practice, and implementation of OER in states, systems, and higher education institutions.

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## Gates-funded Every Learner Everywhere network steadily gaining momentum

As part of its Postsecondary Success program strategy, the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) is supporting a set of solution networks to



drive innovation in three key areas: [Every Learner Everywhere](#) (digital learning), [Strong Start to Finish](#) (developmental education), and [NASPA's holistic student services network](#) (technology-enabled advising).

Every Learner, hosted within WCET, consists of 12 partner organizations committed to helping higher education institutions use adaptive learning technology to enhance teaching and learning and improve academic outcomes, particularly for low-income, first-generation students, and students of color. The network provides two- and four-year institutions with consulting, training, and resources to support the adoption and implementation of adaptive courseware.

The network spent several months earlier this year conducting site visits at its initial cohort of institutions and firming up plans for asset creation and continuous-improvement activities related to service delivery. In June, representatives from each network partner convened to discuss initial findings and to set strategic priorities for the remainder of the year.

Shortly after, the Gates Foundation brought together representatives from all three solution networks to discuss their shared commitment to a deeper understanding of equity in higher education, learnings from their experiences working in the field, and ways to improve coordination between them to maximize student impact and drive institutional transformation.

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## Comings and goings at WICHE

- WICHE extends a warm welcome to **Jasmine Leonas**, its new communications manager. She joins WICHE from the Chicago Botanic Garden, where she specialized in running the Garden's social media channels, working with journalists, and writing content for various publications and programs. Previously, Leonas worked at Northwestern University as an assistant director of marketing and communications for the Medill School's journalism programs. She also worked in Northwestern's University Relations office, coordinating public relations efforts. Prior to her work at Northwestern, Leonas spent four years as an online editor for various media organizations, including Tribune Interactive, the Miami Herald, and Scripps newspapers. A native of Miami, Fla., she holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Florida.
- The newest members of WICHE's Behavioral Health Program are **Ivory Tubbs**, technical expert lead on the Rural Communities Opioid Response Project, and **Genevieve Berry**, project coordinator for the Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.



*Jasmine Leonas*

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## WICHE-hosted meeting focuses on state authorization in the West



Representatives of 12 of the 13 Western states participating in the [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\)](#) met Aug. 13 in Westminster, Colo., to discuss key issues involved in the region's implementation of SARA, which makes the regulation of interstate postsecondary distance education more effective and efficient for students, institutions, and states. At the annual gathering of this group, the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee, members also heard from speakers on the impact of recent changes in federal policy and updates from the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) leadership.

Since its inception in 2014, more than 200 institutions in the WICHE region and more than 2,000 across the nation, have joined SARA. For information about W-SARA, contact Christina Sedney, WICHE's director of policy initiatives and state authorization.

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## WICHE/MHEC-sponsored programs offer savings on insurance coverage, technology purchases



Postsecondary institutions and systems in Western states can save time and money by taking advantage of several programs offered by WICHE in collaboration with the [Midwestern Higher Education Compact](#).

[MHECtech](#) enables colleges and universities to buy hardware, software, and IT services through MHEC's master contracts with vendors, which are negotiated following extensive RFP processes.

- [MHEC's Master Property Program](#) is a property insurance and risk management program that currently serves more than 160 campuses through the U.S. The program strives to secure coverage that meets the special needs of participating institutions, stabilize costs over time, and provide dividend returns when the Institutions' collective loss experience is favorable.
- [MHECare Student Insurance Solutions](#) gives campuses that offer students a school-sponsored health insurance plan the flexibility to provide comprehensive Affordable Care Act-compliant coverage by national carrier UnitedHealthcare StudentResources.
- [MHEC Cyber Insurance Program](#) provides institutions with the flexibility of insurance carrier choice, broad coverage, and access to limits that meet their particular needs. The program offers an analysis of the each institution's threat environment, an assessment of the vulnerabilities in security controls, and a determination of how much financial exposure the institution faces.

For information on how to participate in any of the MHEC programs, contact Jere Mock, WICHE vice president of programs and services, at 303-541-0222 or by [email](#).

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## Interstate Passport Network grows to 32 institutions across 14 states



The [Chicago School of Professional Psychology \(TCSP\)](#) is the newest member of the [Interstate Passport Network](#), a nationwide network of two- and four-year colleges and universities that provide students with a friction-free process for transferring lower-division general education credits as a block to any member institution.

TCSP is a private, nonprofit institution with more than 4,300 students online and at locations in Chicago, Dallas, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Diego, and Irvine, Calif. An innovator in the field of psychology and related behavioral sciences for 40 years, it offers bachelor's degrees in psychology and nursing.

"We are thrilled to partner with the Interstate Passport Network in support of student success," said Dr. Michele Nealon, president of TCSP. "Through this partnership, students are able to experience a seamless transfer credit process and maximize the number of credits earned previously, resulting in a shorter degree pathway to achieve their academic goals."



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## Western Academic Leadership Academy invites nominations for 2020 cohort

Feb. 15, 2020, is the deadline to nominate candidates for the next cohort of participants in the [Western Academic Leadership Academy](#), a yearlong professional development program for aspiring chief academic officers in the Western region. The Academy consists of a three-day seminar in Boulder, Colo., followed by webinars, mentoring, and other activities over the year with guidance from Academy faculty (all sitting or recently retired provosts) and guest experts on fundraising, budgeting, diversity, legislative relations, and other topics.

Western  
Academic  
Leadership  
Forum



The Academy was launched in 2014 to help expand the pipeline of deans and other leaders prepared to advance to a chief academic officer position. Candidates must hold a position of dean or higher at a [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#) member institution. Submit nomination materials to [Anna Galas](#), WICHE'S director of academic leadership initiatives.

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## Utah joins forces with WICHE to prepare rural psychologists

The behavioral health workforce in underserved areas of Utah got a boost this summer with the enrollment of the first cohort of students in the [Utah Psychology Internship Consortium](#), supported by WICHE's [Behavioral Health Program](#).



*UT-PIC Training Committee Supervisors and Interns on a hike*

A shortage of accredited internship slots for doctoral students in psychology is a significant problem nationally, and is most acute in the rural West. WICHE works with state agencies and other partners to develop opportunities for doctoral students to train, work, and ideally make their home in underserved areas. Current WICHE-partner psychology consortia in Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, and Oregon have seen more than half of these budding psychology professionals remain to serve residents in their states.

## Save the date!

- **Sept. 26:** [“Navigating the OPM \(Online Program Management\) Marketplace”](#), WCET webinar
- **Oct. 2:** [“Advising for Interstate Passport Success”](#), Interstate Passport webinar
- **Nov. 5-7:** [WCET 31st Annual Meeting](#), Denver, Colo.
- **Nov. 7-8:** WICHE Commission Fall Meeting, Denver, Colo.
- **March 25-27, 2020:** Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders Annual Meeting, Albuquerque, N.M.
- **April 22-24, 2020:** Western Academic Leadership Forum Annual Meeting, Juneau, Alaska

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## On the road: selected recent and upcoming WICHE-led presentations

- [WICHE Policy Analysis and Research](#) staff at a breakfast for WICHE-region higher education leaders at the [2019 SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference](#), Aug. 6 in Boston, Mass.
  - WICHE President Demi Michelau and futurist Bryan Alexander at a hearing of the [North Dakota Interim Higher Education Committee](#), Aug. 20 at Dickinson State University.
  - [Interstate Passport](#) staff at the [Arkansas Community Colleges’ annual conference](#), Oct. 13-15, in Little Rock, Ark.; at a meeting of the [Colorado Department of Higher Education’s General Education Council](#), Oct. 14 in Denver; and the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ annual meeting](#), Dec. 7-10, in Houston, Texas.
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