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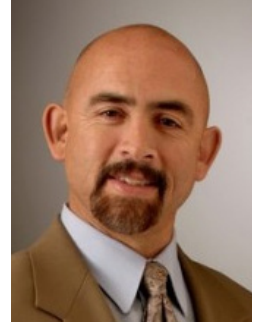
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A Message from WICHE Chair Joseph Garcia



These are interesting times for higher education. As Colorado's Lt. Governor and with the added role of executive director of the Department of Higher Education, I've watched Colorado struggle to find the capacity to adequately fund higher education. In the face of dwindling state support, we know we still need to produce more postsecondary graduates; and because we need to reach deeper into the low-income and minority communities to do so, controlling costs and keeping tuition affordable is critical. I know that Colorado is not alone, and that many other Western states have faced even tougher circumstances this last year. Along with challenging economic circumstances (and in some cases because of them), four issues have come to the forefront in the West, in addition to the key issue of productivity: performance funding; governance changes; accountability; and innovation.

When it comes to performance funding, the West is still in a developmental stage, although some states are already implementing remarkably innovative schemes. Washington has tied funding for its community colleges to their success with students at five levels of performance – from remedial to earned degree. Student achievement at these five "momentum points" is expected to lead to greater success overall. Other states are beginning to emulate this scheme, which Washington launched about two years ago. Arizona is planning to tie performance funding to equity and diversity, as is New Mexico, which has added another factor: workforce success. Here in Colorado, legislation passed this year decrees that 25 percent of institutional funding be performance-based by 2016 and that each institution sign a performance contract with the state commission, based on the goals set forth in the state's Higher Education Master Plan.

Several other states are overhauling their higher education governance structures to improve efficiency. Washington has decided to eliminate its Higher Education Coordinating Board by June 2012 and is engaged in a study researching alternatives. California eliminated the California Postsecondary Education Commission, while Oregon created a new coordinating commission for higher education, as well as an investment board for P-20.

The Oregon Investment Board is also an example of new accountability efforts taking place in the West. Oregon has given higher education institutions state enterprise status (as opposed to agency status), meaning they receive less oversight and more authority – but also have more responsibility for their results. Colorado has had a similar model in place for several years, and institutions now have greater control over their own tuition rates. Tuition revenues now make up a greater proportion of their overall operational budgets than they did even a few years ago.

Lastly, finding new ways to educate our students is leading to fresh innovations, particularly in the area of teaching and instructional delivery. The work on using technology to create hybrid courses and more personalized instruction being done by the National Center for Academic Transformation has influenced a number of Western states.

It is clear that the demands on our higher education systems and our institutions will continue to grow and that state funding levels will not keep pace. So let's hope the last year, challenging though it was for many states, yields more such innovations in the future.

A Message from WICHE President David A. Longanecker

If there's one quality that WICHE's home region, the West, is famous for, it's endurance in the face of crisis. And if there's another, it's the ability to find – and make – opportunities even in tough times. Over the last fiscal year, WICHE has done just that. Our organization has been highly successful in terms of developing new projects and securing funding for them from a variety of foundations and other organizations, including the Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and various federal and state contracts. In addition, we've received strong backing from our member states, all of whom have continued to support WICHE despite the rocky fiscal environment.

Our states have received excellent value for their support over the last year. We've worked directly with a number of them – including California, New Mexico, Oregon, and North Dakota – to help them find solutions to challenges in a number of areas, including higher education finance, performance-based funding, governance structures, and accountability. In addition, we've seen a record number of students participating in our Student Exchange Program: over 28,000 enrolled in our Western Undergraduate Exchange, Professional Student Exchange, and Western Regional Graduate Program last year.

Our research efforts were particularly strong in fiscal 2011. We advanced our work on the multistate longitudinal data exchange project and helped to launch another multistate initiative, the Predictive Analytics Reporting Framework project. We secured resources for a new project, the North American Network of Science Labs Online, and continued our efforts on the College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network. We wrapped up our work on the Non-traditional No More project – and thanks to the depth of experience we gained

through it, we were selected as the national administrator for the Adult College Completion Network. We launched a new partnership, the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, a companion to our four-year-college-focused Western Academic Leadership Forum. And our Mental Health Program initiated and worked on many projects in a wide range of areas last year, from behavioral health training to meet the needs of returning soldiers to rural mental health and mental health first aid.

Over the last fiscal year, the work of our commission – under the leadership of Chair Joseph Garcia, Vice Chair Bonnie Jean Beesley, and Past Chair Thomas Buchanan – has been a major assist in helping us shape the organization's agenda so we can achieve our goals in five focus areas: finance, access and success, workforce and society, technology and innovation, and accountability. In addition, the revitalized Legislative Advisory Committee has been a valuable, on-the-ground resource, highlighting critical higher education issues in the states. Lastly, despite our inability to improve their compensation again this year, our extremely committed staff has done exceptional work, keeping WICHE's many balls in the air, ensuring we make the most of every opportunity, and remaining the most enjoyable team with whom to work that you can imagine.



Programs and Services

The Programs and Services unit oversees WICHE's **Student Exchange Program** and other initiatives that help institutions and students save money and make good use of available resources, as well as programs that bring together the West's higher education leaders. The Student Exchange Program allows students to attend out-of-state institutions in the region at reduced costs and helps the West's higher education institutions to fill enrollment gaps, avoid unnecessary duplication of programs in the region, and better manage limited resources. Prospective professional students receive preferential admission for specialized programs and reduce their debt load after graduation, which makes it feasible for them to "serve the underserved" in rural and urban areas. Participating institutions and departments strengthen their recruiting efforts and are better able to diversify their enrollments with the "best and the brightest," who will become a part of the Western workforce after graduation. The Student Exchange Program includes the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Western Regional Graduate Program, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and our newest initiative, the WICHE Internet Course Exchange. This year WICHE staff collected testimonials from more than 200 **students, graduates, and administrators**, acknowledging the tremendous value of these programs.

The **Western Undergraduate Exchange** (WUE), founded in 1987, is the largest program of its kind in the nation. Students from all 15 WICHE states are eligible to participate, paying 150 percent of resident tuition at out-of-state schools. WUE enrolled 26,711 students in 147 public two- and four-year institutions in the West during the 2010-11 academic year, saving students and their families an estimated \$210.8 million. Colleges and universities can tailor their participation (including admission requirements and available programs of study) to their individual campus needs. Working with Western regional associations of high school counselors, WICHE is encouraging more institutions to join WUE: last year it welcomed California State University Monterey Bay and Colorado Northwestern Community College.

The **Western Regional Graduate Program** (WRGP) is an exceptional educational resource for the West, allowing master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral students

who are residents of the 15 participating states to enroll in high-quality programs at 47 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. WRGP is a tuition-reciprocity arrangement similar to WUE; students enroll directly in the participating programs and pay resident tuition. This represents a tremendous opportunity for WICHE states to share distinctive programs and the faculty who teach them and to build their workforce in a variety of disciplines, particularly healthcare. In academic year 2010-11, 681 graduate students saved an estimated \$7.2 million by enrolling through WRGP. Enrollment numbers for WRGP programs continue to increase, and a recent survey of WRGP cooperating programs shows that some 30 of them are now offered fully or partially online, the perfect solution for place-bound working adults who need to further their education for a change in career or professional advancement.

Thirty-nine new programs were welcomed into the WRGP network in spring 2011. The new programs broaden the academic options in several areas. WRGP now includes 72 healthcare-related programs: graduate nursing degrees, public health, mental health and psychology, audiology and speech pathology, biomedical informatics, and more. WRGP also offers a postprofessional doctorate in occupational therapy and a master's in dental hygiene to train future faculty members. Some of the newest graduate programs that will begin to enroll students through WRGP in fall 2011 include Dakota State University's master's in health informatics; South Dakota School of Mines and Technology's master's in robotics and intelligent autonomous systems; and Northern Arizona University's professional science master's in climate science and solutions.

The **Professional Student Exchange Program** (PSEP) broadens access in 10 professional healthcare fields to students in 12 WICHE states. In 2010-11 some 700 students were enrolled in programs in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic medicine, physician assistant, and pharmacy at more than 50 public and private institutions. This represented an investment of \$14.3 million across the WICHE region. Participating states determine the fields and the numbers of students they will support.

The **WICHE Internet Course Exchange** (WICHE ICE) is a robust administrative tool designed to support collaboration among institutions offering online courses. Through ICE participating institutions expand their students' access to high-quality online courses and programs taught by other member institutions. Seamlessly, students enroll, obtain advising, and use financial aid from their home campus, which transcripts the course. During this fiscal year, there were 10 institutional members and four consortia members for an overall impact on more than 30 institutions. Both two- and four-year institutions may participate as enrolling institutions, teaching institutions, or both.

During this fiscal year, ICE focused on supporting and building new collaborative initiatives. One of its major efforts was the **North American Network of Science Labs Online** (NANSLO) project, a new, 15-month project funded for \$749,994 by a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant to develop robust introductory online courses in biology, chemistry, and physics with remote, web-based lab experiments. WICHE serves as NANSLO's coordinating partner and fiscal agent, partnering with BCcampus, a consortium of 25 postsecondary institutions located in British Columbia, and the Colorado Community College System. The project builds on the success of open educational science courseware and the Remote Web-based Science Laboratory (RWSL) developed by BCcampus. NANSLO provides a technological solution that will address many of the barriers that prevent low-income, first-generation college students who are at risk of failing from completing their degrees or pursuing science-based careers due to challenges such as work and family obligations or living in rural areas that limit their access to traditional classes. The Colorado School of Mines, Great Falls College of Technology, Laramie County Community College, Montana State University, and the University of Wyoming join the consortium as members of the advisory board and discipline panels, as well as potential NANSLO sites for expansion.

In addition, several ICE members participated in the Western Consortium for Rural Social Work Education to exchange graduate courses in frontier social work last year. ICE also continued to provide the administrative infrastructure to support the Nurse Education Exchange (NEXus), which exchanges doctoral courses in nursing

across multiple institutions. Finally, ICE began exploring a pilot partnership with the Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities, whereby six member institutions (three in ICE and three in the consortium) can exchange courses during a one-year trial period across the two consortia. Pending a signed letter of agreement, the pilot will begin in fall 2011.

Several other initiatives explore other ways for Western states and institutions to share resources. The **Western Academic Leadership Forum** (the Forum) addresses regional higher education issues and engages in resource sharing. Its members are public and private doctoral and master's institutions and university system offices and state governing boards in the WICHE states. The theme of its 2011 annual meeting, cohosted by Colorado State University in Fort Collins, was "The Politics of Student Success: Meeting the Challenges, from Readiness to Completion." Speakers from the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the Educational Policy Improvement Center, Lumina Foundation, Complete College America, the National Governors Association, and others provided updates on the assessments in development for Common Core State Standards; discussed approaches to the higher education completion agenda; and examined the benefits of different performance-based funding programs. In addition, Forum members reviewed the new Academic Leaders Toolkit, a web-based repository of decision-making tools to assist them in their leadership roles.

The **Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders** (the Alliance), whose members are academic leaders for two-year institutions and related system and state agencies, was officially established in July 2010. Alliance members are committed to sharing resources and expertise with their colleagues across the region. During this fiscal year, they generated several ideas for regional projects that address common issues beyond the scope of a single institution, system, or state. The Interstate Passport Initiative, envisioned as a series of projects addressing transfer and articulation issues, is one of them. A grant proposal for \$550,000 was submitted to the Carnegie Corporation to fund a pilot project to establish a new framework for regional transfer and articulation based on student learning

outcomes. The project will work with two- and four-year institutions in five WICHE states, pending a funding decision in September. Also, three members of the Alliance are partners in the NANSLO project, described above. In addition, Alliance members helped develop a \$45 million proposal submitted by Colorado's Pueblo Community College to the U.S. Department of Labor for their Trade Adjustment Act competition. The project, pending a decision in September, will create the Western Alliance for Healthcare Education: a collaborative effort across eight WICHE states to develop and share online courses in allied health and nursing and to create a regional, web-based hub to share student support and career-planning services for students in these fields.

WICHE is a partner in the second phase of **GOALS** (Gaining Online Accessible Learning through Self-Study), a project centering on the development, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and processes related to web accessibility for use by institutions and accrediting bodies. Supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, GOALS II is in the first year of its three-year grant. Accomplishments to date include drafting new language regarding web accessibility, to be considered by the policymaking boards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions.

Other initiatives focused on cost savings for institutions. To help institutions conserve precious fiscal resources, WICHE offers participation in the **Master Property Program** (MPP) to colleges and universities in the West. The program, launched and directed by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), is available to two- and four-year public and private institutions and systems of higher education (subject to approval by the MPP leadership committee). Members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to higher education needs while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. The base program rates are typically below industry averages, which helps members to reduce their insurance costs. Members also have the opportunity to earn annual dividends, based on the consortium's comprehensive loss ratios.

The 49 member MPP institutions (with over 100 campuses) have total insured values of nearly \$79 billion.

Members from the WICHE, MHEC, and New England Board of Higher Education regions have achieved savings of over \$69 million in premiums and dividends. The program is underwritten by Lexington AIG and is jointly administered by Marsh, Inc., and Captive Resources, Inc., under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the insured institutions. Seven institutions and two systems in the WICHE region are members: Colorado College; Lewis and Clark College (OR); Nevada System of Higher Education (including the Community College of Southern Nevada, Desert Research Institute, Great Basin College, Nevada State College at Henderson, Truckee Meadows Community College, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University of Nevada, Reno, and Western Nevada Community College), Pima County Community College system (AZ, with six campuses and four learning and education centers), Reed College (OR), Seattle Pacific University, Westminster College (UT), Willamette University (OR), and our newest member, the University of Wyoming.

WICHE also partners with the MHEC on several group-purchasing arrangements to help colleges and universities in the West contain or reduce their administrative costs. WICHE-region institutions are eligible to purchase computers under MHECtech contracts with Dell, Fujitsu, Oracle (Sun), Systemax Computers (also known as Global, GovED and CompUSA), as well as Dell and Xerox printers and peripherals and Juniper Networks' data networking. Several of the purchasing agreements are also available to K12 organizations; local, county, and state governments; and nonprofit organizations. The agreements aggregate volume purchases to lower product costs and reduce the time institutions must spend developing and conducting bids themselves. MHEC undertakes the time and expense of the RFP process, and institutions can purchase the goods or services knowing that the due diligence in selecting the vendor has already been done. For more details on vendors, contracts, and eligible entities, visit [WICHE's cost-saving purchasing options FAQ](#).

Policy Analysis and Research

In fiscal year 2011, the Policy unit achieved a number of important milestones. Staff surveyed the education and policy communities to better understand how several of

the unit's data resources are being used and how they could be improved. The findings led to an update of annual *Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West*. Policy added enrollment-based average prices, which allow users to have a better sense of the typical prices faced by resident and nonresident students, and reduced duplication in the presentation of the data, as well as making data available online for download. Findings are summarized in a *Policy Insights* brief, "*Tuition and Fees in the West 2010-2011*." The survey is also informing a discussion about how to modernize *The Regional Factbook for Higher Education in the West*, a discussion which is capitalizing on our strong partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), which has a well-respected online data repository. In addition, the unit updated its annual *Benchmarks* report, which tracks the extent to which the Western states are enabling students to access and succeed in higher education – and afford it.

Another annual activity is the *Legislative Advisory Committee* (LAC) meeting, which the Policy unit hosted in Denver on October 5-6, 2010. The LAC is composed of legislators from each of WICHE's member states who assemble to advise the WICHE Commission about significant legislative issues related to higher education; provide input on WICHE initiatives; and contribute to WICHE's efforts to engage the appropriate communities in policy forums and other events we host. In return, the Policy unit's staff help inform and broaden LAC members' awareness and understanding about emerging policy issues in the West and nationally. This year's meeting addressed the college completion agenda and the role of adult learners in meeting the national educational attainment goals; the important effort to develop a common set of standards for college and career readiness; outcomes-based performance funding initiatives; and articulation and transfer.

The Policy unit made significant progress on its grant-funded projects. The end of the fiscal year coincided with the closing of the first year of WICHE's Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded project to facilitate the development of a *pilot multistate longitudinal data exchange*. This attempt to stitch together data spanning K12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce information in four initial states led to

three meetings over the course of the year. The first year could be characterized as a success, in terms of building commitment and developing partnerships. As the year wound down, the project was closing in on a consensus draft memorandum of understanding among the partnering agencies in each state.

The Policy unit has also performed a comprehensive analysis of data from the Nevada System of Higher Education, as part of a partnership with the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California that is funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation. This effort relies on unit-record data to examine *pathways through critical milestones* faced by Nevada students and how the pathways differ by race/ethnicity. These findings are being used to raise awareness of issues of equity that contribute to gaps in completion and success for underrepresented populations. WICHE's analysis has helped promote equity issues in a state where the prevailing budget conditions are especially dire, encouraging decision makers to look at the issue broadly, rather than focusing narrowly on triage-based policy approaches that could lead to greater gaps in success.

One of WICHE's signature reports, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity*, was last published in 2008, and the Policy unit continues to be invited to make presentations on the results of that analysis. In the past year, the unit also began a long-awaited review of the methodological approach employed for over 30 years to produce those projections, a review that will also consider fresh ways to examine the data for the benefit of the large and diverse audience that relies on *Knocking*. A first draft of a white paper and plans for twin review panels – one technical in nature and one (or more) representative of the user community – will help advise the unit on how to modernize, enhance, and improve the report.

WICHE's work in the area of adult learners continued to expand and evolve. Staff continued its efforts related to *Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners*, a comprehensive effort to stimulate and guide policy and practice changes to create a more navigable path to degree attainment for "ready adults" – those who are just shy of having enough credits to obtain a degree but have not yet returned to college. Funded by

Lumina Foundation, Non-traditional No More focuses on removing barriers related to data, academic affairs, financial aid and financing, student support services, and communications. Having met the grant obligations with some project funds remaining, WICHE was granted a no-cost extension by Lumina Foundation to continue working on these important issues. As part of this extension, staff had the opportunity to extend services beyond the five original states that were part of the grant (Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Jersey, and South Dakota) to include North Dakota and its major effort to target these potential students. The majority of the work in North Dakota was completed in FY 2011, but the final meeting and the conclusion of the deliverables will happen in FY 2012.

As part of Non-traditional No More, WICHE released a report that highlights how states and institutions can help adults returning to higher education navigate the process through the use of “ready adult” or “re-entry” concierges on college campuses. **“Bringing Adults Back to College: Designing and Implementing a Statewide Concierge Model”** describes the barriers facing ready adults, including financial concerns, the complexity of the enrollment process, and transcript issues. It details how a “concierge model” developed and implemented by the Nevada System of Higher Education addresses these barriers and serves as a blueprint for other states. Specific recommendations include conducting “secret shopper” activities at institutions to determine what kind of support is available for returning adults; developing internal communication efforts to ensure everyone at an institution is aware of the concierge; tracking and analyzing data that monitors the progress of ready adults; and convening meetings for both concierges and key decision makers at each institution in the state.

As part of a new nationwide effort, Lumina Foundation awarded WICHE a four-year grant to develop the **Adult College Completion Network**, in support of the foundation’s adult degree completion strategy. The network is made up of regional organizations, state agencies, city programs, nonprofit organizations, and others working to help those adults who have earned a significant number of college credits but left postsecondary education before finishing to return to complete their degrees. Launched in January 2011, the network serves as a mechanism for effective networking,

communication, and dissemination of information about successful adult degree completion strategies. Project elements include an interactive website; webinars to highlight effective strategies for serving adults; reports on lessons learned; a repository of higher education policies related to adult learners; a listserv to expedite network communications; network meetings and presentations at regional and national meetings; and the use of social and communications media to engage grantees and other stakeholders in relevant discussions.

Policy unit staff has contributed to important initiatives underway nationally and in member states. WICHE staff worked with the National Governors Association (NGA) to write and compile briefing papers that are being disseminated to new governors as part of NGA’s **College Completion and Productivity Agenda**.

WICHE’s contribution was a brief titled “Crossing the Finish Line: Helping Adults with Significant College Credit Get Back on Track to a College Degree.” The unit also participated in the National Postsecondary Education Collaborative, which advises the National Center for Education Statistics staff responsible for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System; made presentations to a subcommittee working on Colorado’s statewide longitudinal data system project; and submitted a report on data governance to the State of Hawaii. In addition the Policy unit collaborated with the **Pathways to College Network**, an alliance of national organizations that advances college opportunity for underserved students by raising public awareness, supporting innovative research, and promoting evidence-based policies and practices across the K12 and higher education sectors. Pathways uses research-based knowledge to improve postsecondary education access and success for the nation’s underserved students. In FY 2011 WICHE staff served on the Pathways to College Postsecondary Standards and Assessments Working Group, which helped plan a Lumina Foundation-funded meeting on postsecondary education learning outcomes last spring; WICHE and WCET staff jointly facilitated a session at this meeting on articulation and transfer issues.

Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems, a joint project of WICHE, WCET, and Hezel Associates, with funding from Lumina Foundation, sought to develop a deeper understanding of how states

coordinate their articulation and transfer policies and practices for students who move from two- to four-year institutions. Two major publications were produced as part of this project: [“Promising Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems”](#) and [“Higher Education Web Portals: Serving State and Student Transfer Needs.”](#) Drawing from surveys and interviews with individuals from all 50 states, the former provides an inventory and summary of state-level strategies for addressing postsecondary articulation and transfer. The latter examines how states use web portals in the articulation and transfer process (and complemented work on college access web portals by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)). WICHE disseminated the research’s key findings at a national meeting held jointly with SREB and Lumina Foundation, designed to inform the direction of future policy, practice, and research related to student information web portals.

For the past three years, the Policy unit has managed the [College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network](#) to assist the Western states with program implementation and administration related to the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG), a federal program that fosters partnerships among national, state, and local governments and philanthropic organizations through matching grants aimed at increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Through the CACG Consortium, WICHE worked closely with state leaders in Alaska, Idaho, and Wyoming to successfully implement their CACG programs. Simultaneously, the CACG Network, composed of the three consortium states plus Nevada, Texas, Utah, and Washington, provides a forum in which staff involved in developing, implementing, and maintaining state CACG efforts can discuss issues related to the administration of their programs. Through this network state leaders and policymakers share promising practices, lessons learned, common challenges, and the latest research. Over the course of the past year, WICHE held two CACG Network meetings and produced a *Western Policy Exchanges* publication titled [“The College Access Challenge Grant \(CACG\) Program \(2011\),”](#) which describes promising practices and lessons learned in Alaska, Nevada, North Dakota, and Washington during the second year of the program. The consortium and network continue to

grow each year and have become important and useful resources for the Western region.

In FY 2011 Policy continued to update the [State Policy Inventory Database Online \(SPIDO\)](#), the nation’s only online searchable database of higher education policies, and its companion resource, WICHE’s [Policy Publications Clearinghouse](#), a searchable database of policy publications. SPIDO and the clearinghouse are intended to provide current and accurate policy information to state and national policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, and education consumers with an inventory of state-level policies and resources in key policy areas related to student access and success in higher education.

While not originally included in the fiscal year 2011 workplan, WICHE had an opportunity to engage in some very important work related to the Common Core State Standards, an unprecedented state-led movement toward common academic standards in K12 education. In November 2010, with funding from Carnegie Corporation of New York, WICHE, in partnership with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), hosted a meeting titled “What the Common Core State Standards Mean to Higher Education in the West.” The meeting was intended to broaden awareness among higher education leaders about the Common Core State Standards and the role of higher education in their development and implementation, as well as to engage postsecondary leaders in a productive discussion about implications. In April 2011 WICHE again collaborated with ACE and SHEEO to convene a special workshop on the Common Core State Standards. This second meeting was part of the annual meeting of the Western Academic Leadership Forum (described above). The discussions at these two meetings informed a policy brief titled [“The Common Core State Standards: Implications for Higher Education in the West,”](#) which summarizes the history of the standards, assesses the initiative’s progress, and highlights the challenges and implications of its adoption and implementation for Western higher education policymakers, policy shapers, and institutional representatives.

WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies

The WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) is a cooperative organization of colleges and universities, higher education agencies and organizations, and companies that share a passion for improving the quality and reach of e-learning, distance learning, and online learning programs. WCET's mission is to accelerate the adoption of effective practices and policies, advancing excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education.

WCET directs an array of services and programs that promote our "connect, learn, and advance" agenda. We offer members unparalleled access to connect with colleagues, peers, common interest groups, experts, and decision makers. We are the channel for trusted advice on policies and practices that support our members' individual goals. We help our members learn about emerging trends and understand important issues. We provide examples of successful adoption of learning technology innovation to improve our members' practice. Collectively, we work to accelerate the effective adoption and use of technology for teaching and learning.

Fiscal year 2011 was a transition year for WCET. In August WCET changed its name to the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies and launched a redesigned website that focuses on the "connect, learn, and advance" agenda, greatly improving the usability of the site. *Frontiers*, WCET's new blog, was also launched and is now followed throughout the higher education community; it has been referenced by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other national news outlets.

WCET experienced one of its best years in FY 2011 in terms of the growth and diversity of its member institutions and organizations. WCET's membership base is critical to sustaining the organization's programmatic priorities and community-driven special projects, as well as a source of revenue. The WCET Executive Council adopted a new dues structure aimed at generating increased revenues and simplifying administration processes. WCET launched a campaign to recruit institutions and other organizations that can contribute to specific educational technology projects and to

more general information sharing related to emerging technologies, student achievement, policy and advocacy, and the management of e-learning. In addition, WICHE IT and WCET began the deployment of a new customer relationship management software application called Salesforce, which will support improved client communications and more streamlined business processes for billing and reporting.

In October 2010 the U.S. Department of Education released new "program integrity" regulations for financial aid. The federal regulations cover a wide range of issues, including gainful employment, incentive compensation, and credit-hour definition. Institutions were required to demonstrate that they are in compliance with state requirements applicable to distance learning in any state in which they enroll students. These regulations have the potential to touch thousands of institutions who offer online and instructional programs at a distance and in multiple states. WCET took a leadership role in interpreting the regulations and providing advice on how institutions might address this issue.

"State Approval Regulations for Distance Education: A Starter List" was published by WCET in January 2011 and updated in March. The starter list was developed as a partnership venture with the SREB, the University of Wyoming, and the American Distance Education Consortium. It provides institutions with a one-of-a-kind resource to assist institutions in finding and complying with state regulations governing out-of-state educational providers.

WCET contributed to related planning efforts by SHEEO and NCHEMS to create an ongoing list of state regulatory agencies and their regulations. WCET has also worked with the Presidents' Forum of Excelsior College and SREB to develop reciprocal arrangements and other strategies to minimize institutional costs for compliance and to safeguard students against reduced access to online educational programs.

WCET launched the **State Authorization Network (SAN)**, an advisement service originally intended to help systems and consortia assist their member institutions in understanding and complying with state regulations. Several individual institutions also decided to join SAN. Interest in SAN led to the addition of several new WCET

memberships from institutions and organizations across the country. SAN members participated in a two-day seminar on April 6-7 in Boulder and have continued to benefit from periodic webcast and email updates and phone conferences.

WCET continues to play a national leadership role on the federal policy and advocacy front. It has reestablished its reputation as a trusted source of timely and critical information. Through the *Frontiers* blog, webcast programs, and members-only email communications, WCET has kept its membership and the e-learning community well informed of new and ongoing developments related to U.S. Department of Education regulations and their impact on colleges and universities.

WCET is leading a multi-institutional effort, the **Predictive Analytics Reporting Framework** project, to federate and aggregate independent data sets and to apply descriptive, inferential, and predictive analytical tests to these data to identify variables that affect student loss and momentum. In May 2011 WICHE was awarded a \$1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for an initiative to unify student data and demonstrate effective use of “big data” predictive analytic methods on a multi-institutional pooled data set, in order to better anticipate points of loss and momentum of students while they pursue a college degree in an online program of study. The goal is to identify variables that influence student retention and progression and guide decision making that improves postsecondary student completion in the U.S.

The Predictive Analytics Reporting (PAR) Framework project will aggregate data representing more than 700,000 student records from across six WCET member institutions. These forward-thinking WCET members represent a mix of public and proprietary institutions, all with significant student enrollments in online programs. They include the American Public University System, the Colorado Community College System, Rio Salado College, the University of Hawaii System, the University of Illinois Springfield, and the University of Phoenix. Each participating institution has been exploring or implementing descriptive, inferential, or predictive analytics projects on their own student data. The PAR Framework expands on this work through exploration of

patterns that can be derived when the six institutional data sets are considered as a single, unified sample.

The project underway is a six-month proof-of-concept initiative, scheduled for completion by December 31, 2011. The results of this project will inform expanded applications for pooled data and identify new opportunities for the participating institutions, for WCET, and for WCET member institutions for whom improving student outcomes is a top priority.

WCET and the Campus Computing Project partnered to conduct the **Managing Online Education 2011 Survey**, which provides data on the instructional, operational, and technology infrastructure of online programs in higher education. Survey data are based on the responses from campus officials at two- and four-year public and private U.S. colleges and universities. WCET’s executive director coauthored an article, “**Online Education: Where Is It Going? What Should Boards Know?**” in *Trusteeship* magazine and also presented at several national higher education conferences about WCET’s research and programmatic activities.

WCET coordinates the **Transparency by Design** project, which powers the **College Choices for Adults** website. During fiscal year 2011, the project did a complete redesign of the website, adding a side-by-side comparison function and social media aspects. The project also developed a new metric, learner progress, which is an enhanced measure of learner retention and completion. These data are currently being collected from institutions and will be published in early 2012.

WCET’s successful **webcast series** has featured updates on news and developments that are important to our members. WCET renegotiated the WICHE-wide license for use of the web-conferencing service, Elluminate. Several member-led **common interest groups** (CIGs) have continued their work to produce resources, such as good practices in e-learning, webcast programs, and conference sessions. The CIGs strengthen the engagement of WCET’s diverse membership and produce resources that benefit all. Current CIGs focus on student retention in online learning, academic integrity and student authentication, e-learning consortia, faculty policies and practices, and ownership of learning management systems. WCET’s November 2010 **annual conference** in La Jolla, CA, received high praise from

participants for the relevant program content and valuable professional networking it offered attendees.

Technology & Innovation

Another tech-related program is the WICHE Technology and Innovation initiative. **Access to broadband networks** remains the priority focus of this initiative. Implementation of the federal stimulus funds to extend broadband connectivity to unserved and underserved communities continued as its main work.

Louis Fox, who leads the Technology and Innovation initiative, continued to serve as an advocate with state and national government entities and a facilitator among the leading advanced research and education networking organizations during fiscal 2011. The Technology & Innovation initiative took a leading role in the **Northern Tier Networking Consortium**, rewriting its charter and continuing to focus on extended networks and network services to the Western states between the Pacific and the Midwest.

The Technology & Innovation initiative also partnered with WICHE's Mental Health unit to begin **behavioral health and information technology** projects in Alaska and South Dakota.

Through its involvement in national, regional, and state-level networking initiatives, the Technology & Innovation initiative is well-positioned as a broker and facilitator as states, institutions, and communities consider how to get engaged in new broadband efforts. WICHE's conversations with the Western Governors' Association and many national higher education and research organizations (such as Internet2, National LambdaRail, the Community Computing Research Association, EDUCAUSE, The Quilt, StateNets, National Science Foundation, EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation, and the Southeastern Universities Research Association) continue to elevate the organization to a leadership role in helping the higher education community shape its regional and national broadband agenda.

Mental Health Program

Despite difficult economic times in our country, the past year has been exceptionally busy for the Mental Health Program (MHP), with projects supporting solutions across the WICHE West and beyond. Mental Health's

mission is to ensure that a high-quality mental health workforce is available to support good care to citizens of the West. The program is recognized as a leader in rural mental health policy and research. Program staff provides technical assistance, conducts research, and supports effective public planning. MHP staff are routinely invited to participate in federal and state planning and advising activities and serve as speakers at conferences across the nation. The MHP maintains a core staff and contracts out with external experts to augment project teams.

The MHP is a subcontractor in the workforce development component of the newly funded **Center for Integrated Health Solutions** (CIHS) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/ Health Resources and Services Administration. This national technical assistance center is jointly funded by two agencies of the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The CIHS focuses upon supporting the integration of behavioral health and primary health care. While the initial technical assistance is centered upon HHS grantees embarking upon this integration effort in community health centers and community mental health centers around the nation, additional assistance is being offered to the field in general. WICHE leads an array of activities to support the efforts of the center. The primary contractor for this effort is the National Council of Community Behavioral Health Organizations, in partnership with a cadre of other organizations and individual consultants.

The MHP is currently finalizing the last year of a project funded by the National Institute of Mental Health to test the impact of a **mental health literacy program** with college students. The MHP recruited 32 campuses for the second and final year of this study.

Another MHP focus is **mental health first aid** (MHFA), a 12-hour training course designed to give members of the public important skills to help those who show signs of developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The MHP is in its first year of a grant from the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command's Telemedicine & Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC). The TATRC study focuses on adapting mental health first aid to military populations and testing it in communities surrounding Kansas Army

National Guard Armory sites. In addition, the program has five certified MHFA instructors, who are available to provide training in interested communities. The MHP has been working in collaboration with several partners in Colorado to develop a plan to roll out MHFA throughout the state.

The MHP completed a contract with the **Citizen Soldier Support Program**, a Congressional demonstration project designed to expand training for health and behavioral health providers to better meet the needs of returning service members. The MHP organized trainings in numerous states in the WICHE West and for hundreds of providers.

MHP staff developed a training to accompany the **Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Rural Primary Care Providers**. The unit is disseminating the toolkit and the training to rural primary care practice settings across the West.

MHP is involved in a wide range of **state-based initiatives**. Alaska contracted with the MHP to provide coordination and development of an accredited clinical psychology internship consortium; to support the Outcomes Identification and System Performance Project; and to facilitate a project to identify and create assessment tools for direct care workers and their supervisors based on the Alaskan Core Competencies that were developed in a previous phase of work. In addition, the Alaska Psychiatric Institute contracted with the MHP to provide consultation on system improvement and quality improvement in forensic and clinical services.

The MHP worked with the Arizona State Hospital to complete a review, analysis, and recommendations to improve overall hospital treatment and safety culture. In New Mexico the program received a contract to work with Doña Ana County to provide technical assistance and training to support improved crisis intervention resources. In the first six months of work, the MHP has coordinated a train-the-trainer program for community members and provided technical assistance regarding peer-to-peer services and professional training options.

The MHP continued to support South Dakota in its efforts to develop improved services to children and families. It provided program evaluation consultation to federally funded efforts in the state, focusing on

suicide prevention initiatives and the implementation of treatment for persons with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

Colorado utilized the MHP to complete a status report on the behavioral health workforce as a springboard to potential statewide planning efforts. In Oregon MHP began a cost-benefit analysis of an early-intervention program designed for persons with early-onset serious psychiatric disorders.

In collaboration with the Health Resources and Services Administration's Office of Rural Health Policy, MHP finalized a report that identified **promising practices in rural behavioral health**.

The Finances of WICHE

WICHE operates on support from three sources of funds: membership dues, grants from philanthropic organizations, and state and federal government contracts and grants. For FY 2011 WICHE's consolidated budget was \$24.6 million. Of this amount \$2.2 million supported the general core functions of WICHE, \$7.5 million supported the grant- and contract-funded activities of the organization, and \$14.3 million supported students through the Professional Student Exchange Program. More detailed information on WICHE's budget can be found in the May 2011 commission meeting [agenda book](#) and the [WICHE annual audit](#).

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The following WICHE papers and reports were published in fiscal 2011. Unless otherwise indicated, all publications are available on the WICHE website (the exceptions are generally articles appearing in journals and books). To access articles or more information, go to the [WICHE publications page](#) and click through to the 2010 and 2011 publication lists.

"Alaska Complex Behaviors Collaborative: Investment in Alaska's Workforce and Services for Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities and Complex Behavioral Needs," Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and WICHE

"The Behavioral Healthcare Workforce in Colorado: A Status Report, 2010"

"Behavioral Health Workforce Development in Rural and Frontier Alaska," *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, winter/spring 2011

"Benchmarks: WICHE Region 2010"

"Bringing Adults Back to College: Designing and Implementing a Statewide Concierge Model"

"Caring in the Country: America's Rural Workforce Shortage," *National Council* 1 (2011)

"The College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Program (2011)"

"The Common Core State Standards: Implications for Higher Education in the West"

"Higher Education Web Portals: Serving State and Student Transfer Needs"

"Managing Online Education Report"

"Multiple Perspectives on Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults with Mental Health Disorders and Addictions," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 25, no. 5

"Online Education: Where Is It Going? What Should Boards Know?"

"State Approval Regulations for Distance Education: A 'Starter' List with Addendum"

"Student Exchange Programs Statistical Report: Academic Year 2010-11"

"Tobacco Cessation in Youth with Mental Illnesses," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*

"Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West, 2010-2011: Detailed Tuition and Fees Tables"

"Tuition and Fees in the West 2010-2011"

"Western Undergraduate Exchange Enrollment Report: Fall 2010"

"Working in Frontier Communities" in *Rural Mental Health* (New York: Springer, forthcoming)

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