



# WICHE NewsCap

WICHE  
Western Interstate Commission  
for Higher Education



University of Colorado and Boulder Flatirons; CU Boulder

- ▶ Idaho's Mike Rush elected 2015 WICHE Commission chairman
- ▶ W-SARA membership grows to nine states
- ▶ Michael Abbiatti appointed to lead WCET
- ▶ Phase II of Interstate Passport Initiative now underway
- ▶ New WICHE reports on trends in higher education access, affordability, and financing

▶ **Number of Western states participating in WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement grows to nine.** Three new states – Arizona, Oregon and South Dakota – have signed the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA), joining Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Washington. Two other states, Hawai'i and Utah, have passed legislation laying the groundwork to sign the agreement. Currently, a total of 38 postsecondary institutions in the W-SARA states are participating in the initiative.



National Council  
for State Authorization  
Reciprocity Agreements

*A voluntary, regional approach  
to state oversight of distance education*

SARA is a nationwide effort of states committed to making distance-education courses more accessible to students across state lines, and easier for states to regulate – and institutions to participate in – interstate distance education. The initiative is funded by \$3 million in grants from Lumina Foundation, \$200,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and fees from member institutions. To find out more about W-SARA, go to [www.wiche.edu/sara](http://www.wiche.edu/sara).

▶ **Mike Rush of Idaho elected 2015 WICHE Commission chair**. At the WICHE Commission's semi-annual meeting in Denver on Nov. 11, Mike Rush, executive director of the Idaho State Board of Education, was elected 2015 chair. Other new officers are Washington State Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles, vice chair and 2016 chair-elect, and California State University President Diane Harrison, immediate past chair.

▶ **Educational technology expert Michael Abbiatti tapped to lead WCET.** Michael Abbiatti has been appointed the new executive director of the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) and WICHE vice president for educational technologies, effective Jan. 5, 2015.



Over the course of his career, Abbiatti has served as director of distance education for Louisiana State University, associate commissioner for information and learning technology for the Louisiana Board of Regents and executive director of the Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network, completed in 2011. Most recently, he has been director of the Southern Regional Education Board's Educational Technology Cooperative. He currently serves on the board of directors for Quality Matters and is active in the Internet2 K-20 community.

In announcing the appointment, WICHE President David Longanecker said Abbiatti's experience and leadership will greatly enhance WCET's ability "to address critical challenges and opportunities in the teaching, learning, technology, and innovation space." To learn more, go to [www.prweb.com/releases/2014/11/prweb12295685.htm](http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/11/prweb12295685.htm).

▶ **Phase II of Interstate Passport Initiative now underway.** The second

phase of the WICHE-based Interstate Passport Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation, kicked off in mid-November with



a workshop of facilitators from six of the seven participating states – California, Hawai‘i, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. (The seventh state, Oregon, is expected to appoint a facilitator shortly.)

Workshop participants fine-tuned the six lower-division general education academic content areas in which Passport Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and transfer-level proficiency criteria will be developed: evolving human cultures (history, anthropology, languages); human society and the individual (sociology, psychology, economics, political science); physical/natural world (biology, physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy); creative expression (music, visual arts, performing arts, media, literature, architecture); critical thinking; and teamwork and value systems. Two- and four-year faculty members from institutions in the participating states will hold six meetings over the next 18 months to negotiate and define the final set of PLOs.

The Passport project is aimed at developing a new learning-outcomes-based framework for transfer with the goal of improving graduation rates, shortening time to degree and saving students money. For more information, go to [www.wiche.edu/passport](http://www.wiche.edu/passport).

The Passport project also recently released “Successful Student Transfer: A Key Building Block of the Completion Agenda,” which distills presentations and discussions from a two-part convening supported by the Gates Foundation and hosted by WICHE. The convening was attended by representatives of initiatives across the country that address competency-based learning, student transfer and completion. Participants discussed ways their work might support better outcomes for transfer students. The report is available at [www.wiche.edu/passport/research](http://www.wiche.edu/passport/research).

► **New WICHE publications focus on higher-education affordability, access and financing in the Western states.**

Four new publications provide a variety of useful, up-to-date information for education and policy leaders in the WICHE region. The first is a six-page policy brief recapping higher education-related legislative activity in 2014 on a number of fronts, ranging from tuition freezes, financial aid, and business-community college partnerships, to undocumented students, guns on campus, veterans’ education, and implementation of common academic standards. The policy brief can be downloaded at [www.wiche.edu/pub/17129](http://www.wiche.edu/pub/17129).

The second publication, “Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West, 2014-15,” provides a state-by-state and institution-by-institution review of tuition changes from year to year, going back to 2004-05. The report, which presents published tuition and fee amounts as averages both unweighted and weighted by FTE enrollments, is available at [www.wiche.edu/pub/tf](http://www.wiche.edu/pub/tf).

The two other publications are companion pieces. “Benchmarks: WICHE Region 2014,” which can be downloaded at [www.wiche.edu/pub/17126](http://www.wiche.edu/pub/17126), offers 15 data tables showing Western states’ progress in improving access to, success

in and financing of higher education. Supplementing the annual benchmarks report is “Closing the Degree Gap: The West’s Contributions,” a four-page policy brief that explores one variant for how WICHE states might meet projected educational attainment goals; in particular, what it would take for the region as a whole to meet such goals, rather than each state individually. To read the brief, go to [www.wiche.edu/pub/closing-degree-gap-wests-contributions](http://www.wiche.edu/pub/closing-degree-gap-wests-contributions).

► **Michael Goldstein receives WCET’s top award for eLearning leadership.** Michael Goldstein, a partner at Cooley LLP and co-chair of the firm’s higher-education practice group, was honored with the Richard Jonsen Award at WCET’s annual meeting in November in Portland, OR. The award is given each year to a WCET member who has made outstanding contributions to improving postsecondary education programs and services through innovative uses of technology.

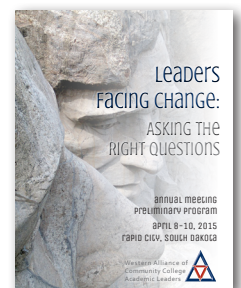
Goldstein spent much of his career with Dow Lohnes (which merged with Cooley earlier this year), where he worked with WCET and others in higher education on regulatory changes that greatly expanded the ability of distance-education students to participate in federal financial aid programs. Goldstein has provided both paid counsel as well as advice, guidance and insight to WCET on matters of legislation, court rulings and political dealings that have an impact on distance learning. For additional information, go to [www.prweb.com/releases/2014/11/prweb12338506.htm](http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/11/prweb12338506.htm).



Mollie McGill, interim co-executive director, WCET; Michael Goldstein, recipient of the 2014 Richard Jonsen Award; Russ Poulin, interim co-executive director, WCET; and David Longanecker, president, WICHE.

► **Community college academic leaders will convene in April in Rapid City.**

The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance) will hold its next annual meeting April 8-10, 2015, in Rapid City, SD. Rob Johnstone, president of the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement, will kick off the meeting, themed “Academic Leaders Facing Change: Asking the Right Questions.” The program features sessions on open educational resources, competency-based education, new approaches to developmental education, prior learning assessment, and other hot topics.



A highlight of the meeting will be a dinner at Mount Rushmore on Thursday evening, with featured speaker Dr. Marni Baker Stein, chief innovation officer at the University of Texas System's Institute for Transformational Learning. She will be introduced by Alliance Chairman Michael Cartney, president of Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, SD.

The West's top academic leaders of the two-year sector are represented in the Alliance's membership of 87. To browse the preliminary program for the April meeting, go to [www.wiche.edu/info/waccal/annual2015/alliancePrelimProgram2015.pdf](http://www.wiche.edu/info/waccal/annual2015/alliancePrelimProgram2015.pdf).

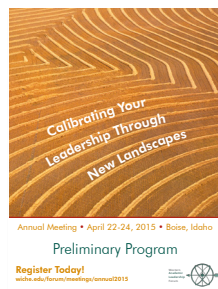
► **WICHE-facilitated agreement will help Northern Marianas Islands expand opportunities for prospective social workers.**

WICHE-facilitated agreement will help Northern Marianas Islands expand opportunities for prospective social workers. The WICHE Mental Health Program has facilitated the authorization of a 2 + 2 bachelor's degree partnership between Northern Marianas College (NMC) and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF). Students in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are expected to have access to the distance-delivered program in fall 2015. Students will complete their associate degree at NMC, and then matriculate into UAF's bachelor of social work program. There is a shortage of social workers in CNMI, and this unique partnership will enable students there to pursue a degree without the need to leave their home communities.

The mission of the WICHE Mental Health Program is to assist states in improving systems of care for mental health consumers and their families and to advance the preparation of a qualified mental health workforce in the West. To learn more about the program, go to [www.wiche.edu/mentalhealth](http://www.wiche.edu/mentalhealth).

► **Western Academic Leadership Forum's 2015 annual meeting slated for April in Boise.**

"Calibrating Your Leadership in New Landscapes" is the working theme of the Western Academic Leadership Forum's 2015 annual meeting, to be held April 22-24 in Boise, ID. Sessions will include presentations on leading academic change, the completion agenda, the quest for higher academic quality, intervention strategies to promote student success, and using data analytics and other tools to communicate effectively with internal and external constituencies.



The Forum gives academic leaders in the WICHE states a venue for sharing information, resources and expertise as they address issues of common concern across the region and work together on innovative solutions. Its members include provosts; academic vice presidents at bachelor's, master's and doctoral-level institutions; and chief executives and chief academic officers for system and state coordinating and governing boards. To learn more about the Forum's 2015 annual meeting, go to [www.wiche.edu/forum/meetings/annual2015](http://www.wiche.edu/forum/meetings/annual2015).

► **Cost-saving purchasing options available to postsecondary institutions, K-12 schools and districts in the WICHE region.**

Through a collaborative agreement with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact's MHECtech program, colleges and universities as well as K-12 districts and schools in the WICHE region are now able to achieve cost savings when purchasing products and services from two additional firms, SAS® Analytics and Parchment.

SAS licenses and support, consulting and training are available at a reduced, prenegotiated rate to help institutions using analytics, data visualization and business intelligence software to achieve improvements in areas such as enrollment and retention, budgeting, student data systems, and teaching and learning. Training costs drop 60 percent through the agreement. K-12 school and districts use SAS for data management and reporting and to measure program effectiveness. Several state higher education systems use SAS Visual Analytics to support online public dashboards that report on system goals and provide students information on degree paths and career prospects. SAS also helps states create, launch and manage longitudinal data systems.

Cost-saving options are also available for electronic transcript exchange services provided by Parchment's Send and Receive services. Parchment's credential exchange platform safely and securely automates and streamlines the complete process for sending and receiving eTranscripts for secondary and postsecondary institutions. Exchanging transcripts electronically saves money for school districts and higher education institutions, drives operational efficiencies and provides data that facilitates improved decision making. The college application process is also simplified for students and parents via digital credential exchanges. Information about the full range of vendors and products available through MHECtech is available at [www.mhetcetech.org](http://www.mhetcetech.org) and [www.wiche.edu/costSavingPurchasing](http://www.wiche.edu/costSavingPurchasing).

► **Mark your calendar for WCET's Leadership Summit on adaptive learning in June in Santa Fe.**

Institutional leaders and corporate innovators will convene June 9-11, 2015, in Santa Fe, NM, for WCET's Leadership Summit, "Adaptive Learning in Higher Ed: Improving Outcomes Dynamically."

Building on prior summits on competencies, data analytics and digital content, the 2015 summit will focus on the extent to which adaptive learning is gaining a foothold in postsecondary education as a means of addressing quality, costs and completion. Adaptive learning solutions use assessment and data to customize course materials and assignments to meet the varying needs and progress of individual learners. Additional information is available at [wcet.wiche.edu/connc/2015-adaptive-learning-summit](http://wcet.wiche.edu/connc/2015-adaptive-learning-summit).

► **WICHE hosts meeting on the challenges of implementing common academic standards and assessments across states.**

With the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, WICHE hosted an invitation-only meeting in Broomfield, CO, in early October that brought together key higher education and

K-12 leaders from the Western region and bordering states to focus on the ongoing implementation of new college and career-readiness standards and assessments.

The meeting was designed to heighten awareness of issues that may arise as students cross state lines to enroll in postsecondary institutions after high school, and to explore ways of promoting cross-state collaboration. Attendees also discussed the possibility of creating a formal network of K-12 and higher education leaders to expand and advance the conversation on more-successful student transitions.

► **New leadership of WCET steering committee and executive council announced.** Luke Dowden, director of distance learning for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, has been elected to serve as 2014-15 chair of WCET's steering committee. Deb Gearhart, vice provost for eLearning and strategic partnerships at Ohio University, was elected vice chair and 2015-16 chair-elect. Peter Smith, founding president of Open College @ Kaplan University, recently assumed leadership of the WCET's executive council.

