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# Protecting Our Priorities



## 2010 WICHE Workplan

## Protecting Our Priorities

As our nation struggles to get back on its feet economically, our colleges and universities are working harder than ever to fulfill their mission: to educate the next generation of workers and citizens. In the West that task is arguably more challenging than elsewhere. Our region is highly diverse in terms of both demographics and geography, with densely packed cities and isolated, lightly populated rural areas. What's more, our success in preparing students to succeed in college and their careers varies dramatically across the region, for many reasons. In addition, the West exhibits wide variability in terms of growth: as WICHE's 2008 *Knocking at the College Door* shows, some of our states are anticipating enormous growth in the number of their high school graduates, while others are projecting declines or holding steady.

"Protecting Our Priorities," WICHE's fiscal 2010 workplan, focuses on how we can ensure that *all* our students not only have access to higher education but are well-equipped to succeed at college and able to pay for it. That's essential today, as U.S. students need to be ready to participate in a demanding and highly competitive global economy. WICHE's four units – Policy Analysis and Research, Programs and Services, Mental Health, and WCET – work to make these priorities a reality by focusing on five areas: finance, access and success, workforce and social issues, technology and innovation, and accountability.

## Finance

Keeping higher education options affordable for Western residents and sharing higher education resources within our region is more critical than ever before. WICHE's three **Student Exchange Programs (SEP)** offer college students in the West access to an array of postsecondary offerings at a reduced tuition rate, which varies depending on the program. The West's colleges and universities benefit too, as they're able to fill undersubscribed programs and reduce duplication of programs.

## Programs and Services

WICHE's three Student Exchange Programs – the Professional Student Exchange Program, Western Regional Graduate Program, and Western Undergraduate Exchange – currently enroll almost 25,000 students. In WUE alone, students and their families saved a record \$151 million in the 2008-09 academic year. Other Programs and Services initiatives include:

- ◆ State Scholars Initiative (programs in 19 states)
- ◆ Western Academic Leadership Forum
- ◆ WICHE ICE (Internet Course Exchange)
- ◆ Western rural healthcare initiatives
- ◆ Western Consortium for Rural Social Work
- ◆ Master Property Program (insurance and risk management consortium)
- ◆ Communications activities: NewsCap, factsheets, Website, annual reports, state briefings, commission agenda books, WICHE annual workplan
- ◆ Workforce briefs (by state and profession)
- ◆ Bridges to the Professoriate
- ◆ Collaborative purchasing (Xerox products)

## The Western Undergraduate Exchange

**(WUE)** was founded in 1987 and is now the largest program of its kind in the nation, with students from all 15 WICHE states eligible to participate. Through WUE, students pay 150 percent of resident tuition. More students saved by enrolling through our graduate and professional programs, the **Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)** and the **Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)**. WICHE's Programs and Services staff, which oversees SEP, will continue to work with our member states to broaden student participation in each program in fiscal 2010 (for more on student exchange, see the Access & Success section).

In 2010 WICHE will provide options for states and institutions to reduce academic and

administrative costs. We will continue our collaboration with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact to offer the **Master Property Program (MPP)** to institutions and systems in the West, helping them save money and obtain comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to higher education needs. Two-year, four-year, public, and private institutions in the MHEC and WICHE regions are eligible to join and purchase property insurance as a group to reduce costs and to receive dividends when the group's loss experience is favorable.

The MPP also provides engineering and loss control strategies that help institutions protect their assets while saving on their premium costs. Administrators and facilities managers from participating institutions attend an annual loss control workshop to gain expertise on evaluating property exposures; insurance coverage issues; managing and communicating campus security and safety needs; strategies for building design and remodeling that lead to operative efficiencies, increased security, and energy conservation; and other issues.

The Nevada System of Higher Education – including seven colleges and universities, as well as a desert research institute – was the first system in the WICHE region to participate in the Master Property Program, joining in 2004. Seven other institutions or systems have also joined: Lewis & Clark College, Pima Community College District, Reed College, Seattle Pacific University, University of Northern Colorado, Westminster College, and Willamette University. The MPP has generated more than \$40.1 million in savings for participating institutions under the direction of a leadership committee that is representative of the insured institutions. Currently, 49 primary policies are issued to member institutions, including 100 campuses with total insured values of approximately \$63.5 billion. Members' property values range from \$83 million to \$9.6 billion. The minimum program deductible is \$25,000.

WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to provide **discounted purchasing options** to higher education institutions, state agencies, county and municipal governments, and other nonprofits that want to buy printing equipment and document management services from Xerox. Under the contract MHEC and WICHE members can use Xerox for their office printing needs and production printing services. Participants will also be able to use Xerox services, including productivity assessments and document advisories, to help manage and streamline records and administrative documents. In the WICHE region, the City of Lakewood in Colorado and the Hanahauoli School in Hawaii are the first organizations to make purchases under the new contract.

In another initiative, under a contract with the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Policy Analysis and Research unit conducted an evaluation of the state's **College Opportunity Fund (COF)** legislation, which represents the first and (to date) only attempt by a state to fund higher education through a voucher-based system. The evaluation focused on the original intent of the policy, its impact on access, and its implementation and supply-side effects, and included recommendations.

In addition, the Policy unit also tracks trends in pricing at all public institutions in the region. Its **Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West** report is updated annually and released every fall.

## Access & Success

From its beginnings in the 1950s, WICHE has focused on expanding access to higher education in the West. Our three **Student Exchange Programs** support this mission by helping students reduce their tuition costs, allow them to enroll in the region when specialized programs are not available within their state and by enabling institutions to diversify their enrollments.

In 2008-09 more than 23,600 students enrolled in public two- and four-year institutions in the West through WICHE's **Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)**. Out-of-state WUE students pay 150 percent of resident tuition. These students and their families saved an estimated \$151 million in tuition costs in 2008-09. Since WUE's inception in 1988, over 62,000 students are estimated to have used the program; and over the last 10 years, more than 46,300 students (and their families) have saved an impressive \$980,228,307. In all, over 140 campuses have opened their doors to WUE students. Colleges and universities can tailor their participation (including admission requirements and available programs of study) to their individual campus needs. Last year WUE welcomed California State University Sacramento into the network. WICHE staff will continue to encourage more institutions to join WUE and increase its outreach efforts with high school counselors by presenting at regional and national meetings. In addition, staff will boost WUE's visibility with an improved Website so that more students and their families are aware of this valuable program.

The **Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)** broadens access in 10 professional healthcare fields to students in 12 WICHE states. In 2008-09 almost 760 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. Participating states determine the fields and the numbers of students they will support.

The **Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)** enables students to enroll in more than 230 distinctive graduate master's, Ph.D., and graduate certificate programs and pay resident tuition. About 30 new programs will join the exchange in May 2009, following a regional peer review process. Programs are offered in a wide range of fields. WRGP offers an expanding menu

of more than 50 programs for future health professionals, including some 30 specialized graduate degrees in nursing; degrees in public health, audiology, speech pathology, mental health counseling, and social work; a master's of science in dental hygiene to train future faculty; and other healthcare-related programs. The network also offers cutting-edge graduate programs in applied environmental geoscience, multimedia production, primate behavior, and other areas. Some 40 institutions in 14 WICHE states participate. Until this year, no institutions in California had reciprocated by offering their programs through WRGP, so California students were not able to enroll at out-of-state institutions at the discounted WRGP rate. California State University's East Bay campus has broken new ground for the state, nominating three programs to the network, all of which were WICHE peer approved. California residents are now eligible to enroll through WRGP, beginning in the 2010-11 academic year. We hope to attract additional programs from California in the future.

The **WICHE Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE)** offers students of its member institutions increased access to online courses and programs while they are enrolled at their home institution. In fiscal 2010 ICE will focus on implementing the marketing and business strategies identified in its new business plan (the development of which was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation), with the goal of increasing memberships, enrollments, and collaborative activities. Currently, WICHE ICE has 12 institutional members and four consortia members, totalling some 30 institutions. A new white paper, "The Time Is Right for ICE," available on the Website, helps members and prospective members understand the ways in which ICE can help institutions retain and expand their online course and program offerings even as they trim their budgets. The white paper and a new Web-based "getting started" checklist will be used to solicit additional members to take advantage of ICE's benefits during the coming year.

New functionality added in spring 2009 to the WICHE ICE database, which supports the exchange of course, program, and student data, will help institutions to more readily participate in ICE and should lead to more enrollments next year. The results of a recent survey of our members' excess demand and capacity for online courses, along with program information gleaned from member profiles, will be used to identify courses and programs where online enrollments can be increased as well.

Several ICE collaborative initiatives are poised to make additional progress this year, if pending grant proposals are funded. The social work consortium, consisting of five ICE institutions, will build on the momentum of its first faculty fellows workshop, held in February 2009, in order to exchange more courses and increase enrollments. In addition, it will explore the viability of creating a joint certificate program for K-12 social workers and other programs, as needed. An initiative focused on math and science for secondary teachers will expand its efforts to involve faculty from its five member institutions in discussions and joint activities to develop online courses serving this niche population. Another ICE initiative is focused on building tools for faculty and staff to develop their awareness of and provide training related to the unique needs of military (active and veteran) students studying online.

During 2010 the ICE partnership with the Colorado Department of Labor in its portal project will enroll students in IT, healthcare, and energy courses at their home institutions in Colorado. The courses will be imported through ICE from institutions in other states. This U.S. Department of Labor demo project will allow participating students to become better prepared to respond to workforce needs, as they are encouraged to form an ongoing relationship with an institution in their state. WICHE ICE will explore other opportunities for collaborative initiatives in 2010 in the areas of lab courses and renewable energy. It will continue to support the

exchange of Ph.D.-level nursing courses through the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus), which uses the WICHE ICE database as its platform.

The **State Scholars Initiative (SSI)** is a multistate program designed to encourage high school students to take a rigorous course of study and to engage the nation's business leaders in this endeavor. WICHE, selected through a national competition, has been directing the initiative since October 2005. State Scholars Initiative funding, provided by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the U.S. Department of Education, totals \$6.6 million. WICHE has successfully completed year three and has received an additional continuation award through September 30, 2009.

In fiscal 2010 SSI will continue to work with up to 19 state-level business/education partnerships and some 400 school districts to support Scholars. Four WICHE states – Arizona, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming – are active in the initiative. Two other WICHE states – New Mexico and Washington – have completed programs. Other states participating in SSI are: Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Four additional states were previously funded and completed SSI projects: Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.

Over the past three years, WICHE has worked with SSI states and school districts to collect perception and course enrollment data that are defensible, comparable across states, and understandable to experts and laypeople alike. WICHE has been collecting these data for three years and is one of a few national programs leading this effort. Early results show that SSI is positively influencing student course-taking behaviors, particularly in algebra, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, and languages other than English. SSI is also positively influencing both student and adult perceptions about the importance of taking a rigorous course of study

in high school. In fiscal 2010 WICHE will share these data, the lessons that have been learned, and the promising practices that have been developed with national, state, and school district partners. Finally, WICHE will pursue sustainability options designed to continue data collection efforts, to expand the national network, and to diversify the funds that support SSI.

WICHE directs the **Bridges to the Professoriate** project with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program provides academic support services to underrepresented minority doctoral students to better prepare them for research and teaching careers. Participating students are predoctoral fellows in the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program. The fellows benefit by participating in the annual Institute on Teaching and Mentoring, sponsored by the Compact for Faculty Diversity, a partnership of WICHE, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the New England Board of Higher Education. In addition to the institute, the Bridges program monitors the predoctoral fellows' progress toward completion of their degree and provides information pertinent to graduate school issues and biomedical careers.

The **Western Academic Leadership Forum (WALF)** gives academic leaders in the WICHE states – provosts, academic vice presidents at master's and doctoral-level institutions, and chief executives and chief academic officers for system and state governing boards – a forum for sharing information, resources, and expertise as they address issues of common concern across the region and work together on innovative solutions. The 2009 annual meeting, hosted by the University of Alaska Anchorage in April, is themed "Taking Stock: Strategic Leadership in Changing Times." Attendees share information about decisions they were making to maintain quality even as they made significant cuts in their budgets due to the downturn in the economy. Models of best practice and lessons learned in supporting student success and

faculty work life are of special focus. WALF, which includes members in all 15 WICHE states, was formerly known as the Northwest Academic Forum (NWAFF). In December 2008 the executive committee expanded the scope of the organization and renamed it.

In an era of tight fiscal resources, WALF provides a mechanism that lets the West's top academic leaders share new cost-effective strategies, debate the pros and cons of restructuring, relay lessons learned from innovative initiatives, and discuss the effects of novel decision making and other activities. During fiscal 2010 WALF will implement new Web-based communication strategies allowing its members to more readily share this information and also to work together on new collaborative initiatives. WALF will also engage in outreach to prospective members to expand the organization's ability to build a stronger future for higher education in the WICHE region.

WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit manages several projects related to access and success. One of the most exciting initiatives on the unit's agenda is the project titled **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 for Education, Non-traditional No More includes a specific focus on removing barriers related to data, academic affairs, financial aid and financing, student support services, and communications. Staff continues to work closely with the three original project states: Arkansas, Colorado, and Nevada. Last fall, with additional foundation support, it expanded the project to include two new states: New Jersey and South Dakota.

The Policy unit also works with the **Pathways to College Network**, an alliance of private and corporate foundations, nonprofits, educational

## Policy Analysis and Research

The Policy Analysis and Research unit seeks to furnish accurate and timely information and expertise that advance WICHE's mission of expanding educational access and excellence. It does so by providing analysis of relevant data related to K-12 and postsecondary education, demography, labor market information, and higher education finances; by supplying assistance with policy design and implementation; and by developing and managing projects that serve the needs of policymakers in the West and throughout the nation. Among its externally funded activities are:

- ◆ Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners
- ◆ College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network
- ◆ Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems
- ◆ Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce
- ◆ State and regional longitudinal data systems development
- ◆ Evaluation of Colorado's College Opportunity Fund

Additional ongoing activities and services include:

- ◆ *Knocking at the College Door* projections of high school graduates
- ◆ SPIDO (State Policy Inventory Database Online)
- ◆ *Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West*
- ◆ *Policy Alerts and Stat Alerts*
- ◆ *Policy Insights*, a series of brief papers addressing issues in higher education
- ◆ Policy Publications Clearinghouse
- ◆ Benchmarks and a Web-based *Fact Book of Policy Indicators for Higher Education in the West*
- ◆ Legislative Advisory Committee
- ◆ State-specific technical assistance on a variety of topics, including financial aid

institutions, and the U.S. Department of Education. Pathways, which includes a vast array of researchers, policy analysts, educators, K-12 administrators, and representatives from government, business, foundations, and community organizations, uses research-based knowledge to improve postsecondary education access and success for the nation's underserved students. These include underrepresented minorities, low-income students, those who are the first in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities. WICHE staff helps determine Pathways' overall focus and policy components through representation on its policy committee.

In an effort to assist the Western states with program implementation and administration, the Policy unit manages the **College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Consortium and Network**. In 2008 the federal government launched a new program designed to foster partnerships among federal, 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 is working closely with state leaders in Alaska and Nevada to successfully implement their CACG programs. Simultaneously, the CACG Network is composed of the two consortium states plus North Dakota and Washington to provide a forum in which staff involved in developing, implementing, and maintaining state CACG efforts can share and 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.

Building on the **Changing Direction** project, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, the Policy unit is partnering with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to promote informed decision making and the alignment of higher education appropriations,

tuition, and financial aid by educating state legislators, news media (especially state house and higher education reporters), and others about these issues in an effort to increase student access and success. The first phase of this project, called **Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid**, is in full swing. WICHE and NCSL collaborated with the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media to produce eight policy briefs about important issues related to policy integration, targeting them to state legislators. These briefs were disseminated to every state legislator in the country. Over the next year, WICHE staff will present the material at a variety of meetings and policy forums.

**Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems**, a joint project of WICHE and Hezel Associates, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their articulation and transfer programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions. In addition to surveying all 50 states and developing in-depth case studies of selected state systems, WICHE's Policy unit and WCET along with Hezel Associates are examining how state colleges and universities use Web portals in the articulation and transfer process to determine the characteristics that make them effective, as well as whether similar models can be used in other states. The project is also examining how well states promote, market, and disseminate information about articulation and transfer to students, faculty advisors, admissions staff, and other administrators. Upon completion of the initial research and case studies, WICHE and Hezel Associates will distill key findings into best practices guide featuring recommendations for policy and decision makers. The project will host regional and national meetings specifically focused on articulation and transfer. It will also create a set of products that compare the effectiveness of statewide Web portals and

disseminate the findings through the EduTools Website. Additionally, information from the project will be presented to a national policy audience as part of the State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO). Ultimately, the goal of the project is to guide policy and practice within state higher education organizations, particularly the state higher education executive offices. The project's findings should be a valuable resource to SHEEOs and other policymakers as they confront issues related to postsecondary access and affordability in the years to come.

**Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity** (7th edition), released nationally last year, is widely used by politicians and policymakers; librarians; researchers; the media; businesses; state agencies (including SHEEO offices and education departments); postsecondary institutions; school districts, and individual public and private schools. In the 7th edition, Policy made some changes that will allow WICHE to update these projections more regularly (the income projections from the 6th edition could not be replicated for the 7th, due to data limitations). Policy is seeking funding for a project to examine the methodology behind the projections, which has changed little since WICHE published the first edition of the projections in 1979. The project will also investigate ways to incorporate additional analyses sought by our constituents, such as income-based projections. Finally, it will modernize the content and delivery of the data through an interactive and dynamic Web application, allowing users to develop meaningful, real-time reports for their specific needs.

In the summer of 2008, WICHE began a partnership with a national organization, the Sullivan Alliance to Transform the Health Professions Workforce, to help states broaden the pipeline of underrepresented student populations into jobs in the health professions. This partnership has organized a meeting that



will take place in April 2009 to build institutional commitments that foster the success of targeted populations enrolled in prerequisite coursework at two- and four-year colleges and to ensure a place in post-baccalaureate professional training programs for those students. This initial meeting, titled the **Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce**, is funded with money from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its Office of Minority Health and is also cosponsored by the Anschutz Medical Campus of the University of Colorado, Denver. With this collaborative effort between all four units – Policy Analysis and Research, Mental Health, Programs and Services, and WCET – WICHE hopes to replicate the meeting and the models that emerge from it in other parts of the region, pending the necessary additional funding.

## WCET

WCET is a membership cooperative of institutions and organizations dedicated to advancing access and excellence in higher education through the innovative use of technology. WCET's membership includes many of the top technology innovators from colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and companies around the country. WCET develops research projects that focus on integrating technology into the teaching and learning processes; consults with higher education institutions; holds professional development conferences for practitioners; and supports its members in the planning and implementation of e-learning. Some of WCET's projects and working groups include:

- ◆ Transparency By Design
- ◆ CatalystCAMP
- ◆ Student retention in online learning
- ◆ eLearning Consortia
- ◆ Academic integrity and student authentication
- ◆ EduTools 2.0
- ◆ Webcast series on e-learning practices and policies

## Technology and Innovation

WCET and the Educational Technology Cooperative of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) have been exploring opportunities for working more closely together on **e-learning initiatives**. The two organizations have begun sharing more information, and SREB is a cosponsor of WCET's new professional development event, CatalystCAMP, which will be held in conjunction with WCET's annual conference on October 21-24, 2009, in Denver. Other professional development offerings on a range of educational technology topics will be released, including a spring 2009 Webcast series on Web 2.0 teaching that will focus on several topics, including helping students to avoid plagiarism; mobile learning and innovations in online student retention; and a new series of podcasts that can be accessed via WCET's new iTunesU, hosted by the University of Northern Colorado. Given current travel restrictions for many of those who work in public higher education, these Web-based professional development services will become even more valuable to members.

WCET will continue to facilitate dialogues and partnership opportunities between **China Open Resources for Education (CORE)** and North American institutions that are interested in developing targeted training programs for the Chinese market. WCET and CORE, which has been active in promoting international exchanges of open courseware, signed a memorandum of understanding in 2007 and have been working together to advance the use of open courseware in China. Open courseware and open educational resources are gradually being adopted by postsecondary institutions around the world, especially in countries where student demand greatly exceeds institutional capacity.

**EduTools**, the highly successful model for providing comparative reviews of various e-learning products, is being redesigned to take advantage of more contemporary Web 2.0 models and practices. The new

EduTools Website will make it easier for higher education administrators and faculty to obtain good information on many of the emerging educational technologies and ideas on how they can be used in teaching and learning. The development of the EduTools 2.0 prototype was delayed this year due to staffing changes but will proceed apace during 2009-2010, in partnership with the National Internet2 K20 Initiative.

WCET's governance committees conducted a priorities-setting process to identify a select number of topics or challenges to be addressed by WCET in 2009. As a "cooperative" organization, WCET is defined by the volunteer participation from individual members. Member contributions to specific projects are invaluable and result in work reflecting various perspectives, the pragmatism of the user community, and oftentimes a more up-to-date knowledge of the technology. The following three areas will become new **common interest groups** (CIGs), and each will produce one or more resources or other products to share with the membership at large: student retention in online learning; evaluation and ownership of learning management systems; and institutional policies and initiatives affecting faculty roles, workload, and other institutional and statewide practices.

The Academic Collaboration Common Interest Group recently changed its name to more clearly describe the types of organizations it serves. The renamed **eLearning Consortia CIG** consists of interinstitutional organizations that share resources to increase institutional capacity for, sharing of, and access to technology-mediated courses and programs. The eLearning Consortia CIG is producing a repository of policies and publications for all WCET/WICHE members to use.

**Access to broadband networks** has been identified as a national priority and is slated to receive a significant investment of federal stimulus funds. Ubiquitous access to broadband will stimulate job and knowledge creation and

improve educational, health, and mental health services to citizens. WICHE vice president for technology, Louis Fox, continues to serve as an advocate with state and national government entities and as a facilitator among the leading advanced research and education networking entities. WICHE and WCET are well positioned to help states, colleges, and universities in the areas of policy development and applications in education and healthcare. In 2009 Fox hosted the Northern Tier Networking Consortium and, with WICHE President David Longanecker, met with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) concerning broadband networks and the role of states in the national broadband initiatives. In 2007 WICHE published the white paper "Can You Hear Us Now? Connecting Minority-Serving Institutions in the West to U.S. Advanced Cyberinfrastructure," which includes recommendations to raise awareness of the critical importance of cyberinfrastructure for the future of research, education, and healthcare. This paper and conversations among WCET/WICHE leaderships, the WGA, and many national higher education and research organizations (e.g., Internet2, National LambdaRail, the Community Computing Research Association, EDUCAUSE, The Quilt, StateNets, National Science Foundation, EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation, and the Southeastern Universities Research Association) have elevated WICHE to a leadership role in helping the higher education community shape its national broadband agenda. This work will continue throughout the year.

## Workforce & Society

WICHE was created more than 55 years ago to help our Western member states affordably "grow their own" healthcare practitioners and has successfully done so. More than 14,100 graduates have enrolled through its Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) since the early 1950s. Nonetheless, persistent workforce shortages across the West continue to affect rural and underserved areas. The West's demographics and its wide expanse of rural counties make

## Mental Health

The WICHE Mental Health Program seeks to enhance the public systems of care for persons with mental illnesses, children with serious emotional disturbances, and their families. The program approaches this mission through partnerships with state mental health authorities, advocacy and consumer groups, federal agencies, and higher education institutions. Activities focus upon direct technical assistance to state and local agencies, policy analysis and research, support of state mental health agency data analysis, and liaison activities with higher education to enhance workforce development. Current projects include the following.

- ◆ **Mental Health First Aid training.** The Mental Health Program is pleased to announce Mental Health First Aid training opportunities in the Western states. Mental Health First Aid is a 12-hour training course designed to give members of the public key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.
- ◆ **Mental Health First Aid training for military communities.** The program also submitted a proposal to work with the Department of Defense on adapting Mental Health First Aid training for military communities.
- ◆ **Rural behavioral health.** In collaboration with the Health Resources and Services Administration's Office of Rural Health Policy and the Nakamoto Group, the program is working to identify promising practices, best practices, models that work, and evidence-based practices in rural behavioral health.
- ◆ **Idaho behavioral health system redesign.** The Mental Health Program plans to support Idaho in its effort to create the Governors Behavioral Health Transformation Work Group and to develop a plan to increase the availability and access to quality services.
- ◆ **WICHE Center for Rural Mental Health Research.** This federally funded research institute conducts studies that help inform health policy at multiple levels of decision making. Focused upon rural mental health, the center is one of seven rural health research centers in the United States funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Since most rural Americans obtain their mental health care through primary care providers rather than specialty mental health providers, the focus of the research seeks to expand knowledge around supporting adoption of evidence-based practices in primary care and the potential impact of such adoption on health outcomes for the consumer.
- ◆ **Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG).** Through a partnership in funding between the federal Center for Mental Health Services and 15 WICHE states, the Mental Health Program coordinates a regional effort to enhance and coordinate program evaluation and data-driven decision support in the public mental health systems of the WICHE West. WSDSG meets face to face three times yearly to focus on regional issues related to enhancing accountability through sound data management to support quality improvement, policy formation, and administration.
- ◆ **Workforce development.** The Mental Health Program is engaged in an array of activities to improve the preparation and continuing education of the public mental health workforce in the WICHE West.
- ◆ **Collaboration in training.** The Mental Health Program continues its work with the Western states to improve collaboration in training between state mental health systems and higher education training programs.
- ◆ **Webinars.** The program produces Rural Mental Health Grand Rounds Webinars, funded by the federal Center for Mental Health Services. These Webcasts enable rural professionals to obtain training on current issues in mental health practice and continuing education credit.
- ◆ **Technical assistance.** The Mental Health Program is routinely called upon by member states and others to offer state-specific technical assistance, facilitating activities focused upon system improvement, planning, and needs assessment.
- ◆ **Key competencies.** The program is working with Alaska to identify key competencies for behavioral health workers across the career ladder. Additionally, we are leading an effort to establish a new internship consortium in Alaska for doctoral internships in psychology.
- ◆ **Care for children and families.** The program has an ongoing project in South Dakota related to supporting the development of systems of care for children and families and is providing technical assistance, conducting surveys of consumers.
- ◆ **Suicide prevention.** Mental Health Program staff members are currently the evaluators for two federally funded suicide prevention grants – one in Wyoming and one in South Dakota.
- ◆ **Needs assessment and gap analysis.** Staff members frequently work with states across the region in areas of needs assessment and gap analysis. An epidemiologist has updated the model estimating the prevalence of serious disorders. New estimates are based on the National Comorbidity Survey Replication Study and include estimates of individuals with serious emotional disturbances, serious mental illness, and substance use disorders. Eight Western states have contracted with WICHE for state-specific synthetic estimates of serious disorders at the county level.

attracting healthcare professionals to rural and underserved areas all the more challenging. Even with tuition assistance to reduce initial student debt load, low Medicare reimbursement rates and lower salaries in many underserved and rural areas are major deterrents for professionals, as are the lack of employment opportunities for spouses.

In 2010, under the multipronged **Healthcare Workforce Issues and the West's Rural Needs initiative**, WICHE will continue to explore partnerships with federal and state agencies and private funders, seeking support for regional strategies to alleviate healthcare workforce shortages. To better understand the region's options, WICHE developed an inventory of the PSEP cooperating medical schools' rural track programs and their plans for expansion. Staff also completed an inventory of incentives for rural healthcare practitioners. Expanding on this work in 2010, WICHE is developing a pilot initiative to train primary care physicians committed to working in rural areas. Students of the program will be exposed to rural practice opportunities; will benefit from an enhanced rural curriculum with a strong mental health component; and will participate in preceptorships and rotations with mentors in their home state. In addition, home state residencies will be available to them, coupled with host community retention efforts that will increase the graduate's likelihood of returning to a rural area in their home state to serve.

WICHE staff is also researching the creation of new **student exchange models in emerging career fields**. Such programs would allow our member states' institutions to collaborate on offerings and share faculty for cutting-edge programs to train IT and digital communications specialists, as well as hardware engineers. Programs for high-demand fields, including biotechnology, nanotechnology, and energy technology, are also being explored.

The **Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce** meeting (described in the Access & Success section) will have a workforce component, aiding in eight member states' efforts to ensure an adequate supply of trained healthcare workers in fields currently projecting shortages. Because the meeting will focus on underrepresented populations, the commitments of states and institutions to broadening the pipeline of underrepresented students into healthcare jobs will also have the long-term effect of reducing health disparities.

WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit is seeking funding for a project that will build on its previous Ford Foundation-supported work in helping states build stronger **linkages between their higher education investments and their labor force needs**. The proposed project will more explicitly focus on how well institutions are recruiting, retaining, and preparing students from underrepresented populations in fields for which the state projects a substantial demand.

In 2010 WICHE will continue working closely with its **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**, a group of state legislators from the West who inform the WICHE Commission's Executive Committee and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education; provide input on WICHE initiatives; and advise staff on program and participant considerations related to WICHE's policy forums. Staff serves the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West. This year the activities of the LAC will look a bit different than in previous years. Instead of holding an annual meeting over the summer, the LAC will convene via Webinar in an effort to conserve resources and increase participation and interest. As in years past, the focus of the meeting will be on important higher education issues facing the Western states and their legislatures.

## Accountability

WCET has joined a group of 12 adult-serving higher education institutions in an important initiative called **Transparency by Design**, whose goal is to collect and share extensive data on student engagement and performance. WCET will serve as a neutral repository and display of outcomes data from the participating institutions. This work will require that WCET create a Website for the display of outcomes data of importance to prospective adult students as they choose or seek to better understand their higher education provider. The Website will offer context, guidance, and tools for the prospective adult student users. It is also intended to provide comparisons among the participating institutions, context about the differences in the institutions, and research related to the Transparency by Design initiative.

The Policy Analysis and Research staff will continue its ongoing support for state accountability efforts, providing assistance to states. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Policy unit recently hosted a meeting attended by delegations from 14 member states. The meeting, **Fostering Collaborative State-Level Education and Workforce Database Development**, focused on the design and development of statewide longitudinal data systems that span K-12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce data. Such linked data systems are vital to providing useful analyses pointing to effective policies and practices, but their development is hindered by an array of factors, among the most obstructive of which often is a misunderstanding of legal privacy restrictions. Though the meeting has concluded, WICHE continues to provide follow-up services with member states. We are also planning to work with one or more states on a pilot project to broker data linkages within and across states, which we hope will provide a model for other states or regions.

In 2010 Policy will continue to update **SPIDO (State Policy Inventory Database Online)**, at <http://wiche.edu/SPIDO>, the nation's only online searchable database of higher education policies. WICHE staff will develop ways to increase the utility and visibility of this Web resource, which boasts a new look and additional features. In addition, staff will conduct presentations about SPIDO at national meetings to highlight how the database can be used to support accountability and other higher education efforts in the states. Policy will continue to work with databases – federal and others – as well as other sources of information, to create Western-specific research and policy briefs on timely and relevant topics.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 includes a new requirement directed to accrediting agencies: institutions must have processes in place to **authenticate students in distance education courses and programs**. The new requirement potentially has significant cost and student privacy implications for colleges and universities. WCET established a study group on academic integrity and student authentication in online learning to create a body of knowledge and shared expertise. The study group produced several resources to inform member institutions about current practices and policies employed by institutions to secure student access and use of campus network resources and to promote academic honesty in online education, including a Webcast, podcast, conference presentation, and briefing paper. The study group is developing a set of good practices for academic integrity, modeled on the Best Practices in Electronically Delivered Degree and Certificate Programs, developed by WCET nearly a decade ago.

## Information Resources

Part of WICHE's mission is to provide legislators and decision makers with the data and information they need. In 2010 WICHE will provide the following resources on our Website ([www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)), in print, and via email.

- ◆ **Policy Alerts** and **Stat Alerts** offer weekly e-mail notices of new policy and data-related reports.
- ◆ **Policy Insights**, our short report series, covers numerous higher education topics.
- ◆ **Policy Publications Clearinghouse** (<http://wiche.edu/policy/Clearinghouse>), maintained by the Policy Analysis and Research unit, is a database of policy publications, offered in a continuing effort to provide those in the West with access to the latest studies, reports, surveys, and policy briefs published by various research and public policy organizations.
- ◆ **Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West**, updated annually by the Policy Analysis and Research unit, provides a wealth of data on access, affordability, finance, faculty, technology, and workforce issues.
- ◆ **Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West** is an annual survey produced by the Policy Analysis and Research unit, with detailed data on tuition and fees at all public institutions in the West. While the data collected for this publication go back in some cases to the mid-1980s, in recent years the unit has sought to improve the reliability of the data through additional accuracy checks and through improved survey instructions and definitions. This past year the unit also queried respondents about the degree to which public institutions in the West employ tuition differentiation policies and practices, the first such attempt to gather this information at the institutional level. This annual project supports the development of a *Policy Insights* on tuition and fees and also provides the vital information on tuition required by the Student Exchange Programs, run by WICHE's Programs and Services unit.
- ◆ **Workforce reports** make the connection between education and work clear. The Programs and Services unit's new workforce-brief series *A Closer Look at Healthcare Workforce Needs in the West*, informs policymakers and higher education decision makers in the Western states about education and employment trends (the oral healthcare workforce and the primary care physician workforce were two recent topics). In 2010 the briefs will evaluate the regional workforce needs in veterinary medicine, with an emphasis on veterinarians who are willing to serve in the less popular but critical areas, such as public health, food safety, biosecurity, and food/animal practices. Additional issues are planned for public health, the allied health professions, optometry, and podiatry. In addition to providing much needed information, these briefs will help WICHE determine if other fields with significant workforce shortages should be added to PSEP or WRGP.
- ◆ **Other publications and services:** Our Website ([www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)) posts a slew of reports and newsletters (such as *NewsCap* and the SSI newsletter), as well as hosting the WCET online community and archiving a host of resources, including the Mental Health Grand Rounds Webcasts.

# WICHE WORKPLAN 2010

## EXISTING ACTIVITIES

### Finance

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- Annual *Tuition and Fees* report (GF)
- *Non-Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners* (Lumina)
- *Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid* (Lumina)
- Performance measurement improvement in the Western states public mental health programs
- Legislative Advisory Committee
- State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) (GF, Lumina, Pathways)
- Evaluation of Colorado's College Opportunity Fund (COF) (Colorado Department of Higher Education, Donnell-Kay Foundation)
- Master Property Program, insurance and risk consortium (self-funding)
- Collaborative purchasing through MHEC/WICHE Xerox contracts (self-funding)

### Access & Success

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- Student Exchange Programs: Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP); Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP); Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) (state-funded)
- Internet Course Exchange (ICE) (Sloan Foundation and membership dues)
- State Scholars Initiative (OVAE)
- Bridges to the Professoriate (HHS)
- *Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid* (Lumina)
- *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity* (ACT, College Board, and GF)
- *Non-Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners* (Lumina)
- Evaluation of Colorado's College Opportunity Fund (Colorado Department of Higher Education, Donnell-Kay Foundation)
- Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, Sullivan Alliance)
- State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) (GF, Lumina, Pathways)
- Children's mental health improvement projects in Wyoming and South Dakota
- College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network (state subcontracts/U.S. Department of Education)
- Initiatives to expand educational equity for underrepresented ethnic students
- Best Practices in Statewide Transfer and Articulation Systems

### Technology & Innovation

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- Western Academic Leadership Forum (membership dues and TIAA-CREF grant)
- *Fostering Collaborative State-level Education and Workforce Database Development* (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)
- Professional development services to help colleges and universities offer quality e-learning programs, including WCET's annual conference (Oct. 21-24 in Denver), CatalystCAMP for new e-learning professionals (in conjunction with annual conference), Webcast seminars for faculty development, and establishment of an iTunesU channel to access WCET podcasts (WCET)
- Expansion of the services, scope of resources, and number of participants in the eLearning Consortia common interest group, in partnership with Kansas State University's Institute for Academic Alliance (WCET)
- Provision of comparisons of electronic learning software and online course evaluations via the widely recognized EduTools website. (WCET)

- Expansion of utilization of Web 2.0 social networking and new breed of Web-based communications tools, serving as a prototype for other WICHE programs (WCET)

## **Workforce**

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- Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, Sullivan Alliance)
- Development of Student Exchange Program responses to critical workforce shortages, especially in rural and underserved areas
- Regional Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council
- Western Consortium for Rural Social Work (WICHE ICE)
- Healthcare and emerging fields' workforce briefs (GF)
- Collaboration with Colorado Department of Labor to expand access to online education via WICHE ICE in four-state demonstration project (Sloan Foundation)
- Mental health student exchange
- Building partnerships for competency: public mental health workforce development
- Rural mental health training initiatives

## **Accountability**

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- *Fostering Collaborative State-level Education and Workforce Database* (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)
- *Benchmarks: WICHE Region* (GF)
- *Electronic Regional Fact Book: Policy Indicators for Higher Education* (GF)
- *Policy Insights* on a range of higher education issues (GF)
- Facilitation of the Western States Decision Support Group for Public Mental Health (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- *Electronic Policy Alerts and Stat Alerts* (GF)
- Policy publications clearinghouse (GF)
- State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) (GF, Lumina, Pathways)
- Transparency By Design: collaboration with the President's Forum to develop outcome and quality measures for leading online education institutions (WCET)
- Launching of the initial phase of the Transparency By Design Website, to educate adult students to become better consumers of online education (WCET)
- Establishment of a knowledge base of existing research and best practices about academic integrity and student verification in online learning in response to Higher Education Opportunity Act legislation, serving as a resource to institutions and the accrediting community (WCET)



# NEW DIRECTIONS

(approved by the commission)

## Finance

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- Technical assistance with state financial aid program design and funding (single-state support, as requested)

## Access & Success

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- Expanded access to cyber-infrastructure, research and education networks, and applications for geographically remote or underserved institutions, including minority-serving institutions in the West by working with national broadband initiatives of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Technology and Innovation)
- Establishment of a knowledge base of existing research and good practices that improve student retention in online courses and programs (WCET)
- *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity* methodology review and expansion
- Expansion of WICHE ICE to develop new multi-institution academic collaborations to produce online courses and programs in high-demand fields

## Technology & Innovation

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- Transitioning EduTools to a new model focused on community contributions of knowledge, in partnership with WCET's new LMS/CMS common interest group and with the National K-20 Initiative of Internet2 (WCET)
- Advancement of the work of the new common interest group on academic administration and academic policies related to e-learning, attracting more academic administrators to actively participate in peer discussions of a variety of academic and faculty issues related to distance education, online education, and technology-enhanced learning (WCET)
- Expansion of the availability and use of research and education networks (state, regional, and national) for health and mental health services and related educational outreach (Technology and Innovation, Mental Health)
- Development of a broadband technology policy and awareness initiative that supports individual state and regional efforts to deploy, connect, and use advanced networks in support of education, healthcare, and research by working with national broadband initiatives of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Technology and Innovation)
- Technologically enhance the State Higher Education Policy Center (SHEPC) learning center
- Expansion of ICE (Sloan and memberships)

## Workforce

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- Expansion of professional advisory councils (health professions)
- Survey of PSEP medical and dental schools' rural track and pipeline programs to identify best practices
- Assessment of Mental Health Program distance-learning opportunities for California's small and frontier counties (Mental Health and WCET)
- Collaboration with Colorado Department of Labor to expand access to online education via WICHE ICE in four-state demonstration project (Sloan Foundation)
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# ON THE HORIZON

(not yet submitted to the commission)

## Finance

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- Residency policies
- Research and analysis of outcome-based funding approaches

## Access & Success

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- Expanding adult degree completion through online education via ICE
- Expansion of the State Scholars Initiative with new funding
- Broadening on-campus and online educational options for active service members and veterans

## Technology & Innovation

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- Research on strategies and good practices that promote use of open educational resources in higher education (WCET)
- Research on effective intervention strategies to increase student retention and student success in online courses and programs (WCET)

## Workforce

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- Policy and Mental Health collaboration on recidivism reduction in the prison population
- Assisting states in identifying academic program development needs and exploring new regional student exchange opportunities
- Health and allied health workforce development and policy
- Workforce credentialing systems
- Forging collaborations between Western higher education agencies and institutions and state departments of labor and workforce development
- Extending the Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce initiative into other WICHE states

## Accountability

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- International Comparisons of Learning Outcomes
- Research and analysis of outcome-based funding approaches
- Second phase of the Transparency By Design Website: the site will improve and enrich the institutional and program data offered, recruit more institutions to participate, and expand marketing of the site to attract more users (WCET)

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# WICHE COMMISSION

WICHE's 45 commissioners are appointed by their governors from among State Higher Education Executive Officers, college and university presidents, legislators, and business leaders from the 15 Western states. This regional commission provides governance and guidance to WICHE's staff in Boulder, CO. Jane Nichols, vice chancellor for academic affairs at the Nevada System of Higher Education, is the 2009 chair of the WICHE Commission; Thomas Buchanan, president of the University of Wyoming, is vice chair.

## ALASKA

\*Diane M. Barrans (WICHE Chair, 2005), Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education  
Patricia Brown Heller, retired State Director, U.S. Senate  
Marshall L. Lind, former Chancellor of Higher Education, University of Alaska Fairbanks

## ARIZONA

Leah Bornstein, President, Coconino College, Flagstaff  
David Lorenz, retired Vice President of Administration and Finance, Northern Arizona University  
\*Joel Sideman, Executive Director, Arizona Board of Regents

## CALIFORNIA

Appointments pending.

## COLORADO

Joseph Garcia, President, Colorado State University-Pueblo  
Kaye Howe, Executive Director, National Science Digital Library  
\*David E. Skaggs, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

## HAWAII

\*Roy T. Ogawa (Immediate Past WICHE Chair), Attorney at Law, Ogawa, Lau, Nakamura & Jew  
\*Roberta M. Richards, Principal, Pauoa Elementary School  
Helene I. Sokugawa, Institutional Analyst, University of Hawaii, Manoa

## IDAHO

\*Robert W. Kustra, President, Boise State University  
Michael Rush, Executive Director, Idaho State Board of Education  
Arthur Vailas, President, Idaho State University

## MONTANA

Dan W. Harrington, Former State Senator  
Kerra Melvin, former Student Regent, student, Montana Tech  
\*Mary Sheehy Moe, Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year Education, Montana University System

## NEVADA

Warren Hardy, State Senator  
\*Jane A. Nichols (WICHE Chair), Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education  
\*Carl Shaff, Educational Consultant

## NEW MEXICO

Dede Feldman, State Senator  
\*Patricia Sullivan, Assistant Dean, College of Engineering, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces  
One appointment pending.

## NORTH DAKOTA

Bill Goetz, Chancellor, North Dakota University System  
Pamela J. Kostelecky, Member, State Board of Higher Education  
\*David E. Nething (WICHE Chair, 2006), State Senator

## OREGON

Ryan P. Deckert, President, Oregon Business Association  
\*Camille Preus, Commissioner, Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development  
James K. Sager, Senior Education Policy Advisor, Education and Workforce Policy Office

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Robert Burns, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Political Science Department, South Dakota State University, and Dean Emeritus, SDSU Honors College  
James O. Hansen, Regent, South Dakota Board of Regents  
\*Robert T. (Tad) Perry (WICHE Chair, 2002), Executive Director, South Dakota Board of Regents

## UTAH

Bonnie Jean Beesley, Vice Chair, Utah Board of Regents  
Peter C. Knudson, State Senator  
\*William Sederburg, Commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education

## WASHINGTON

\*Ann Daley, Executive Director, Higher Education Coordinating Board  
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney, State Representative  
Jeanne Kohl-Welles, State Senator

## WYOMING

\*Thomas Buchanan (WICHE Vice Chair), President, University of Wyoming  
Debbie Hammons, State Representative  
\*Klaus Hanson, Emeritus Professor of German, University of Wyoming  
  
\*Executive Committee member

## WICHE Staff and Contact Information

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**Louis Fox**, executive director, WCET; vice president, WICHE Technology and Innovation  
**Demarée Michelau**, director of policy analysis, Policy Analysis and Research  
**Jere Mock**, vice president, Programs and Services

**Dennis Mohatt**, vice president for behavioral health; director, Mental Health Program  
**Brian Prescott**, director of policy research, Policy Analysis and Research  
**Terese Rainwater**, program director, State Scholars Initiative  
**Margo Schultz**, program coordinator, Student Exchange Programs  
**Pat Shea**, program director, WICHE ICE and WALF, Programs and Services

**For further information, please contact Erin Barber, assistant to the president:  
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