WICHE INSIGHTS

May 2021

Colleen Falkenstern, Senior Research Analyst

wiche.edu

Tuition and Fees, Appropriations, and Financial Aid in the West: Aligning Resources to Aid COVID-19 Recovery Efforts

Introduction

The far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 have generated unprecedented challenges for higher education institutions, states, and individuals over the past year. This includes significant budget implications that resulted in a strained and uncertain fiscal environment as states seek to meet goals and priorities while providing affordable and accessible postsecondary opportunities.

This edition of *WICHE Insights* discusses the most recent results of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) annual survey of tuition and fees at public postsecondary institutions in the West. We explore trends in state financial aid and higher education appropriations and highlight the ways that COVID-19 has impacted higher education finance over the past fiscal year (FY).

The most recent results of the survey present a positive outlook for tuition rates in the Western region, as there was minimal average increase in rates at both two- and four-year institutions between academic years (AY) 2019-20 and 2020-21. However, it is important to recognize that, in most cases, AY 2020-21 tuition rates were set prior to the onset of the pandemic and reflect relatively little impact of the ongoing fiscal challenges brought on by COVID-19.

On the other hand, the current fiscal year's state appropriations data demonstrate a departure from recent trends in state funding in the region, as overall student funding for higher education took a significant cut in FY 2021. Federal aid over the past year has provided some relief to state higher education budgets and the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocates substantial funds (about $220 billion) directly to state governments on top of additional aid directly to higher education institutions. While some states are expected to restore funding in the upcoming fiscal year, several states in the region are expected to face significant budget shortfalls with potentially damaging implications for higher education. And while there is no exact timeline for moving beyond COVID-19, as states and higher education institutions look ahead to recovery efforts, it is imperative that meeting strategic priorities is done through aligned fiscal policies that target key populations and address gaps in student access and success that were further widened as the result of the pandemic.

Key Takeaways

- Regional average tuition and fees for resident undergraduates at public four-year institutions were $9,890 in AY 2020-21, an increase of 1.2 percent from AY 2019-20.
- Regional average in-district tuition and fees at public two-year institutions increased 0.7 percent from AY 2019-20, to $4,051 in AY 2020-21.
- State financial aid per student in the West was slightly lower than the national average in AY 2018-19, but the share that was need-based aid was well above the national average.
- Overall in the region, state support for higher education decreased 6.3 percent between FY 2020 and FY 2021, although when taking into account the $649 million in federal COVID-19 relief spending, the decrease over the past year was 4.0 percent.
- COVID-19 recovery and reengagement efforts should be addressed through strategic alignment of appropriations, tuition, and financial aid.

Tuition and Fees in the West

WICHE's annual survey of tuition and fees collects the resident and nonresident tuition and fees at public two- and four-year institutions in the WICHE region for undergraduate and graduate students. The most recent survey was administered in the summer of 2020 to state higher education executive offices, system offices, and institutions in each of the 17 states and territories in the region.[1] The survey respondents vary from state to state, depending on governance structures and other factors, but the results represent full coverage of public higher education institutions in the West. Unless otherwise indicated, tuition and fees rates are in current dollars, and state- and regional-average rates are weighted by full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment.[2] Data on the website provide both weighted and unweighted averages.[3] Complete data from the survey are available at wiche.edu/policy-research-/data-resources/tuition-fees/ and enable comparisons in rates over time, across states and territories, and between Carnegie Classifications.

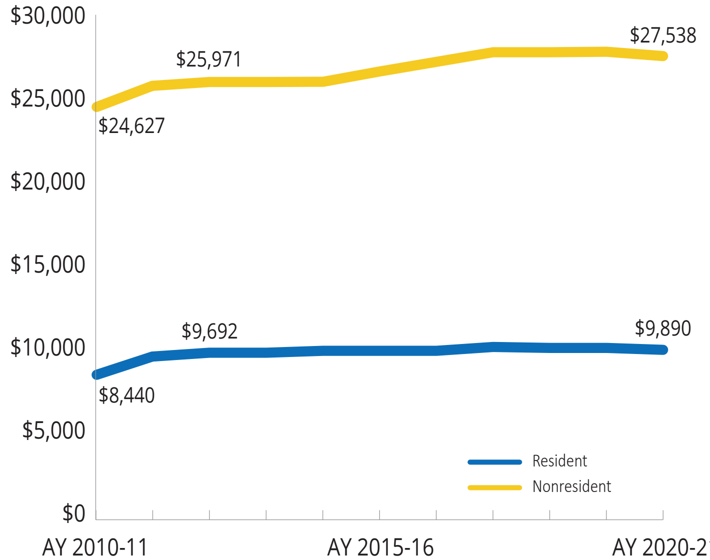
Tuition and Fees at Public Four-Year Institutions

Regional average tuition and fees for resident undergraduates at public four-year institutions were $9,890 in AY 2020-21, an increase of $114 (1.2 percent) from AY 2019-20, which was the lowest reported annual increase in the past decade. When adjusting for inflation, the regional average tuition and fees decreased by $62 (0.6 percent) in the past year.[4] The AY 2020-21 regional average tuition and fees were about 6.3 percent lower than the national average ($10,560) and increased at about the same rate in the past year as the nation (1.1 percent).[5] Tuition and fees for nonresidents in the region averaged $27,538 in AY 2020-21, an increase of $207 (0.8 percent) from AY 2019-20, and when adjusted for inflation decreased by $284 (1.0 percent).

Undergraduate Tuition and Fees in the Past Decade

In the past decade, tuition and fees for resident undergraduates increased 17.2 percent ($1,450, constant 2020 dollars), from $8,440 in AY 2010-11 to $9,890 in AY 2020-21 (Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, most of the increase in tuition and fees rates over the past decade occurred prior to AY 2012-13. Since AY 2012-13, average tuition and fees have increased

Figure 1. Tuition and Fees at Public Four-Year Institutions in the WICHE Region, AY 2010-11 to AY 2020-21, Constant 2020 Dollars



just 2.0 percent. Since AY 2010-11, average tuition and fees for nonresident undergraduates increased at a lower rate (11.8 percent) than the resident average. While resident tuition and fees stabilized in the past eight years, the nonresident average tuition and fees rate increased 6.7 percent since AY 2012-13.

State Variation in Tuition and Fees Rates

While the regional average tuition and fees reflect a positive trend of recent minimal increases, there is significant variation in state averages, both in terms of the rates students pay and the rate of change over the past year. As shown in Figure 2, state average tuition and fees for resident undergraduates ranged from $5,791 in Wyoming to $11,853 in Oregon.[6] There was also wide variation in tuition and fees rates across systems and institutions. For example, in AY 2020-21, tuition and fees at institutions in the University of California system averaged $14,076, about 1.4 times the state average in AY 2020-21 ($9,802). On the other hand, tuition and fees at institutions in the California State University system, where over 60 percent of the state's four-year students are enrolled, averaged $7,386 in AY 2020-21, which is well below the state and regional averages.

There was also considerable variation in the rate of change in average tuition and fees across states in the region (Figure 3). Two states, Arizona and South Dakota, had no change in average tuition and fees between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21, and Idaho had a reported decrease of less than 1 percent. Four other states – California, Colorado, Hawai'i, and

Montana – reported average increases of less than one percent in the last year. Similar to the regional average rate of change, seven states reported the lowest average rate of annual change in tuition and fees over the past decade in AY 2020-21. On the other hand, six states reported an annual increase of 4 percent or higher, including a reported 9.3 percent increase at New Mexico's public four-year institutions.

Figure 2. Average Tuition and Fees for Resident Undergraduates, Public Four-Year Institutions, AY 2020-21

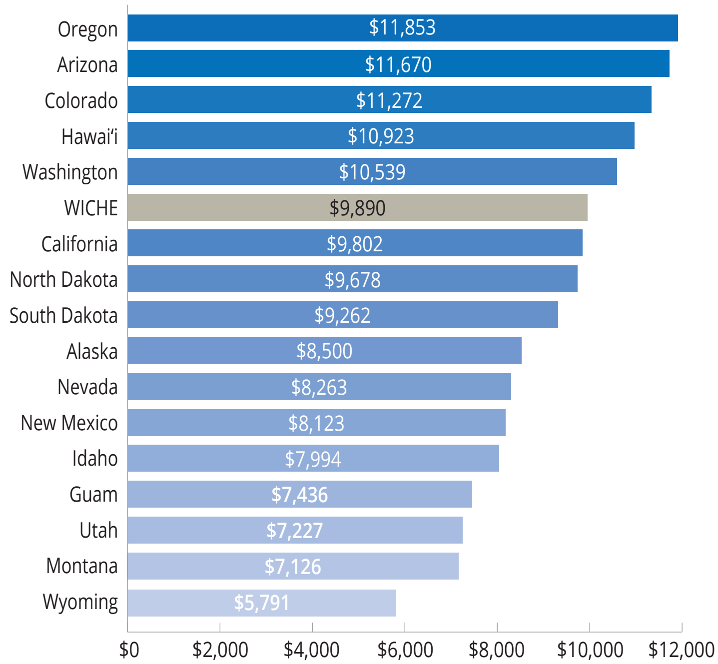
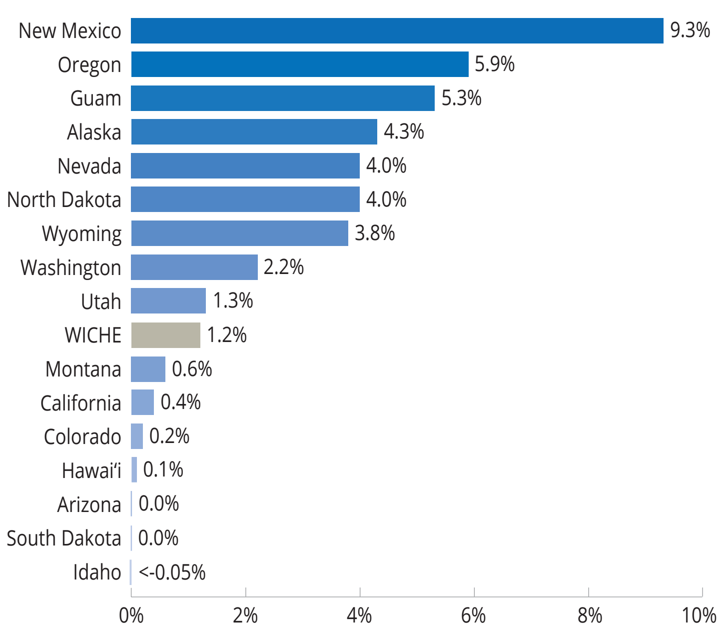


Figure 3. Average Tuition and Fees for Resident Undergraduates, Public Four-Year Institutions, Percent Change AY 2019-20 to AY 2020-21, Current Dollars



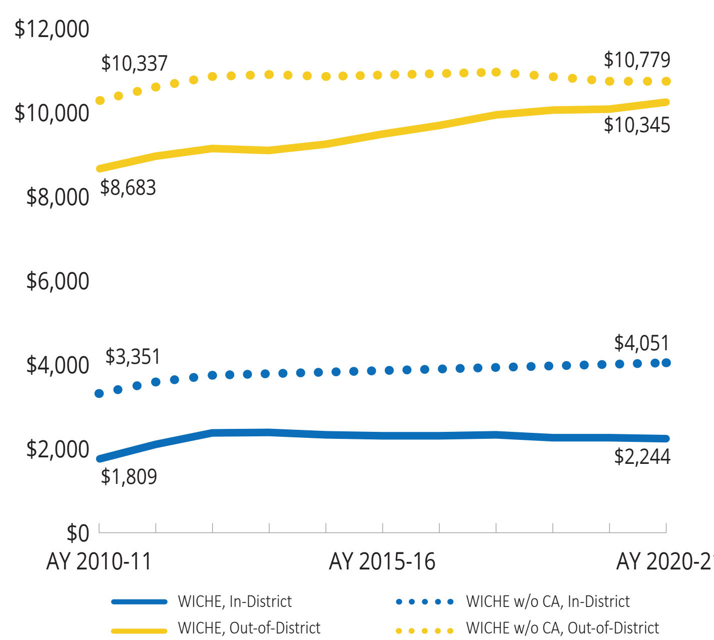
Tuition and Fees at Public Two-Year Institutions

Regional average tuition and fees for in-district undergraduates at public two-year institutions (excluding California) were $4,051 in AY 2020-21, an increase of $30 (0.7 percent) from AY 2019-20.[7] When including California, the regional average tuition and fees for in-district students was $2,244 in AY 2020-21, an increase of just $10 from AY 2019-20. When adjusting for inflation, average tuition and fees (excluding California) decreased by 1.0 percent ($43) between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21.[8] Compared to the nation, the regional average tuition and fees for in-district students was 7.4 percent higher than the national average ($3,770); however, nationally tuition and fees at public two-year institutions across the nation increased at a higher rate (1.8 percent) over the past year.[9]

Undergraduate Tuition and Fees in the Past Decade

Over the past decade, in-district tuition and fees at public two-year institutions (excluding California) increased 20.9 percent ($700; constant 2020 dollars). When including California, average rates increased 24.1 percent ($435, constant 2020 dollars) since

Figure 4. Tuition and Fees at Public Two-Year Institutions in the WICHE Region, AY 2010-11 to AY 2020-21, Constant 2020 Dollars



Detailed tuition and fees and state finance data available from wiche.edu/tuition-fees

AY 2010-11 (Figure 4). Similar to trends at four-year institutions, average tuition and fees for in-district students at public two-year institutions have remained relatively flat over the past eight years, and when adjusted for inflation, have actually decreased when California is included in the average. Regional average tuition and fees for out-of-district students (excluding California) has followed a similar trend over the past five years and decreased by 1.8 percent ($194, constant 2020 dollars) since AY 2015-16. However, when including California in the regional average, tuition and fees for out-of-district students increased 8.0 percent ($769, constant 2020 dollars) since AY 2015-16.

State Variation in Tuition and Fees Rates

State average tuition and fees for in-district undergraduates at two-year institutions ranged from $1,380 in California to $7,078 at South Dakota's technical colleges (Figure 5). Between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21, six states reported no change in average in-district tuition and fees, and Arizona had a 12.8 percent decrease in average tuition and fees as a result of the largest community college district in the state cutting tuition rates by 20 percent in response to COVID-19 (Figure 6). Additionally, six states had increases between 0.5 and 3.0 percent, and three states reported average increases greater than 5.0 percent between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21.

COVID-19 Impacts on Tuition and Fees

The process to set tuition and fees varies widely by institution, system, and state across the region. Typically, however, academic year tuition and fees are determined in the preceding winter and spring. As a result, in 2020, there was variability in how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the tuition and fee-setting process and the rates themselves.

On the tuition and fees survey issued in summer 2020, WICHE included voluntary questions that addressed the effects of COVID-19 on the decision-making process and tuition and fees rates. In most cases it was found that the pandemic had no impact on AY 2020-21 tuition and fees, as rates were decided prior to the onset of the pandemic. There were a few institutions and systems that specifically addressed financial concerns for students and families by adjusting tuition and fees in response to COVID-19. For example, Maricopa Community College District in Arizona reduced AY 2020-21 tuition rates to a flat rate of $1,020 per semester for all resident students enrolled in at least 12 credits per semester, resulting in a 20 percent decrease in tuition and fees rates in the past year for each institution in the district.

Figure 5. Average Tuition and Fees for In-District Undergraduates, Public Two-Year Institutions, AY 2020-21

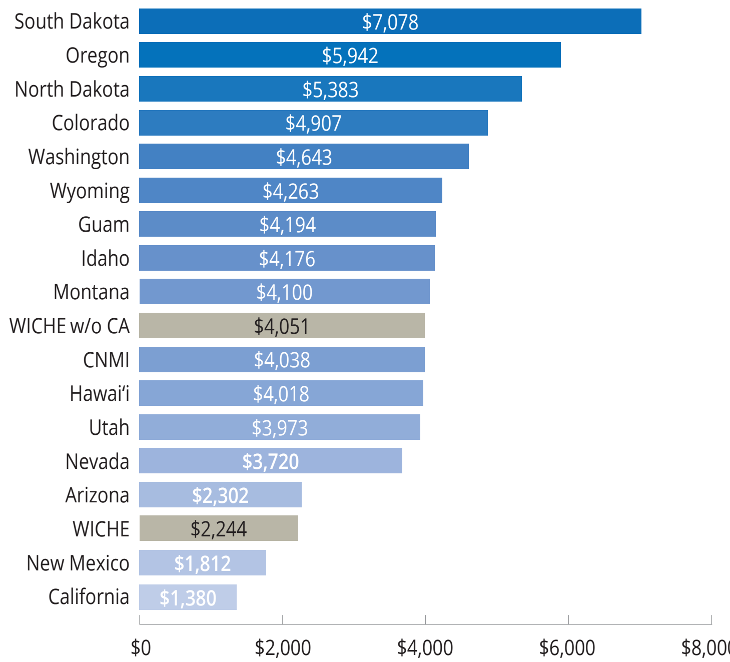
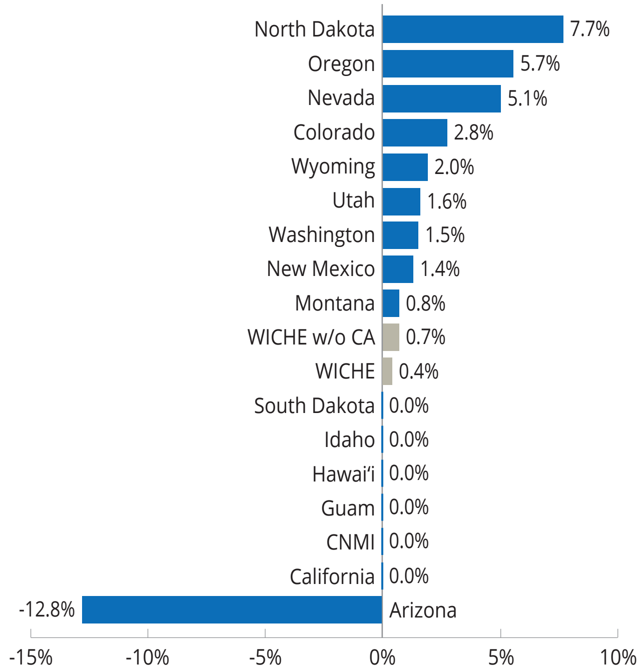


Figure 6. Average Tuition and Fees for In-District Undergraduates, Public Two-Year Institutions, Percent Change AY 2019-20 to AY 2020-21, Current Dollars



Looking ahead, as states and institutions continue to face considerable budget challenges, it can be expected that tuition and fees rates will potentially be more impacted by the pandemic and resulting economic disruption for the AY 2021-22 academic year than they were for AY 2020-21, although support from federal relief packages may offset some state fiscal constraints. That said, it is important in times of economic crisis that states view tuition and fees in alignment with other components of state finance – appropriations and financial aid – in order to advance state goals, such as affordability, access, and improving attainment rates.

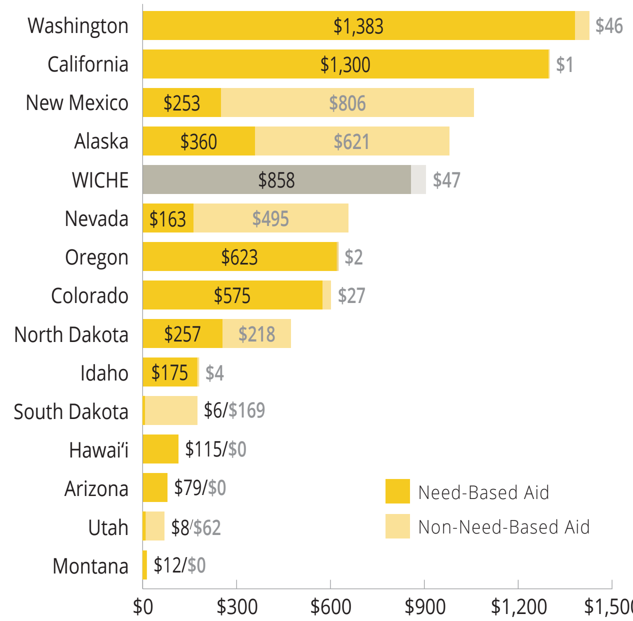
State Grant Aid in the West

State financial aid, when aligned with tuition and fees and appropriations, can be used as a critical policy lever for promoting affordability, access, and success in higher education. Additionally, state aid programs should be structured in alignment with state goals and priorities in a manner that directs financial resources to targeted populations. The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) provides a comprehensive review of state aid awarded, including that awarded to undergraduate and graduate students by type of aid. For the purpose of this brief, all aid discussed is for undergraduate students only.

According to NASSGAP, total grant aid per student in the WICHE region averaged $905 in AY 2018-19, which was slightly below the national average of $930.[10] Although average aid per student was below the national average, 95 percent of state aid in the West was awarded based on need in AY 2018-19, considerably higher than the national average (76 percent).[11]

> Although average aid per student was below the national average, 95 percent of state aid in the West was awarded based on need in AY 2018-19, considerably higher than the national average (76 percent).

Figure 7. Need-Based and Non-Need-Based Grant Aid per Undergraduate, AY 2018-19



Source: National Association of State Sponsored Grant Aid Programs. See endnote 10.

State aid programs are structured differently across states and, as a result, there is significant variation in how states in the West award aid to students, both in terms of eligibility for awards and the amount of aid dollars available to students. In AY 2018-19, eight states in the region awarded at least 95 percent of aid dollars based on need, including five states awarding 100 percent of state grant aid based on need (Figure 7). Among the remaining states, the share of aid awarded based on need ranged from 3 percent to 54 percent. The distribution of aid based on need highlights a state's commitment to addressing price barriers for the neediest students, but it masks the amount of aid dollars awarded to students. In AY 2018-19, four states reported average aid per student that was higher than the regional and national averages. On the other hand, six states had average aid amounts lower than $200 per student in AY 2018-19.

It is important to note that these data are lagged and represent students receiving aid in AY 2018-19, and do not take into account changes in state aid programs over the past couple of years. For example, in 2019, Utah implemented a new statewide need-based aid program, the Utah Promise Scholarship, that is not reflected in these data.[12] Another need-based aid program that is not included these data is the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship that was started in 2020 and recently funded at the same levels for the upcoming academic year.[13] Lastly, in 2021, the South Dakota Legislature adopted Senate Bill 171 that, along with private funding, set up an endowment for the state's first need-based aid program, the Freedom Scholarship.[14]

State Fiscal Support

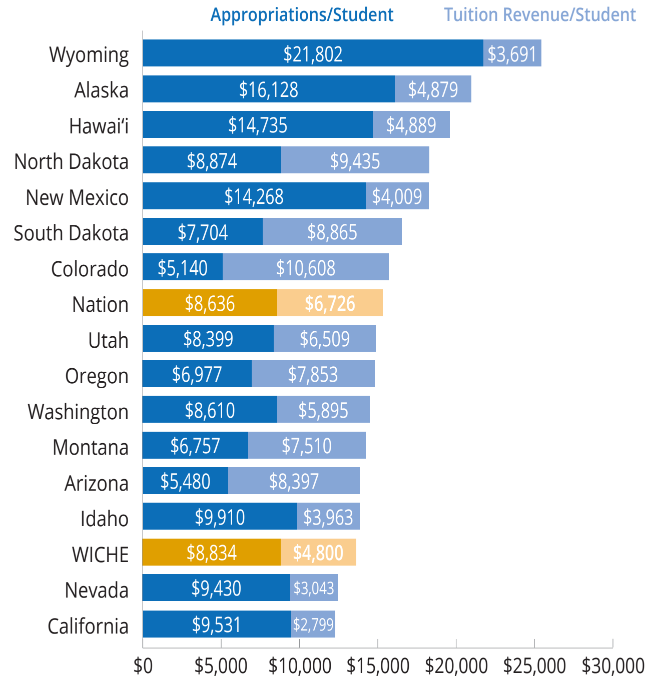
State appropriations represent the largest fiscal resource provided to higher education systems and institutions, and in many states in the region, appropriations remain the majority of higher education revenue on a per-student basis. This brief discusses two sources of state appropriations data, the State Higher Education Executive Officer Association's annual *State Higher Education Finance (SHEF)* report and the Illinois State University's Center for Education Policy's annual *Grapevine* survey of higher education funding. There are key differences between these data sources that are important to note. SHEF includes public higher education funding through FY 2020, which for almost all states in the West would have ended on June 30, 2020, and limited the impact of COVID-19 on funding levels. *Grapevine* data discussed in this brief are through FY 2021, which means that they reflect the current fiscal year and, as discussed below, demonstrate the impacts of COVID-19 on state support for higher education.

State fiscal support in the WICHE region appeared to fare better than the national average as state appropriations per student in the West increased 3.9 percent between FY 2019 and FY 2020 and were $8,834 in FY 2020.

State Higher Education Finance (SHEF): FY 2020 Survey Results

According to the recently released data from the SHEF report, FY 2020 state appropriations per student in the United States averaged $8,636, an increase of 2.9 percent compared to FY 2019.[15] Nationally, total higher education revenue per student, which includes tuition revenue in addition to state appropriations, was $15,361 in FY 2020, which was the highest reported educational revenue per student in the past 20 years. In the WICHE region, total education revenue per student was below the national average ($13,634), but again was at the highest levels for the region in the last 20 years (Figure 8). State fiscal support in the WICHE region, however, appeared to fare better than the national average as state appropriations per student in the West increased 3.9 percent between FY 2019 and FY 2020 and were $8,834 in FY 2020. Appropriations per student in the region ranged from $5,140 (Colorado) to $21,802 (Wyoming) in FY 2020.[16]

Figure 8. Higher Education Appropriations and Tuition Revenue per Student, FY 2020



Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. See endnote 15.

Appropriations per student provide a benchmark for how states are meeting higher education demands, but mask some of the underlying trends in total fiscal support in relation to fluctuating higher education enrollments (see box on the following page). For example, enrollment in the WICHE region decreased slightly between FY 2019 and FY 2020 (0.2 percent), and as a result the one-year percentage increase in total appropriations (3.7 percent) was about the same as the increase in appropriations per student (3.9 percent) (see Table 1 on the following page for more detail).[17] Twelve states in the region experienced enrollment decreases between FY 2019 and FY 2020, and in many of these states that meant appropriations per student increased at a higher rate than total appropriations. This trend is most notable in Alaska, which had an overall decrease in state appropriations of 8.9 percent between FY 2019 and FY 2020; however, due to an even larger percentage decrease in enrollments, appropriations per student actually increased by 1.2 percent between FY 2019 and FY 2020. On the other hand, in Arizona state appropriations increased by 4.2 percent between

Record revenue or declining state support – Which is it, and what should policymakers do with this information?

The answer for higher education is frustratingly complicated and varies depending on context and perspective. As shown in Table 1, most states in the WICHE region increased total appropriations for public higher education between FY 2010 and FY 2020, bringing the sector closer to levels of state support per student that were seen prior to the Great Recession. That increased state support coupled with increasing tuition and generally decreasing enrollment levels over that same period, has resulted in higher levels of per student revenue than seen in the past 20 years.

Additionally, as is also shown in Table 1, changes in total appropriations by states interact with changes in enrollment, leading to results that seem to contradict themselves (e.g., Alaska's significant decrease in total appropriations coupled with an even-larger decrease in enrollment to produce a substantial uptick in per student revenue). While these overall trends are important, they mask substantial variability and important context across states.

However, these data don't yet reflect the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (and accompanying federal relief funds), so caution is warranted before jumping to conclusions that either a) higher education is robustly funded or b) states should be shouldering a greater portion of the costs.

For policymakers, this underscores the need to consider how state appropriations, tuition, and financial aid all move in concert when setting policy.

Table 1. Percent Change in Total Appropriations, Appropriations per Student, FTE Enrollment, FY 2019 to FY 2020 and FY 2010 to FY 2020

	FY 2019 to FY 2020			FY 2010 to FY 2020		
	Total Appropriations	Appropriations per FTE	FTE	Total Appropriations	Appropriations per FTE	FTE
Alaska	-8.9%	1.2%	-10.0%	-20.1%	7.7%	-25.8%
Arizona	4.2%	-3.1%	7.5%	-18.2%	-32.4%	21.1%
California	2.7%	2.9%	-0.2%	26.8%	27.5%	-0.6%
Colorado	9.5%	9.5%	0.0%	2.4%	4.4%	-1.9%
Hawai'i	-2.2%	-0.8%	-1.5%	16.2%	33.3%	-12.8%
Idaho	2.4%	1.1%	1.3%	15.6%	3.3%	12.0%
Montana	4.3%	7.6%	-3.1%	-0.6%	9.8%	-9.4%
Nevada	1.4%	-0.2%	1.6%	-4.9%	-9.3%	4.9%
New Mexico	4.9%	17.6%	-10.8%	11.7%	54.6%	-27.7%
North Dakota	1.8%	5.3%	-3.3%	-4.7%	10.1%	-13.4%
Oregon	6.5%	11.5%	-4.5%	21.4%	40.9%	-13.9%
South Dakota	12.7%	15.7%	-2.6%	15.0%	16.3%	-1.1%
Utah	7.9%	8.1%	-0.2%	30.6%	21.0%	7.9%
Washington	7.7%	10.2%	-2.3%	9.0%	20.4%	-9.5%
Wyoming	10.2%	12.9%	-2.4%	19.2%	40.9%	-15.4%
WICHE	3.7%	3.9%	-0.2%	16.4%	17.9%	-1.2%
Nation	2.3%	2.9%	-0.6%	1.7%	5.9%	-4.0%

Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. See endnote 15.

Detailed tuition and fees and state finance data available from wiche.edu/tuition-fees

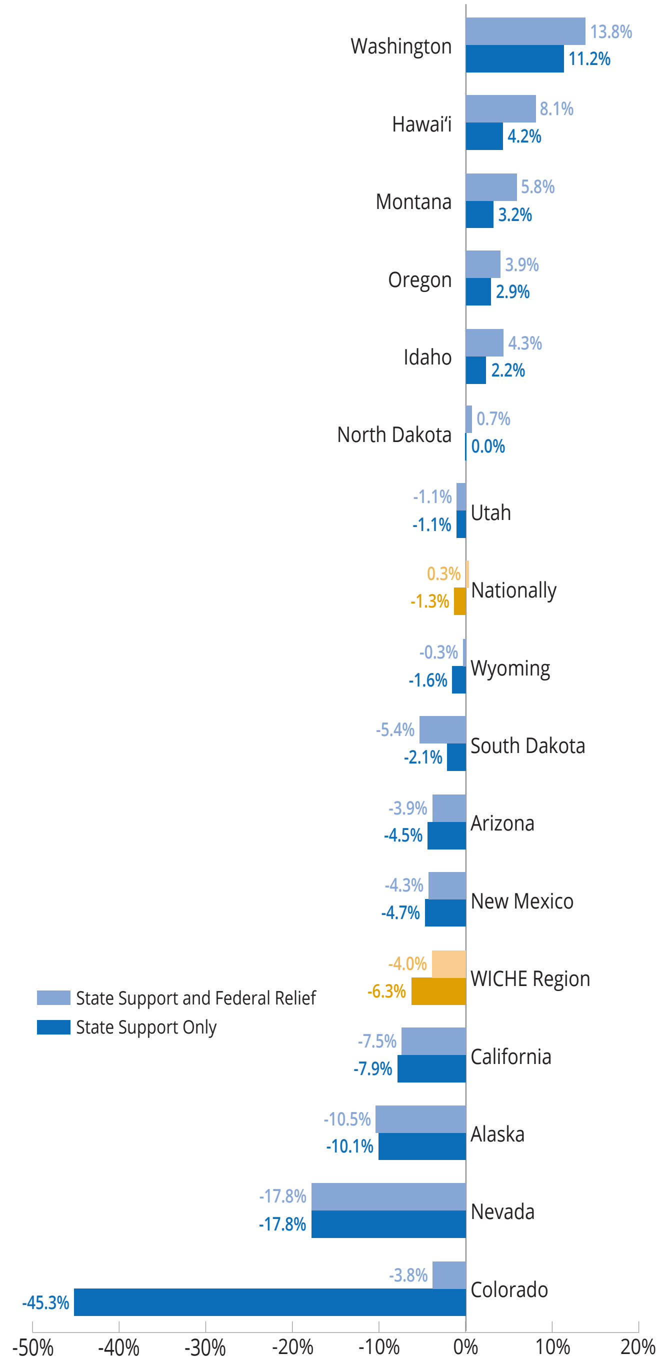
FY 2019 and FY 2020 while enrollment increased by 7.5 percent, resulting in a decrease of 3.1 percent in funding per student between FY 2019 and FY 2020.[18]

Compared to 10 years ago, when state appropriations were declining sharply during the Great Recession and postsecondary enrollments were at their highest levels, most states in the WICHE region had higher levels of state funding in FY 2020. Regionally, total state support increased 16.4 percent between FY 2010 and FY 2020, well above the national average rate of increase (1.7 percent). In terms of appropriations per student, all but two states have surpassed FY 2010 levels, ranging from an increase of 3.3 percent in Idaho to a 54.6 percent increase in New Mexico between FY 2010 and FY 2020. Between FY 2010 and FY 2020, education revenues shifted as a greater share of overall revenues came from tuition than from state appropriations, with most of the increases in tuition revenue as share of total revenue per student occurring between FY 2010 and FY 2014, when state support was decreasing. As state funding has recovered in most states over the past several years, the share of education revenue from tuition has remained relatively stable, or even decreased, in most states. In the WICHE region, tuition revenue increased from 30 percent of the region's higher education revenue in FY 2010 to 35 percent in FY 2020, which was 9 percentage points below the national average (44 percent) in FY 2020. Across WICHE states, tuition revenue ranged from 14 percent of education revenue (Wyoming) to 67 percent (Colorado) in FY 2020.[19]

Grapevine: FY 2021 Survey Results

The results from the FY 2021 *Grapevine* survey of state fiscal support for higher education suggest that nationally, fiscal support for higher education remained relatively the same in FY 2021 compared to FY 2020.[20] This is in part due to the over $1.9 billion from federal COVID-19 relief money that was passed through states to higher education in the past year. For example, between FY 2020 and FY 2021, state support for higher education decreased 1.3 percent, but when taking into account federal dollars to higher education, total funding to higher education increased 0.3 percent in the past year (Figure 9). However, based on data from *Grapevine*, state funding trends in the West suggest that states in the region faced more considerable cuts to higher education in the past year compared to the nation. Overall in the region, state support for higher education decreased 6.3 percent between FY 2020 and FY 2021, although when taking

Figure 9. Percent Change in Fiscal Support for Higher Education, FY 2020 to FY 2021



Source: Illinois State University Center for the Study of Education Policy and State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. See endnote 20.

into the account the $649 million in federal COVID-19 relief spending, the decrease over the past year was 4.0 percent.[21]

As shown in Figure 9, nine states reported decreases in state support between FY 2020 and FY 2021. These cuts ranged from a decrease of 1.1 percent in Utah to a 45.3 percent decrease in Colorado. It is important to note that although Colorado's state support for higher education dropped significantly in FY 2021, most of the decrease was recouped through federal aid dollars, which are discussed further in the following section. Additionally, federal relief dollars helped mitigate the impact of state support decreases in five other states in the region, although to a lesser extent than observed in Colorado. On the other hand, several states in the region had funding levels that remained the same or increased in FY 2021 compared to the year prior. In these cases, federal dollars helped buoy higher education fiscal support over the past year.

For many states in the region, the past five years have been a period of restoration and growth in higher education funding, with almost all states recovering from steep budget cuts that occurred during the Great Recession. The one-year trends demonstrated in Figure 9 highlight the initial impact of COVID-19 on state economies and the role of federal relief funds in times of economic crisis. The following section discusses in more detail how federal support to states was targeted to meet higher education needs, and potential impacts on the upcoming fiscal year's state budgets.

Impact of COVID-19 and Federal Support to Higher Education

In spring 2020, as COVID-19 was rapidly changing the higher education landscape and institutions were quickly responding to meet student needs in the transition from in-person to online learning, the economic outlook was bleak and, in many ways, uncertain. States were bracing for budget shortfalls and while the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was poised to provide some fiscal support to states, it was unclear how these dollars would be appropriated to higher education and if it would be enough to alleviate the damaging economic impacts of COVID-19. Fast forward a year, and while COVID-19 is still very much impacting higher education and all sectors of society, there is now somewhat greater clarity about the extent to which the pandemic has affected state budgets and the role of federal dollars in supporting higher education during these unprecedented times.

In total, the federal government has enacted three major pieces of legislation that included direct funds to higher education institutions, education block grants to be allocated by governors, and direct support for state budgets (see Table 2 on the following page for additional information). In March 2020, Congress passed the CARES Act, a $2 trillion relief package of assistance across all sectors of the economy. Included in the CARES Act was an allotment of $30.75 billion for an Education Stabilization Fund, which created four targeted education grant programs: Education Stabilization Fund Discretionary Grants, Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, and Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.[22] In addition to the CARES Act dollars, the Education Stabilization Fund received another $81.9 billion from the December 2020 passage of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), divided between the four categories noted above.[23] In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was enacted, providing more direct funding to higher education ($40 billion) than the CARES Act and the CRRSAA combined.[24]

The largest fund specifically for higher education, the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), totaled $14 billion from the CARES Act. It provided direct fiscal support to higher education institutions and included additional funding for Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), as well as institutions most impacted by COVID-19.[25] An additional $22.7 billion was made available to this fund from the CRRSAA in December 2020, and $40 billion more was added by the ARPA. The CARES Act required institutions to allocate at least 50 percent of funds directly to students through emergency financial aid grants. The legislation also allows institutions to use the remaining funds to cover costs associated with significant changes in instructional delivery as the result of the pandemic. The funds allocated through the CRRSAA provided more relief to institutions with the requirement that they spend at least as much as they did in the CARES Act on direct student financial assistance, while ARPA returned to the 50 percent threshold of direct student financial assistance.

In addition to the financial support through the HEERF, higher education institutions and systems received fiscal support through other discretionary funds created by the CARES Act. The Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund was established with $3 billion and was made available to local education agencies, institutions of higher education, or other education entities through subgrants or contracts.[33] The CRRSAA authorized an additional $4 billion to the GEER Fund with $1.3 billion

Table 2. Summary of Key Funding Sources for Higher Education from Federal Relief Bills

		Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA)	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
	Funding	$14 billion	$23 billion	$40 billion
Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)	Purpose and Requirements of Funds	Institutions required to allot at least 50 percent of aid directly to students in the form of emergency grants to cover expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to COVID-19. The remaining funds to be used by institutions to defray the expense of significant changes in instructional delivery due to COVID-19.[26]	Institutions required to spend spend the same dollar amount on direct student aid as was provided through CARES Act HEERF and use remaining funds to defray costs associated with COVID-19.[27]	Institutions required to allot 50 percent of funds for student emergency grants and remaining funds to defray costs associated with COVID-19.[28]
	Funding	$3 billion	$1 billion	N/A
Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund	Purpose and Requirements of Funds	Flexible spending for governors to provide sub grants to local education agencies, institutions of higher education, and other education entities within their jurisdiction to be used to support ongoing efforts in light of COVID-19.[29]	An additional allocation to supplement CARES Act GEER funds for the same purposes described in the CARES Act.[30]	*The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) did not include funding for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund.*
	Funding	$150 billion	N/A	$350 billion ($220 billion appropriated for states, territories, and Tribal governments).
Direct Aid to State and Local Governments	Purpose and Requirements	Allowed state and local governments to make payments to programs that were necessary expenditures due to COVID-19, were not accounted for in the most recent budget, and are incurred between March 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021. An estimated $2.2 billion has been spent on higher education.[31]	*The CRRSAA did not include direct aid to state and local governments.*	Funds are intended to mitigate fiscal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and can be used across a broad range of governmental costs. At this time, it remains unclear how funds will directly support higher education.[32]

to supplement the existing GEER funds awarded to states, and the remaining $2.7 billion reserved for Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) did not allot additional funds to the GEER Fund.[34] The purpose of these funds was to support school districts and institutions that were most significantly impacted by the pandemic and to bolster the ongoing functionality of these entities in supporting students. Almost all states in the WICHE region allocated some portion of GEER funds to higher education institutions, systems, or targeted higher education programs.[35]

The way GEER Fund dollars were allocated to postsecondary education varied across states in terms of the amount of funding distributed to higher education and the types of programming that were funded. Washington was one of the few states in the country that used all GEER funds for higher education, with the majority of GEER dollars ($44 million) distributed across the states' community and technical colleges to help them address increased operating expenses and financial losses in light of the pandemic – with a specific provision that institutions use a portion of funds to support students of color.[36] In some cases, as in Idaho and Oregon, portions of GEER dollars were distributed to support broader approaches to online learning, including increasing accessibility to remote learning opportunities, making technological and infrastructure enhancements, and expanding professional development opportunities related to remote learning.[37] Hawai'i also focused GEER resources on establishing subgrants aimed at expanding remote learning efforts in the state, with the largest portion of the funding to be used to establish a Distance Learning Teacher Academy through the University of Hawai'i.[38] Wyoming used a portion of its GEER allocation to support enhancements to online learning environments at the state's community colleges, with an additional emphasis on supporting adult education learning programs.[39] Other states targeted more specific programs; for example, Alaska and Montana both allocated GEER Fund dollars for their dual enrollment efforts. This included $1.5 million for the University of Alaska's growing online dual enrollment program to ensure students from all districts can access dual credit, and $6.5 million for Montana's One-Two-Free dual enrollment program.[40] South Dakota used about $2 million of its GEER Fund allocation to create Upskill, a short-term certificates program.[41] Both Oregon and Colorado provided GEER-funded subgrants to institutions to be used for additional direct financial assistance to students, with both states targeting those students who were excluded from HEERF student assistance grants under CARES Act guidance and regulations from the U.S. Department of Education – particularly undocumented students and those enrolled in exclusively online programs.[42]

Another federal source of support for higher education was the $150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund, which was created to assist states, local governments, territories, and tribes in addressing pandemic-related expenditures, and was used broadly across the economy, with a limited number of states directing these funds to higher education. In the West, eight states – Arizona, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming – allocated some funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to higher education.[43] In most instances, these resources were directed to institutions to support testing, contact tracing, and other on-the-ground efforts to address the COVID-19 outbreak on campuses. Additionally, Idaho's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Council approved $4 million for the State Board of Education to develop the infrastructure for Idaho Online, the state's online digital campus.[44] The largest amount of Coronavirus Relief funding used specifically for higher education was in Colorado, which directed $450 million from the fund to support higher education institutions, with the provision that institutions would not increase tuition by more than 3 percent in 2021.[45] This funding accounted for 43 percent of total higher education funding in Colorado in FY 2021, and helped fill significant cuts in state-only support that are shown in Figure 9 on page 8.

In addition to the funds allocated directly to postsecondary institutions, the ARPA provides $350 billion to state, local, and tribal governments that is expected to offer some relief in expected state budget shortfalls. However, it remains unclear at the time of publication whether or how those dollars will be disbursed in a manner that supports higher education institutions and systems.[46]

Looking Ahead: Aligning Resources to Best Support Students

The pandemic has brought considerable challenges and opportunities to higher education, including significant budget impacts, decreasing enrollments, and the expansion of remote learning. At this time it is still fairly uncertain how the challenges of the past year will impact postsecondary access and success in the long term. But as states move out of triaging the complex issues of COVID-19 and begin to plan for future directions in a post-COVID economy and education system, it is imperative that fiscal resources – appropriations, tuition, and financial aid – are aligned in a manner that will position states to strategically address the challenges that have arisen in the past year, as they approach short- and long-term recovery efforts.

Varying Fiscal Conditions Across the Region

Across the WICHE region, states are facing varying budget conditions for the upcoming fiscal year, with some states expecting to restore funding cuts that were made in FY 2021, and other states grappling with considerable budget challenges that could have significant impacts on higher education funding in

FY 2022. For example, governors' budgets in California and Idaho included increases in state funding for higher education in the upcoming fiscal year that would restore funding to at least FY 2020 levels.[47] On the other hand, two states with economies that rely heavily on tourism, Nevada and Hawai'i, appear to be bracing for significant budget cuts as the result of lost revenue during COVID-19.[48] Additionally, Alaska, which relies heavily on the energy sector, has been facing budget issues over the past several fiscal years, and COVID-19 has only added to the state's fiscal challenges. And while there may not be a definitive timeline for a post-COVID higher education system, many states will be addressing some of the challenges that have arisen over the past year with significant budget constraints, although federal support will certainly help address these challenges. This makes it all the more important that as states move forward in addressing challenges from the past year and developing reengagement efforts, they do so with aligned fiscal resources that support state goals and priorities, such as addressing gaps in access and attainment that have been exacerbated in the wake of COVID-19.

Addressing Impacts Due to COVID-19 with Strategic Alignment

While the effects of COVID-19 on higher education have been broad and far-reaching over the past year, it is becoming more apparent that low-income and underrepresented students have disproportionately been impacted by the pandemic, shining a light on longstanding inequities that have existed within postsecondary education. For example, although higher education enrollments declined overall in 2020, the most recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse suggests that American Indian/Alaska Native and Black student enrollment declined at higher rates than other populations and than the national average.[49] Additionally, recent data on college-going rates among high school graduates in 2020 found that students from high-poverty and high-minority high schools were significantly less likely to enroll in postsecondary education in fall 2020.[50]

Looking ahead to fall 2021, admissions data shows disparities in the institutions students are seeking to enroll in, as applications have significantly increased at selective public and private institutions, while broader-access institutions have not seen the same jump in application numbers.[51] Another troubling trend for the upcoming academic year is that FAFSA completions are down overall among high schoolers graduating in 2021, with the largest decreases among students at Title I-eligible high schools and high schools with a high concentration of minority students.[52] Additionally, the initial movement to an online learning environment exposed the digital divide and the inability of so many students to access the necessary technology in order to continue their academic pursuits.[53] This is not to say that these issues have not been discussed for years and not been a priority for policymakers and education leaders in the past, but as higher education will play a critical role as states recover from the economic losses of the past year, addressing these gaps must be prioritized.

As higher education institutions and systems seek to reengage those students who have either left or opted out of postsecondary education during the pandemic, states must ensure affordable pathways for students to access and complete their degree. Addressing cost barriers that students and families face in accessing higher education offers a critical vehicle for states in broadening access, supporting students, and meeting state goals and priorities, particularly as they relate to the needs of low-income and underrepresented students.

However, as noted previously, states are facing varying economic conditions and in most cases recovery and reengagement efforts will be addressed within a strained fiscal environment. This makes it all the more important that states view strategic priorities, such as addressing the challenges resulting from the pandemic, through a framework of aligned appropriations, tuition, and financial aid. Decision-making in one area of state finance (i.e., tuition) must be aligned with decision-making in the other areas of state finance (i.e., appropriations and financial aid) so as to not present barriers for students and families to access and afford postsecondary education. This is particularly important given the most recent fiscal year's declining levels of state support in the region. Since often tuition revenue is used as a lever for making up revenue in times when state support declines, leaving many students unable to afford higher education.

While in past recessions, higher education has benefited from an increased level of demand, that has not happened in the wake of COVID-19. This may mean that institutions, systems, and states are not positioned to increase tuition to the extent that was seen in the past. Additionally, the significant burden of tuition increases on students and families would come at a time when those most affected by the pandemic are still struggling.

In addition to the unequal impacts on postsecondary enrollment and access, COVID-19 exposed a widening employment gap across education levels, as historic unemployment over the past year was largely concentrated among those without a college degree or credential.[54] This troubling trend reinforces the important role that higher education must play in state economic recovery efforts, and highlights the opportunity for states and systems to prioritize adult learners in reengagement efforts. With that said, it is important to recognize the significant price barriers that adults face in accessing higher education, as state financial aid is often reserved for full-time and/or traditional-age students, leaving adults, particularly low-income adults, unable to afford a degree. In 2021, the Utah Legislature passed House Bill 328, establishing the Adult Learners Grant Program, which provides financial aid to adults pursuing an online degree.[55] Although more limited in scope than broad-access state aid programs, this represents a targeted effort to support a critical population of students in the state and offers a pathway for access that may not have existed for some adult students previously.

Build Off COVID-19 Opportunities

The past year has brought significant challenges to higher education but has also presented policymakers and education leaders with an opportunity to build off some of the successful strategies that have been implemented as result of COVID-19. As discussed previously, states used federal funding for a range of activities and programs that could foster short- and long-term opportunities in states, particularly in the area of online learning. For example, the federal relief funding that spurred the infrastructure of Idaho Online has the potential for increased access to online learning and enhancements for distance education in the state well beyond COVID-19. Additionally, Wyoming's focus on adult students offers an opportunity to scale up policies that target this population and support the state's workforce and economic development outcomes. As more data become available about the programs and strategies that were implemented with stimulus funding or in response to efforts to mitigate COVID-19 impacts, it is important for states to recognize ways to allocate resources to sustain successful programs beyond the scope of a COVID-19 environment. This will be particularly true of the large influx of funding to state governments from the ARPA.

Conclusion

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have brought unprecedented challenges to the postsecondary environment, and particularly presented significant budget challenges that will have implications for years to come. As shown in the most recently released data on state funding, higher education has already been impacted by COVID-19. So, although there was little impact on AY 2020-21 tuition and fees rates, the current economic conditions could result in increases in the coming year. The three rounds of federal support have and will continue to offer some relief for states and institutions. However, several states in the WICHE region are still facing significant budget cuts that could have considerable impacts on how states and institutions are able to invest in recovery and reengagement efforts in the future. Additionally, the budgetary challenges across the region mean that states will be moving forward in addressing such things as declining enrollment, the digital divide, and widening gaps in accessibility under tight fiscal conditions. This makes it all the more important that the fiscal policy levers of appropriations, tuition, and financial aid are decided upon in an aligned manner, in order to advance state goals and support students' ability to access and afford postsecondary education opportunities.

Endnotes

[1] The WICHE membership includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States. The WICHE membership of the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States is currently represented jointly by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam. Average tuition and fees are calculated for each territory separately in this report. WICHE average tuition and fees includes CNMI and Guam. Other data sources included in this brief – *Grapevine*, *SHEF*, and NASSGAP – do not cover these territories.

[2] The AY 2019-20 and 2020-21 tuition and fees rates provided in this brief are weighted by FTE enrollment from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System's fall 2019 enrollment survey, the most recently available data at the time of publication. The enrollment-weighted AY 2019-20 and 2020-21 tuition and fees rates published in the November 2020 data report, *Tuition and Fees in Higher Education in the West 2020-21*, used the most recently available data at the time of publication, which was fall 2018 enrollment. In an effort to the use the most recently released enrollment data and provide the most accurate enrollment-weighted rates, the region and state averages in this brief may appear different from what was published in the November 2020 report.

[3] Weighted averages provide a truer estimate of the published price a typical student faces, reflecting overall enrollment levels (although this weighting does not reflect patterns for in-state and out-of-state enrollments).

[4] Tuition and Fees inflation adjustments used the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA), calculated by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

[5] College Board, *Trends in College Pricing* (Washington, D.C.: College Board, 2020), Table 4, accessed March 12, 2021, at collegeboard.org.

[6] The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' one public postsecondary institution, Northern Marianas College (NMC), is categorized as a public two-year institution for the purpose of this report at the request of the institution, although NMC confers a limited number of baccalaureate degrees per year.

[7] The regional average for two-year institutions excludes California and Alaska institutions. Including California, with its historically high enrollment and low rates, heavily impacts the regional average. Since AY 2014-15, Alaska has had no separately accredited two-year campuses and all community campuses are under the University of Alaska umbrella. Associate-seeking students can be found at all campuses and are charged the same lower-division per-credit rate as bachelor's-seeking students, which was $234 per credit hour in AY 2020-21.

[8] Tuition and fees inflation adjustments used the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA), calculated by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

[9] College Board, *Trends in College Pricing*.

[10] National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), *50th Annual Survey Report on State-Sponsored Student Financial Aid, 2018-19 Academic Year*, (Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2020), accessed March 18, 2021, at nassgapsurvey.com. Note: NASSGAP survey results report aid that has any need eligibility as being "need-based aid," even if need-eligibility is used only after merit requirements have been met. For example, Wyoming's primary aid program, the Hathaway Scholarships, only provides need aid for eligible students after receiving the scholarship based on merit. For the AY 2018-19 year, Wyoming reported all aid dollars to NASSGAP as uncategorized and are not included in the WICHE region total aid per FTE calculation.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Utah System of Higher Education, "Board of Regents also Adopts Changes to Regents', New Century, and T.H. Bell Scholarships," accessed March 4, 2021, at ushe.edu/board-of-regents-implements-first-need-based-scholarship-from-the-state-of-utah/.

[13] The New Mexican, "Winners and losers of the 2021 legislative session," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 20, 2021, accessed April 6, 2021, at santafenewmexican.com/news/legislature/winners-and-losers-of-the-2021-legislative-session/article_def6b226-866f-11eb-aa4f-e3056de81a65.html.

[14] Bob Mercer, "$50 million of state funding for new need-based Freedom scholarships heads to governor's desk," *KELO*, March 3, 2021, accessed March 4, 2021, at keloland.com/news/capitol-news-bureau/50-million-of-state-funding-for-new-need-based-freedom-scholarships-heads-to-governors-desk/.

[15] State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, *State Higher Education Finance FY 2020*, (Boulder, Colo.: State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2021) accessed May 5, 2021, at shef.sheeo.org/. Figures are adjusted for inflation using Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA), enrollment mix index (EMI), and cost-of-living index (COLI) differences among states. Total appropriations and appropriations per FTE calculated from SHEF results are for public higher education only. SHEF data do not include the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Illinois State University Center for the Study of Education Policy and State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, *Grapevine, An Annual Compilation of Data on State Fiscal Support for Higher Education: Fiscal Year 2020-21*, (Normal, Ill.: Illinois State University, 2021) accessed March 17, 2021, at education.illinoisstate.edu/grapevine/. All year-over-year change in Grapevine is in current dollars. Federal dollars included in Grapevine do not include money distributed directly to higher education institutions and only reflects federal stimulus funds that were distributed to states and were used for higher education.

[21] Ibid.

[22] United States Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Education Stabilization Fund," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/offices/Education-Stabilization-Fund/.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, "Analysis of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, accessed March 24, 2021, at aplu.org/members/councils/governmental-affairs/CGA-library/aplu-analysis-of-the-american-rescue-plan-act/file.

[25] United States Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, "CARES Act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund," accessed March 18, 2021, at ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/caresact.html.

[26] National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, "Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds Comparison Chart," accessed March 24, 2021, at nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/HEERF_Funds_Comparison_Chart.pdf.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] United States Department of Education, "Fact Sheet Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund II Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021" accessed March 24, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/FINAL_-GEER_FactSheet_1.8.211.pdf. Under the CARES Act, states that receive GEER funds must maintain fiscal support for K-12 and higher education in FY 2020 and FY 2021 at least at the average levels of support provided in FYs 2017, 2018, and 2019.

[30] Ibid. In addition to $1.3 billion that was allocated to supplement CARES Act GEER funds, the CRRSAA appropriated $2.7 billion for an Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools. As this program is solely focused on K-12 education it is not included in this table. Under the CRRSAA, states receiving GEER funds must maintain K-12 and higher education fiscal support in FY 2022 based on the proportional share of the state's support for K-12 and higher education averaged in FYs 2017, 2018, and 2019.

[31] Owen Daugherty, "$350 Billion for State and Local Governments Come at Crucial Time for Higher Education Budgets," National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2021, accessed March 19, 2021, at nasfaa.org/news-item/25049/_350_Billion_for_State_and_Local_Governments_Comes_at_Crucial_Time_for_Higher_Education_Budgets.

[32] Paul Bonner, "Federal Aid could Hobble New State Tax Cuts and Credits," *Journal of Accountancy*, 2021, accessed March 24, 2021, at journalofaccountancy.com/news/2021/mar/federal-coronavirus-aid-could-hobble-new-state-tax-cuts-credits.html.

[33] United States Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund/.

[34] United States Department of Education, "Fact Sheet Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund II Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021" accessed March 24, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/FINAL_-GEER_FactSheet_1.8.211.pdf.

[35] The Hunt Institute, "COVID-19 GEER Fund Utilization," accessed March 18, 2021, at hunt-institute.org/covid-19-resources/geer-fund-utilization/.

[36] United States Department of Education, "GEER Clarifications – Washington Response," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2020/08/Washington_GEER_Clarifications_for_45_Final.docx.

[37] Idaho State Board of Education, "Board Approves GEER Fund Recommendations," accessed March 18, 2021, at boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/board-approves-geer-fund-recommendations/. United States Department of Education, "Oregon Department of Education Governor's Emergency Education (GEER) Fund 45 Day Initial report," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2020/08/Oregon_GEER-45-Day-Initial-Report.docx.

[38] United States Department of Education, "State of Hawai'i Initial Report for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2020/07/Hawaii_GEERF.pdf.

[39] United States Department of Education, "Wyoming 45 Day GEER Plan," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2020/08/Wyoming_GEER_Clarifications_for_45_Final-4.pdf.

[40] The Century Foundation, "How Will States Use the Governor's Emergency Education Fund to Support Higher Ed?" accessed March 18, 2021, at tcf.org/content/commentary/will-states-use-governors-emergency-education-fund-support-higher-ed/. Meredith Depping, "$8.7 million in emergency grants to be distributed to Montana's education entities," *KURL*, August 19, 2020, accessed March 18, 2021, at kulr8.com/coronavirus/8-7-million-in-emergency-grants-to-be-distributed-to-montanas-education-entities/article_55bb569c-82e5-5291-aaa7-75a0efc52d5d.html.

[41] South Dakota State News, "Governor Noem Announces UpSkill," accessed March 18, 2021, at news.sd.gov/newsitem.aspx?id=27090.

[42] Economic Development Council of Colorado, "Governor Polis Announces $44 Million for Education in Federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds," accessed March 18, 2021, at edcconline.org/governors-emergency-education-relief-geer-funding-for-school-distri/. United States Department of Education, "Oregon Department of Education Governor's Emergency Education (GEER) Fund 45 Day Initial report," accessed March 18, 2021, at oese.ed.gov/files/2020/08/Oregon_GEER-45-Day-Initial-Report.docx.

[43] National Conference of State Legislatures, "State Actions on Coronavirus Relief Funds," accessed March 18, 2021, at ncsl.org/research/health/state-action-on-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx

[44] Idaho State Board of Education, "Idaho Online Will Improve Distance Learning in Higher Education," accessed March 18, 2021, at boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/article-idaho-online-will-improve-distance-learning-in-higher-education/.

[45] Colorado Legislative Council Staff, "Summary of Governor's Executive Order Issued During COVID-19 Emergency," accessed March 18, 2021, at leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/r20-487_summary_of_governors_covid_executive_orders_17.pdf.

[46] Owen Daugherty, "$350 Billion for State and Local Governments Come at Crucial Time for Higher Education Budgets," National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2021, accessed March 19, 2021, at nasfaa.org/news-item/25049/_350_Billion_for_State_and_Local_Governments_Comes_at_Crucial_Time_for_Higher_Education_Budgets.

[47] Emma Whitford, "State Higher Ed Funding for Next Year Looks Like a Mixed Bag," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 2, 2021, accessed March 18, 2021, at insidehighered.com/news/2021/02/16/governors-propose-cuts-increases-and-other-changes-higher-ed-funding-depending-state.

[48] Riley Snyder, Megan Messerly, Michelle Rindels, and Tabitha Mueller, "Sisolak proposes $8.68 billion budget restoring cuts to Medicaid, other state programs," *The Nevada Independent*, January 18, 2021, accessed March 18, 2021, at thenevadaindependent.com/article/sisolak-proposes-8-68-billion-budget-restoring-cuts-to-medicaid-other-state-programs. Dan Nakaso, "University of Hawai'i and Department of Education brace for budget cuts," *Star Advertiser*, January 19, 2021, accessed March 18, 2021, at staradvertiser.com/2021/01/19/hawaii-news/uh-and-doe-brace-for-budget-cuts/.

[49] National Student Clearinghouse, "Stay Informed with the Latest Enrollment Information," accessed March 18, 2021, at nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/.

[50] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, *High School Benchmarks COVID-19 Special Analysis Update & Correction: National College Progression Rates*, (Washington, D.C.: National Student Clearinghouse, 2021) accessed March 25, 2021, at nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021_HSBenchmarksCovidReport.pdf.

[51] Scott Jaschik, "The Full Story on Admissions," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 1, 2021, accessed March 19, 2021, at insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/02/01/full-story-admissions-isnt-just-what-youve-been-reading.

[52] Doug Lederman, "Aid Application Data Portend Dip in Low-Income, Minority Students," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 16, 2021, accessed March 19, 2021, at insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/02/16/data-financial-aid-applications-portend-drop-low-income-minority.

[53] The Education Trust-West, "The Digital Divide in Higher Education," 2020, accessed March 19, 2021, at west.edtrust.org/resource/the-digital-divide-in-higher-ed/.

[54] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unemployment Rate 3.7 Percent for College Grads, 6.7 Percent for High School Grads in March 2021", April 7, 2021, accessed April 13, 2021, at bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/unemployment-rate-3-7-percent-for-college-grads-6-7-percent-for-high-school-grads-in-march-2021.htm.

[55] Utah State Legislature, H.B. 328 Adult Learners Grant Program, accessed April 13, 2021, at le.utah.gov/~2021/bills/static/HB0328.html.

3035 Center Green Drive, Suite 200, Boulder, CO 80301-2204
Publication Number 4b2021LMF
Demarée K. Michelau, President
Tel: 303.541.0200
E-mail: policy@wiche.edu
Visit wiche.edu for our full series of *WICHE Insights* and other research publications.