Portland, Oregon

Monday, May 17, 2010

2.00 - 4.00 pm
SMSU Room 323

WICHE Commission Meeting

WICHE

Monday, May 17, 2010

Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Position open, chair
Robert Burns (SD), vice chair
Tom Buchanan (WY), ex officio
Joe Garcia (CO), ex officio

Patricia Heller (AK)
David Lorenz (AZ)
Position open (CA)
D. Rico Munn (CO)
Steven Wheelwright (HI)
Arthur Vailas (ID)
Dan Harrington (MT)
Jane Nichols (NV)
Viola Florez (NM)
William Goetz (ND)
Ryan Deckert (OR)
Committee vice chair (SD)
William Sederburg (UT)
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA)
Debbie Hammons (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Robert Burns (SD), vice chair

Staff: Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis
      Brian Prescott, director of policy research
      Brandi Van Horn, research analyst

Action Item
Approval of the Issue Analysis and Research meeting minutes of November 2, 2009  7-3

Action Item
Approval of Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange project  7-6

Action Item
Approval of Serving Student Soldiers of the West: Policy and Practice Solutions project  7-8

Action Item
Approval of the FY 2011 workplan sections pertaining to the Policy Analysis and Research unit’s activities  7-10
Information Items:
Update on the status of the High School Graduates Projections Methods Review project 7-14
Update about the development of model data standards for K-12 and postsecondary education (background information) 7-16

Discussion Items:
Reviewing Fact Book/Benchmarks/Tuition & Fees content and presentation 7-18
Update on Center for Urban Education equity project activities
IPEDS human resources survey
Potential project on residency policies
Potential project on Web portals

Other business

Adjournment
Chair Skaggs convened the Issue Analysis and Research Committee on November 2, 2009, and a quorum was established.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Issue Analysis and Research Committee Minutes**

**Monday, November 2, 2009**

**Committee Members Present**

David Skaggs (CO), chair  
Robert Burns (SD), vice chair  
Tom Buchanan (WY), ex officio  
Viola Florez (NM)  
Dan Harrington (MT)  
Patricia Brown Heller (AK)  
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA)  
David Lorenz (AZ)  
Jane Nichols (NV)  
Roberta Richards (HI)  
William Sederburg (UT)

**Committee Members Absent**

Ryan Deckert (OR)  
Roy Ogawa (HI), ex officio  
William Goetz (ND)  
Debbie Hammons (WY)  
Arthur Vailas (ID)

**Staff Present**

Brian Prescott, director of policy research, Policy Analysis and Research  
Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis, Policy Analysis and Research  
Jeanette Porter, administrative assistant

Chair Skaggs asked members to review the minutes of the previous meeting. Commissioner Burns motioned TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 18, 2009, ISSUE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING. Commissioner Heller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously by the committee.

**ACTION ITEM**

Approval of the Minutes of the May 18, 2009, Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Chair Skaggs provided an overview of the new project, *Education Equity and Postsecondary Student Success: A Center for Urban Education (CUE) and WICHE Partnership for Policy Research and Analysis*. He explained that WICHE proposes to work with the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California as a subcontractor to assist with a project to progress the equity agenda in state-level policymaking. This will enable the two organizations to work collaboratively to make racial equity more transparent in states’ policy and programmatic efforts to increase degree completion. It will familiarize state leaders with tools and techniques to enable them to better monitor the state of equity in college completion, create a cohort of professionals with these capabilities, and strengthen the use of benchmarks and metrics for assessing and tracking equity in college completion. Prescott explained that CUE has already received the grant award from the Ford Foundation and intends to partner with the Policy unit.

Skaggs questioned what was meant by “developing a cohort of equity-minded professionals” in the project description. Prescott answered that this could be an opportunity to bring in five or six fellows to explore this project, as well as work on some of their own similar projects. Florez asked what demographic the fellows will come from. Prescott replied that these individuals will most likely be junior faculty or advanced graduates at the institutional or state level.

Commissioner Buchanan moved TO APPROVE THE NEW PROJECT. Commissioner Sederburg seconded the motion. The project was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Burns moved TO APPROVE THE PROJECT. Commissioner Sederburg seconded the motion. The project was approved unanimously.

Prescott took a few minutes to bring attention to memberships and advisory positions that various Policy staff members hold. Prescott has just been appointed to a three-year term with the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, and Michelau is currently working with Women in Government, which is a national organization that
serves female legislators. Michelau also works closely with Southern Regional Education Board and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. Prescott mentioned that if the commissioners have any questions or concerns regarding these organizations or what they do, they should be comfortable speaking with himself or Michelau.

Michelau reported on the status of the grant application for Innovative Strategies in Community Colleges for Working Adults and Displaced Workers. She had hoped that funds from that grant would allow for funding the next phase of the Non-traditional No More program. Unfortunately, WICHE did not receive the funding; she explained that all 29 awards were given to two-year institutions. She would like to use parts of the grant application to “shop around” and find additional sources of funding. There has been a no-cost extension on the Non-traditional No More grant, which WICHE will use to continue to work with adult learners.

Prescott directed the commissioners’ attention to the annual Benchmarks document. This report presents information on the West’s progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education. He explained that the information is updated annually, so that we might be able to monitor change over time and to encourage its use as a current tool for informed discussion in policy and education communities, focusing demographics related to access, success, and finance in the West.

Kohl-Welles mentioned that the inclusion of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the same racial category is very deceptive. She pointed out that in Washington, they are two very distinct categories. Prescott agreed that it is deceptive and that the same holds true for the Hispanic category. He explained that at this point that is how the data are collected, and there is no way to disaggregate that data. He hopes that with the ongoing rollout of American Community Survey, data will increasingly be more reflective of the population.

Florez questioned whether the data in Figure 9 of the Benchmarks document included Pell Grant money, as New Mexico has had a significant increase in Pell Grant recipients. Prescott answered that Pell grant support is not included. That is one problem with the Benchmarks document: the data are always changing.

Skaggs questioned if anybody actually looks at the WICHE region as a whole or if they more often look at the state-level data. He cannot see the utility in presenting regional data. Sederburg mentioned that Utah frequently uses data from the Intermountain areas because of the large number of Latter-day Saints churches in those areas. He feels that the regional information is more valuable than the national data because the national data distorts what is going on those areas. Burns added that it is helpful if you compare state data to WICHE data. Prescott agreed and added that a regional Benchmarks does have value over a national document because there are specific things that go on in the West that may not be the same in the East. For example, the West has very few private institutions compared to the East. Michelau added that she believed that it was per the request of the committee that Benchmarks was presented in a regional fashion. Nichols said that she was correct – it was the committee that originally requested the document be regional – but suggested that it may be the right time to begin to show state data. Prescott worried about the size of the publication if it was presented that way and questioned whether the state data could be distributed in an Excel file. Skaggs recommended a survey to the commissioners to see how they would prefer that data be distributed.

Prescott mentioned that WICHE needs help with reevaluating the online Factbook. There are 61 tables, and he is unsure how the tables are being used. Currently, the tables are updated on an as-needed basis. He is also curious if the data are being delivered in the most effective way. Nichols answered that at this time of lean staff, WICHE needs to make sure that they are doing the things that are most important to the organization. She recommended surveying the SHEEOs and commissioners to see how the online Factbook is being used; we may find out that updating that data is not the best use of our time.

Michelau began the discussion on the progress that the Policy unit has made towards the 2010 workplan. She stated that the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) had experienced a decrease in participation, but due to her efforts to increase communication with the LAC members, the most recent annual meeting had greater attendance.

The grant Getting What You Pay For, which is a partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures and is funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, has some money left, and WICHE is asking for a no-cost extension. Michelau explained that there is not a lot of time left to use the money and requested that commissioners make any suggestions that may be related to that subject.

The State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIIDO), which is a searchable online database of state-level higher education policies, has had some significant technical challenges. The Website has been revamped and relaunched.
Policy staff will soon be updating this database. Michelau also reminded the commissioners about the Policy Publications Clearinghouse, which is currently being updated weekly.

*Best Practices in Statewide Transfer and Articulation Systems* is a joint project of WICHE and Hezel Associates in partnership with WCET, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education. It is a project which seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their articulation and transfer programs for students who move from two- to four-year institutions. Michelau noted that WICHE, WCET, and Hezel are currently surveying all 50 states to examine how states use Web portals in the articulation and transfer process. She also mentioned that there will be a national meeting sometime next year, also funded by Lumina and cosponsored with the Southern Regional Education Board.

Prescott mentioned that WICHE’s annual *Tuition & Fees* report is now available online. This report details tuition and fees charges for every public institution in the West. It includes charges for resident and nonresident graduate and undergraduate students in a number of tables, allowing for easy comparisons and providing some historical information. Currently, Policy is examining how it might contemporize the report to allow for the calculation of enrollment-weighted averages and also how to make it available online.

The *Knocking at the College Door* publication was recently updated and published in March of 2008; it is currently on a five-year cycle of updating. Prescott added that Policy is currently trying to secure funding to conduct a methodological review of the study. The Gates Foundation has expressed an interest in funding this review, and WICHE has submitted a proposal.

Prescott added that WICHE and the Policy unit are available to help out with any available technical assistance opportunities, and he requested that the commissioners contact the unit if there are areas where WICHE can be of assistance. Sederburg mentioned his interest in the presentation on remedial mathematic. Michelau thought that that topic could possibly fit into the *Non-traditional No More* grant. Burns asked if there is any research on how society gains from higher education. Prescott answered that there are not measurable data at this time. Skaggs added that you can see more correlations in the data than cause and effect. Burns said it would be very valuable if you could quantify that data.

Chair Skaggs adjourned the meeting.
ACTION ITEM
Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange

WICHE proposes to work with four states initially to develop a multistate data exchange encompassing data from the K-12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce sectors within each participating state. This effort will complement existing state activity to develop longitudinal data systems by enabling the tracking of individual students across state lines. WICHE’s Policy Analysis and Research unit was invited by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to submit a formal proposal for this project and has done so.

Relationship to WICHE Mission
This project will help longitudinal data systems fulfill their promise as the means to provide policymakers with improved information about educational outcomes, including workforce outcomes, and about subpopulations commonly targeted by policy, such as students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and low-income backgrounds. As a collaborative effort among member states, it also builds on and contributes to WICHE’s mission to develop regional solutions to common challenges concerning access to educational opportunity.

Background
The proposed project builds off of a recently completed meeting funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to bring together member states to better link data within each state’s K-12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce sectors. Shortly after that meeting, the federal government passed its stimulus package, which included a $250 million set-aside for state data systems development. The stimulus funding lent greater urgency to activity already underway in most states to develop longitudinal data systems. WICHE followed up its initial meeting with a subsequent meeting in the summer of 2009, with four states to begin preliminary conversations about how a data exchange among them might be developed, what information it might provide, and how it might be designed and governed. The Gates Foundation remained interested in WICHE’s efforts in this regard and requested a full proposal to develop the data exchange.

WICHE had previously approached the Gates Foundation with its long-desired plan to conduct a methodology review of its projections of high school graduates, the Knocking at the College Door publication. While Gates initially expressed interest in that effort, as the activity around data systems grew more energetic, WICHE’s program officer first requested that it be linked with the multistate data exchange project proposal before ultimately informing us to focus our project on the multistate data exchange.

Project Description
The proposal is for a three-year project to allow WICHE to build on its recently completed Gates-supported project and continue providing technical assistance to states in their efforts to build analytical capacity for improving educational policy and practice. This project will promote interoperability and collaboration among states to ensure that relevant information about individual mobility is captured. Specifically, WICHE will coordinate efforts to pilot a multistate data exchange allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the production, stock, and flows of human capital through a regional, multistate approach. Our plan is to engage four states initially (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Hawaii) to build out the necessary architecture to facilitate data exchange, standard reporting, and governance structures. Lessons learned from the effort will be passed along to WICHE’s other member states (through our semiannual commission meetings) and beyond. As the project moves forward, we hope to fold in additional states into the exchange. Given specific interest and feedback from the Gates Foundation, we do envision the possibility of eventually opening up the exchange to states outside the West.

WICHE envisions that the resulting data exchange will be capable of:

- Tracking the stock and flow of the skills and abilities (represented by education and training) of various populations within a given state.
- Examining the gaps in educational attainment between population groups based on demography and socioeconomic status.
- Incorporating information from multiple states, given the mobility of the U.S. population and the fact that many population centers are located on state boundaries.
Engaging leaders and data stewards within the participating states, WICHE’s Policy Analysis and Research unit will focus its facilitation efforts on the exchange’s architecture/design, governance, and use. WICHE will rely heavily on its strong partnerships with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and the State Higher Education Executive Officers, both of which have expertise in this area.

Staff and Fiscal Impact
The total cost of proposed project is $1,562,000 over three years. Of that amount, we have requested $1,500,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. If awarded, the grant will support a portion of the salaries and benefits for several current employees (.7 FTE in year one, .75 in year two, and .7 in year three), but the bulk of the grant money will be awarded in subcontracts and consultant agreements. The contributed amount reflects a portion of David Longanecker’s time and benefits, with the grant covering the rest.

Action Requested
Approval to receive and expend funds to support WICHE’s leadership of this project.
ACTION ITEM  
Serving Student Soldiers of the West – Policy and Practice Solutions

WICHE proposes a project that will work to increase access to and success in higher education for military students and their families in the Western region. Specifically, the project aims:

- To increase awareness of state and institutional policymakers about the demographics, needs, and challenges of the military population in higher education.
- To identify state and institutional policies that create barriers to or enhance access and success for military students and their families.
- To assist states and institutions in developing clear, seamless degree pathways for military personnel, veterans, and their families.

Relationship to WICHE Mission
This project will help WICHE states and institutions address the array of challenges associated with serving student soldiers, a national priority that is of particular importance to the Western region. This project will contribute to WICHE’s mission by promoting new and innovative solutions to these challenges and fostering collaboration across states to develop sound public policy and practice to increase access and success for this population.

Background
Much of the recent attention paid to the new GI Bill (technically, “The Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008”) has focused on government delays in processing benefit payments. These logistical challenges, combined with the focus on the federal role in education for military students (which for our purposes include active, reserve, and National Guard members of the armed forces, as well as veterans), have overshadowed some of the other challenges that military students face when returning to campus.

By all accounts the expanded benefits, which went into effect August 1, 2009, are leading to a surge in military students’ enrollment throughout the country. Particularly in the West, where there are unprecedented numbers of military students expected on campuses in coming months, the need for a deliberate, evidence-based response to the challenges associated with serving this population is serious and immediate. With the new GI Bill addressing the major financial hurdles for veterans, state and institutional policymakers must still identify and eliminate other policy- and practice-related barriers that limit the access and success of these students; and the fiscal distress facing both public and private institutions exacerbates the difficulties in addressing these issues. These include:

- Credit for military and work experience.
- Transfer and articulation.
- Residency requirements.
- Requirements to fulfill the last 30/15 hours at an institution.
- Financing and financial aid.
- Distance education.
- Mental health issues (need for mental health professionals at VA hospitals and on college campuses).

Project Description
The project will span three years, with emphasis placed on the front end in order to be responsive to the immediate needs of the Western states and institutions. Later work will be devoted to dissemination and strategies for maintaining and enhancing effective services for the target population. The project will include four types of primary activities: research, meetings, state-specific work, and dissemination.

Research. Although institutions and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs collect a great deal of data on the usage of veterans benefits, the information is rarely used to assess quantitatively how well postsecondary policies and programs are serving military students. As states work to improve their data systems in general, they have a definite opportunity to address this gap. This component of the project would identify research gaps and produce three research briefs in response. In addition, WICHE research staff will guide policymakers in how to evaluate success of their programs and policies.
Meetings. The project will convene two policy forums, in which teams from the 15 Western states would participate. The first meeting would take place in the first year and would be smaller in scope, with high-level decisionmakers (three key individuals from each state). The goal would be to raise awareness about the needs of the target population, the anticipated demands on states and institutions, and possible strategies for dealing with challenges. The second major forum would happen in the third year and would include representation from larger teams of up to six individuals from each state; broad representation would include the state higher education executive officer, state agency staff person, a legislator, a governor’s staff person, a four-year institutional representative, and a two-year institutional representative. This would happen in the third year, so that the lessons learned in the first two years could be disseminated broadly.

State-specific work. Three states would be selected to receive $50,000 over two years to work on these issues. The funding would be used to bring key state- and campus-level policymakers together in a task force format over the time period to identify and address the policy needs of the particular state.

Dissemination. Dissemination will be a key component of this project as this is an issue facing the entire nation, not just the Western region. WICHE will work with its project partners and colleagues to inform state-level and institutional policymakers about evidence-based promising practices that emerge from this work. WICHE’s Communications unit will issue press releases, develop an interactive Website, and produce deliverables.

The project will be guided by an advisory board consisting of up to 10 individuals with a wide range of experience working with this population and experts in higher education. The advisory board will meet face-to-face once a year and participate in additional Webinars and conference calls as needed. In addition, where appropriate, advisory board members will serve as technical assistance experts for the targeted state-specific work. Additional project partners may include the U.S. Department of Defense, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, and the American Council on Education.

Staff and Fiscal Impact
The total budget of the proposed project is $1,000,000 over three years. The intended funding sources are Lumina Foundation for Education and Walmart Foundation. If awarded, the grant will support a portion of the salaries and benefits for several current employees (1.35 FTE), most of whom reside in the Policy Analysis and Research unit. Other units – Programs and Services through the Communications staff, Mental Health, and WCET – will also have a portion of salaries covered. The grant would also cover a portion of David Longanecker’s time (.05 FTE).

Action Requested
Approval to seek funding to support WICHE’s leadership of this project.
## WICHE WORKPLAN 2011

### ISSUE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH (Highlighted)

#### EXISTING ACTIVITIES

### Finance

- Annual *Tuition and Fees* report (general fund - 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 (Mental Health)
- Property insurance and risk consortium (self-funding)
- Collaborative purchasing via MHECtech (self-funding)

- Legislative Advisory Committee (GF)
- Evaluation of Colorado’s College Opportunity Fund (Colorado Department of Higher education, Donnell-Kay Foundation)

### Access & Success

- Student Exchange Programs: Professional Student Exchange Program, Western Regional Graduate Program, Western Undergraduate Exchange (state-funded)
- WICHE ICE – Internet Course Exchange (member dues and GF)
- Bridges to the Professoriate (NSF)

- 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*, including a methodology review and expansion (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)
- SPIDO – State Policy Inventory Database Online (GF, Lumina)

- Children’s mental health improvement project in South Dakota (Mental Health)

- College Access Challenge Grant Program Consortium and Network (state subcontracts, U.S. Department of Education)
- Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems (Lumina)
- Education Equity and Postsecondary Student Success, a CUE and WICHE Partnership for Policy Research and Analysis (Ford)
- Association for the Study of Higher Education Institutes on Equity and Critical Policy Analysis (Ford)

- National Institute of Mental Health challenge grant to improve identification of persons with behavioral health issues on college campuses (NIMH, Mental Health)
- Identifying promising practices in rural behavioral health (Mental Health)

### Technology & Innovation

- Facilitation of Internet2 connectivity throughout the West (Technology and Innovation)
- Ongoing work on HealthNet, LibraryNet, JusticeNet, and K20Net concepts and proposals (Technology and Innovation)
- Providing technical assistance services for creating/managing data-driven Websites (TBD, Hewlett/EduTools)
- Launching new electronic publication series on innovative practices, technology trends, and policy on developments related to technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education (WCET)
• Expanding WCET’s knowledge base and member resources that can help institutions and organizations evaluate their own policies and practices in: student retention in online learning; recruitment and retention of quality adjunct faculty; strategies for learning management systems’ transitions; and management of e-learning consortia (WCET)

• Transitioning EduTools to a new model focused on community contributions and user experiences, initially in the areas of identity authentication technologies and learning management systems (WCET)

• Providing professional development in e-learning for the higher education community through WCET’s signature annual conference event, Catalyst Camp, and invitational summits (WCET)

• Serving as a knowledgeable resource for higher education on promising practices and policies that address academic integrity and student verification in online learning (WCET)

• Webinar series of national education technology debates: retention strategies, authentication, completion strategies (WCET)

• Extend the reach of WICHE’s policy and research work by leveraging WCET’s national network and technical assistance with new media communications (WCET)

• Build out WCET’s capacity as a third-party provider of grants management and oversight for complex technology-related projects among WCET member institutions and other partners (WCET)

• WALF – Western Academic Leadership Forum (member dues and TIAA-CREF grant)

• Webinar series to enhance information exchange in rural behavioral health (Mental Health)

• Providing technical assistance in a pooled group of experts on health information technology (Mental Health)

Workforce & Society

• Development of Student Exchange Program responses to critical workforce shortages, especially in rural and underserved areas (GF)

• Regional Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council (GF)

• Collaboration with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment in its U.S. Department of Labor-funded demonstration project to address pressing education and workforce training needs through online learning (U.S. Department of Labor and CO Department of Labor and Employment)

• Mental health student exchange (Mental Health)

• Building partnerships for competency: public behavioral health workforce development (Mental Health)

• Behavioral health training initiatives to expand the rural workforce capacity (Mental Health)

• Increasing knowledge of the state behavioral/health workforce capacity (Mental Health)

• Suicide prevention toolkit for rural primary care providers (Mental Health)

• Increasing health and behavioral health provider knowledge of returning veterans’ service needs (Mental Health)

Accountability

• 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 (state-funded)

• Electronic Policy Alerts and Stat Alerts (GF)

• Policy Publications Clearinghouse (GF)

• Launching the next phase of Transparency By Design’s College Choices for Adults Website, to educate adult students to become better-informed consumers of online education (WCET)
NEW DIRECTIONS
(approved by the commission)

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

Access & Success
- Expanding access to cyberinfrastructure, research and education networks, and applications for geographically remote or underserved institutions, including minority-serving institutions in the West (Technology and Innovation)
- Expanding the opportunities for rural rotations for healthcare students participating in PSEP (GF)
- Creating a new regionwide academic forum for community college administrators (member dues)

Technology & Innovation
- Conducting a national survey of the instructional, operational, and technological infrastructure of distance education through the Managing Online Education survey, in partnership with the Campus Computing Project (WCET)
- Develop action and information agendas to assist higher education institutions with issues of mobility (mobility of learners, mobile technologies, mobile services), digital content ownership and use (copyright, e-textbooks, virtual labs), and e-learning programs and services for adult learners (WCET)
- Working with Internet2 and National Lambda Rail on the Unified Community Anchor Network (UCAN) project (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, pending funding)
- Creation of an “eScience Institute” for WICHE states’ commissioners, higher education leaders, and other public policy leaders (Technology and Innovation)
- Project to broaden the use of open educational resources in teaching, learning, and other areas of higher education (WCET, Technology and Innovation)
- Technology and Innovation and Mental Health partnership to expand research and education networks (state, regional, and national) for health and mental health services and educational outreach (WCET, Technology and Innovation, Mental Health)
- Developing a regional learning center for State Higher Education Policy Center
- Expansion of ICE (member dues)
- Development of a new WALF forum to support academic leaders of two-year institutions, systems, and state agencies (member dues)
- Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange program (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)

Workforce & Society
- Surveying Professional Student Exchange Program medical, dental, and veterinary medicine schools’ rural track and pipeline programs to identify best practices (GF)
- Expanding a behavioral health training program for military communities (Department of Defense)
- Expansion of WICHE ICE to develop and support new multi-institution collaborations to exchange online courses and programs in high-need and niche disciplines (member dues)

Accountability
- Launching comparison functionality on Transparency By Design’s College Choices for Adults Website, to allow potential adult learners to compare institutions and programs side by side (WCET)
ON THE HORIZON
(not yet submitted to the commission)

Finance
- Explore data, policies, and issues related to undocumented students
- Research and analysis of outcome-based funding approaches

Access & Success
- Expansion of the State Scholars Initiative with new funding and a focus on rural and inner city students’ college readiness (in partnership with the Colorado GEAR UP program and Gallup, pending funding)
- Improving access and outcomes for people with co-occurring behavioral health disorders (State of Alaska)
- Exploring strategies for improving the delivery of remedial and developmental education
- Identifying the most effective college persistence and success projects and working to bring them to scale
- Expanding the Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce
- Serving Student Soldiers of the West: Policy and Practice Solutions

Technology & Innovation
- Establishing a data-driven decision-support center for proactively deploying student retention, authentication, and management solutions at demonstrated points of need
- Developing more effective Web portals
- Development of WALF toolkit, a Web-based repository of strategic-planning and decision-making tools for academic leaders (membership dues)
- Broaden access to innovative new academic programs on energy research and development in the West through WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs
- Seek funding to convene an energy summit for Western states involving higher education, relevant state agencies, and the private sector

Workforce & Society
- Policy and Mental Health collaboration on recidivism reduction in the prison population
- Assisting states in identifying academic program development needs or collaboration options when existing programs are eliminated
- 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
- Expanding the Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce

Accountability
- Assessing the landscape for state policy on student-learning outcomes
- Research and analysis of outcomes-based funding approaches
- Continued development of Transparency By Design’s College Choices for Adults Website, to improve the institutional and program data offered, recruit more institutions to participate, amplify marketing to attract more users, and expand resources for adult learners
INFORMATION ITEM
Updated Status of the High School Graduates
Projections Methods Review Project

The WICHE Commission previously approved the Policy Analysis and Research unit’s request to seek and expend funding to conduct a comprehensive review of the methodology employed in *Knocking at the College Door*, its widely used projections of high school graduates. This information item is to report that WICHE has secured commitments of funding to begin that work. Specifically, we plan to consider alternative projection methods that might prove to be more accurate and dynamic. In addition, we plan to explore ways to disaggregate the projections by income level, examine how the new race/ethnicity reporting standards might impact the methodology, explore how projections might take advantage of the richer data that will become available as state-level longitudinal data systems are rolled out, and build a more dynamic online interface for enhanced user functionality.

Background
In 1979 WICHE began collecting data and projecting high school graduates for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The commission’s initial publication of high school graduates provided the first comprehensive examination, regionally and by state, of the effects of birth rates and interstate migration on the numbers of public high school graduates. In 1990 this project was expanded to include data and projections on grade-by-grade enrollment and graduates by race and ethnicity; it was extended again in 2003 to add projections by family income (data limitations prevented replicating these for the 2008 edition). Through these publications, WICHE established an enviable reputation for producing projection data needed for access and diversity discussions.

The current, 7th edition of WICHE’s *Knocking at the College Door* covers the period 1992 to 2022. As access to higher education remains a critical issue nationally, *Knocking* provides a unique contribution to the education and business communities – one that is widely used and often cited by constituents in the field of education broadly. It remains the only projection series that disaggregates high school graduates by race/ethnicity at the state and regional level and that includes state-level projections for students attending private schools.

Relationship to WICHE’s Mission
This project directly supports WICHE’s mission to promote access and sound public policy in the West. WICHE’s high school graduate projections are an important tool for long-term planning in education, as well as for decision making concerning issues of access, state-level financing, and financial aid. The potential enhancements to the publication will provide more accurate data that are more relevant and accessible to our constituents.

Project Description
WICHE has received funding or funding commitments from ACT and the College Board to review the current projection method and status of the report and to explore potential ways to enhance the publication. The following updates and features will be explored.

New projection method. WICHE’s current projection method, CSR, draws upon enrollment and graduation data collected from state education agencies and assumes that enrollments and graduates can be projected by measuring the survival of the birth cohort to first-grade enrollment and by measuring the grade-to-grade retention of each cohort. While CSR is a common forecasting method, the accuracy of projections using CSR usually declines after about five years. CSR’s predictive ability suffers when an abrupt change in historical or school progression patterns occurs (i.e., Hurricane Katrina). We plan to look into alternative methodological approaches that might improve the accuracy and afford some capacity for modeling the effects of recent “shocks” to the projection model. One of the chief virtues of the CSR approach is how easy it is for public policymakers, members of the education community, and others to understand. We will therefore consider tradeoffs associated with adopting a different methodological approach before doing so, especially concerning that transparency.

Income disaggregation. The income projections in the 2003 edition of *Knocking* were based on Census 2000 data, and a lack of new data prevented us from replicating those projections for the 2008 version. However, with the rollout of the American Community Survey (ACS), we may be able to develop an updatable approach to income-based projections. Staff will examine the possibility of reintroducing income-based projections using the ACS (or other possible sources). Such disaggregations are much in demand by institutional users and public policymakers concerned about the affordability of higher education.
New dynamic interface. Currently, WICHE’s *Knocking at the College Door* is available in paper and electronic format via the Internet. Enabling data users to retrieve and interact with high school graduate projections data will make the data more accessible and relevant as a planning tool to our user base.

New race/ethnicity standards. In 2007 the U.S. Department of Education modified the way in which education agencies and organizations collect and report race/ethnicity data. Educational institutions will be required to implement these new standards in order to report data for the 2010-2011 academic year. Staff will look at how these new racial/ethnic categories might impact WICHE’s projections of high school graduates.

Longitudinal data systems. Millions of dollars are being spent to support the building of longitudinal data systems based on student-level records. While the establishment of longitudinal data systems is in its infancy, WICHE is at the forefront of this national agenda with a proposed project to facilitate the development of a longitudinal data exchange linking data from several adjacent states. Once constructed, longitudinal data systems will provide a much richer array of information about students and usage of those data has the potential to expand and enhance WICHE’s current method of projecting high school graduates. Understanding the potential impact this type of data might have on WICHE’s projections is timely and appropriate.

Fiscal Impact
WICHE has received commitments of $150,000 from ACT and $216,000 from the College Board over three years to review and explore potential ways to enhance *Knocking at the College Door* and to produce the next edition.
Chief State School Officers and State Higher Education Executives
Promote the Voluntary Adoption of a Model of Common Data Standards

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the association of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) are collaborating with their members, the U.S. Department of Education, and national educational entities toward the development of model data standards for K-12 and postsecondary education. The goal of this collaborative effort is to leverage and create model data standards that will attract widespread, voluntary adoption and ultimately enhance policy-making and student achievement. Initially, the project will focus on data related to the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

The diversity of America’s elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools and institutions is a national asset. But an unintended consequence of diversity is that schools and institutions may define and collect core data elements in slightly different ways. These discrepancies in data collection can cause students to lose momentum when they move from school to school, and state educational leaders often have difficulty identifying and monitoring student needs and communicating key information to the public.

For example, these small differences make it harder to communicate student needs and previous achievements when they transfer or begin college, and they can make it impossible to come up with valid information on relatively simple questions such as student achievement, drop-out rates, teacher mobility and shortages, or graduation rates for a school, district, or state. Education in the United States could be improved if most schools and institutions used common standards for the core data they identify, collect, retain, and use.

Standard measures and procedures are crucial in business, computing, health care, engineering, and construction – just about every part of life. The key questions involve deciding what needs to be standardized, what does not need to be standardized, and why standardization will serve important purposes. Such decisions need to consider different purposes at different levels (individual schools, districts or systems, states, and the nation), the benefits of standardizing different kinds of information, the costs of changing existing systems in order to achieve greater standardization, and how data standards and practices can be improved in a reasonable time frame and at a reasonable cost.

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CCSSO and SHEEO will work with their respective members, partner on communications with the Data Quality Campaign funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation for this effort, provide feedback on standards design to the U.S. Department of Education, and engage policy and information system experts from the states, standards groups, associations, and individual schools and colleges to address the what, why, and how questions for model data standards.
The U.S. Department of Education will facilitate the leveraging, and where needed, the development of model common data standards for a core set of student-level variables to increase comparability of data, interoperability and portability of data, and reduce collection burden. A Technical Working Group comprised of representatives of key stakeholders will identify the core subset of student variables and common definitions, model business rules and technical specifications for these variables. The list of variables and model standards will be shared with states, districts and postsecondary stakeholders for feedback and discussion, in order to achieve broad consensus and voluntary adoption. Existing definitions, standards and guidelines for state and federal reports will provide a foundation for this work, but proposals for improving definitions and guidelines will be invited and considered.

CCSSO and SHEEO will promote the voluntary adoption of these model data standards by states, districts, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions and marketplace providers. While this initiative’s fundamental purpose is to provide better information to those seeking to improve education, it also will make it easier for schools, colleges, and states to meet existing reporting requirements. Recently authorized and funded federal grant programs are available to help finance such improvements in educational data systems. Decision makers in individual states, schools, and colleges will make the ultimate decisions about their data standards, but the project seeks to develop highly useful and valuable standards that will attract widespread adoption.
DISCUSSION ITEM
Review of WICHE’s Fact Book, Benchmarks, and Tuition & Fees Annual Data Resources

The Policy Analysis and Research unit is undertaking a review of three of its annual data resources: WICHE’s Regional Fact Book, Benchmarks, and Tuition & Fees in the West. The purpose of the review is to determine the usefulness of the publications and how we might improve the reports to better serve our constituency. Specifically, we plan to survey commissioners (and possibly others) on whether and how they use the three resources and on what other data sources they find most useful. As a result of our publication review, we hope to update these resources to make them more concise, user-friendly, and relevant to the issues facing state higher education leaders in the West.

Background
At the November 2009 meeting of the Issue Analysis and Research committee, commissioners suggested we conduct a review of the content and delivery of the Regional Fact Book and Benchmarks resources. Policy unit staff thought that this review provided an opportunity to examine how the Tuition & Fees report might be improved as well. In addition, we believed it worthwhile to look into how the proliferation of relevant data displays via the Web in recent years may be tapped to ensure that WICHE’s efforts are efficient while adding value.

Relationship to WICHE’s Mission
For many years WICHE’s Regional Fact Book, Benchmarks, and Tuition & Fees in the West reports have provided information to our member states and the broader community to assist them in making important state-level policy decisions. Providing data and information is an important aspect of our unit’s work, as it allows WICHE to assist state leaders in achieving postsecondary access and student success. Therefore, ensuring that the data provided in our publications are valuable to our audience directly relates to WICHE’s mission. Improving the quality of our publication products will help us better respond to the needs of our community members and will enable us to be a more valuable resource to our member states.

Project Description
The Policy Analysis and Research unit is reviewing the three principal data resources it makes available, principally through a survey of commissioners and others among our constituent community. The principal questions we seek to answer are:

- What data and data sources do our users find most useful?
- Do we provide the appropriate amount of information in our publications? Is there a need to increase or reduce the amount of information that we provide?
- How effective is the presentation of our data?
- Should our data be disaggregated in a way that is more useful and, if so, in what ways?
- How can our data be modified or enhanced to better meet the needs of our constituency?
- How can we capitalize on other Web-enabled data displays to improve efficiency?