What’s Up in the WICHE West? And What’s WICHE Been Up to Lately?

These are interesting times! As the economy begins to recover, many states are looking at more rosy financial scenarios than they have seen in the last few years. A recent report from the Rockefeller Institute, however, cautions that many states still face difficult times ahead, due to the instability and inconsistency of the current recovery; another problem is the fact that states which used nonrecurring revenues to fund recurring budget items in the last couple of years must now adjust to filling the void they face. A number of Western states are using these challenges as opportunities to rethink the fundamental ways in which they have and will finance and deliver public higher education in the future. The goal — broad access to high quality education and research — has not changed, but the means of achieving it are being rethought in a number of places.

This session will present data on what has been happening lately with respect to enrollments and finance throughout the region and will describe a number of very creative initiatives throughout the West. It will also provide an opportunity for commissioners to discuss these activities and to share new initiatives that are emerging within their states.

Biographical Information on the Speakers

David A. Longanecker is the executive director of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Previously, he served for six years as the assistant secretary for postsecondary education at the U.S. Dept. of Education, developing and implementing national policy and programs providing more than $40 billion annually in student aid and $1 billion to institutions. Prior to that he was the state higher education executive officer (SHEEO) in Colorado and Minnesota. He was also the principal analyst for higher education for the Congressional Budget Office. Longanecker has served on numerous boards and commissions and was president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers. He has written extensively on a range of higher education issues. His primary interests in higher education are: access, teacher education, finance, the efficient use of educational technologies, and academic collaboration in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. He holds a Ed.D. in education from Stanford University.

Cheryl Blanco is senior program director for Policy Analysis and Research at WICHE. She monitors historical and emerging socioeconomic and political trends that impact higher education; directs the work of several policy projects; and produces a variety of publications to improve policymaking in higher education. She was appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley to the Advisory Council on Education Statistics for the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and is past chair of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Prior to joining WICHE, she was educational policy director at the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission. She has held faculty and administrative positions at Arecibo Technological University College, University of Puerto Rico, including assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, director of the division of continuing education, coordinator for professional development, and tenured associate professor in the English Department. She received her Ph.D. in higher education from Florida State University.