Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Monday, November 5, 2007
3.30-5.00 pm
Mount Elbert
Monday, November 5, 2007

3.30 - 5.00 pm
Mount Elbert

Programs and Services Committee

Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Marshall Lind (AK), vice chair
Camille Preus (OR), ex officio
Roy Ogawa (HI), ex officio

Committee vice chair (AK)
John Haeger (AZ)
Position vacant (CA)
Joseph A. Garcia (CO)
Helene Sokugawa (HI)
Robert Kustra (ID)
Dan Harrington (MT)
Committee chair (NV)
Dede Feldman (NM)
William Goetz (ND)
James Sager (OR)
James Hansen (SD)
Peter C. Knudson (UT)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)
Tom Buchanan (WY)

Agenda

Presiding:  Carl Shaff, committee chair

Staff:  Jere Mock, senior program director,
Programs and Services
Terese Rainwater, program director,
State Scholars Initiative
Margo Schultz, program coordinator,
Student Exchange Programs
Susan Vermeer Lopez, project coordinator,
Programs and Services

Action Item
Approval of the Programs and Services
Committee meeting minutes of May 21, 2007 7-3

Discussion Items:

Proposal to Provide Hawaii Students with Full
Community College Enrollment Reciprocity in the
Western Undergraduate Exchange – Margo Schultz 7-8

Focusing Increased Attention on Academic Rigor and
Relevance: WICHE’s State Scholars Initiative – Terese Rainwater 7-10
Information Items:

Updates: Student Exchange Program – Jere Mock and Margo Schultz 7-13

- Inventory of Rural Health Practice Incentives in the Western WICHE States (PowerPoint presentation)
- WUE, WRGP, and PSEP

Update: WICHE Internet Course Exchange – Jere Mock and Susan Vermeer Lopez 7-19

Update: Master Property Program and Property and Casualty Program – Susan Vermeer Lopez 7-20

Update: Northwest Academic Forum – Susan Vermeer Lopez 7-21

Other business and adjournment
ACTION ITEM
Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2007

Committee Members Present
Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Marshall Lind (AK), vice chair
Helene Sokugawa (HI)
James Hansen (SD)
Peter Knudson (UT)

Committee Members Absent
John Haeger (AZ)
William Hybl (CO)
Robert Kustra (ID)
Dan Harrington (MT)
Eddie Dunn (ND)
Dede Feldman (NM)
James Sager (OR)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)
Tom Buchanan (WY)

Other Commissioners Present
Diane Barrans (AK)
Joel Sideman (AZ)

Staff Present
Jere Mock, senior program director, Programs and Services
Terese Rainwater, program director, State Scholars Initiative
Margo Schultz, program coordinator, Student Exchange Programs
Erin Barber, assistant to the executive director

Guests Present
David Iha, certifying officer, Hawaii
Peggy Wipf, certifying officer, North Dakota
Lisa Shipley, certifying officer, Wyoming
Ron Sparks, certifying officer, Nevada

ACTION ITEM
Approval of the Minutes of the November 13, 2007, Committee Meeting

Chair Carl Shaff called the committee meeting to order.


ACTION ITEM
Approval of the FY 2008 Programs and Services Workplan

Jere Mock, senior program director, gave an overview of the FY 2008 workplan for Programs and Services, which includes managing WICHE’s three regional programs that broaden access to higher education for nearly 23,000 students annually: the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). The unit also directs the national State Scholars Initiative (SSI), which is currently funded by a $6.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Vocational Education. In addition, the Programs and Services staff manages several other regional initiatives that foster resource sharing and interinstitutional collaborations across the West. (More information regarding the Student Exchange Programs and SSI follows in other sections of the minutes.)

Mock explained that a regional initiative called the WICHE Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE) is our newest exchange program. The program grew out of a NEON (Northwest Educational Outreach Network) project that was funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. WICHE ICE is an online course-sharing consortium with 12 initial institutional and system members. It helps institutions to share courses and to develop program exchanges that lead to certificates and degrees. WICHE ICE enables students to receive credit for online courses as though they were offered by their home institution, which eliminates course transfer barriers.
Mock said WICHE ICE course exchanges are developing in a number of academic disciplines, such as general education, health, math, and science. Mock and WICHE ICE’s coordinator, Susan Vermeer Lopez, are also working with deans of social work in six institutions in the West to develop an online graduate certificate in rural social work practice. WICHE staff works with the WICHE ICE Steering Board to create policies and procedures for this regional resource. Staff also provides training and technical assistance to ICE member institutions, manages a regional database, and provides other centralized functions. WICHE ICE members pay an annual membership fee to WICHE, and there is a $20 fee per student per course fee that also is paid to WICHE to support our involvement. External funding is also being sought to support WICHE ICE.

Programs and Services staff members are also exploring ways to address workforce shortages in several health care fields, with particular emphasis on the needs of rural and frontier communities in the West. Staff produces annual workforce briefs, which focus on the high-growth professions in each state. This year staff has begun developing briefs on particular areas of the workforce, starting with pharmacy, an area where there are increasing shortages across the West. Mock described another new WICHE resource, a regional inventory of state-level incentives for rural health care practitioners, which will be finalized over the next few months.

Mock described some other projects that have been added to the WICHE workplan over the past few years, including the Master Property Program (MPP). It enables institutions to purchase property insurance through a consortium that was initiated by the Midwest Higher Education Compact. The MPP provides comprehensive property coverage specifically tailored to the needs of today’s college campuses, while reducing insurance costs and improving asset protection for more than 90 campuses (43 primary policies), including the Nevada System of Higher Education. The oversight committee is meeting this week in Chicago to look at adding several institutions in the West to the consortium: Pima County Community College in Arizona; Westminster College in Utah; University of Northern Colorado; and CLIC, a consortium of private institutions based in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. Mock was hopeful that the proposals will be accepted by the oversight committee and that WICHE will continue to recruit other institutions in the region that could benefit.

Programs and Services staff members use a variety of resources to communicate with WICHE constituents, including the organization’s website, its NewsCap online newsletter, and other print and electronic resources. They also work closely with the Policy unit to reach legislators and governor’s offices.

Chair Shaff asked for a motion to approve the Programs and Services workplan as presented by Mock.

COMMISSIONER SIDEMAN MOVED A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE FY 2008 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WORKPLAN. COMMISSIONER KNUDSON SECONDED THE MOTION. The motion passed unanimously.

**ACTION ITEM**

Approval of PSEP Restructuring

Chair Shaff introduced Margo Schultz to give an update on the Student Exchange Program. There are over 22,000 students participating in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE). Schultz said new WUE enrollment reports that identify trends by program and institution will be posted on the WICHE website my mid-June, and she asked for commissioner feedback on the reports. Staff has worked hard to promote the WUE program over the year and has reached out to high school counselors. She showed the poster that is being used in high schools and also described the downloadable WUE handout that is available online. An online catalogue is also available. Commissioner Sokugawa asked Schultz if she could contact her for assistance with the Hawaii college and career fairs that will take place in November, and Schultz offered to help.

Schultz said there are 179 programs in 39 institutions participating in the Western Regional Graduate Program. Every two years there is a nomination process; it will take place this fall. Staff will contact institutions to see if there are programs they would like to see become a part of WRGP.

The Professional Student Exchange Program is made up of 14 fields and over 700 students; Arizona increased its participation this year as a result of a larger legislative appropriation. Schultz discussed PSEP’s involvement in aspects of health care in the West, particularly in attracting professionals to rural areas. There are several new, private health-related schools opening in the WICHE region (in pharmacy, osteopathic medicine, and optometry).
Administratively, there are two classifications of PSEP fields: Group A fields, where participating states agree to pay higher support fees because there are significant student access issues and more workforce pressures; and Group B fields, which have fewer access issues. Over the past 10 years, state participation levels have dropped in the Group B fields, with the exception of pharmacy, where there is high participation because of shortages nationwide. Nevada, Alaska, and Hawaii are the three supporting states in the PSEP pharmacy programs. Programs and Services staff would like to raise the support fees for pharmacy and move the program into the Group A fields. The proposal was discussed over the past few months with the certifying officers and again at a meeting on May 20, 2007, prior to the commission meeting. It was concluded that it would be too difficult right now for Alaska, Nevada, and Hawaii to accommodate the increase for all of their students. Schultz proposed that the proposed increase be discussed again during the May 2008 meeting, when the PSEP fees for the other fields will be set to see if state budgets are healthier then. There was discussion about whether all PSEP students in pharmacy would benefit from the higher support fees or if just the new students would benefit once the fees are increased. Schultz said it would likely be confusing for the students and institutions to have two different tiers of funding.

Commissioner Barrans asked if there are institutional pressures that we are unable to resist to move in the direction of putting pharmacy into Group A. Schultz said that there are admission pressures because student applications have increased dramatically among the schools, and having a higher support fee would encourage schools to give preferential consideration to our students. Commissioner Barrans asked if the new schools would relieve any of this pressure, and Schultz said that they would probably relieve some, but it is hard to anticipate how much; some of the schools have not yet received accreditation or full funding.

Commissioner Barrans wondered if it would make sense to have a strategy to set a date out in the future in order to look at what the impact would be for making the support fee change and to wait and see if circumstances still warrant the move from Group B to Group A. Chair Shaff said that the earliest the change in fees could take place is 2010. Nevada's budget for 2008-2009 is in and complete. Commission Barrans said that Alaska will give notice to those involved in the program that in 2010 they could face an increase at least more than double the current $6,300 fee. Shaff said Nevada would do the same thing.

Commissioner Sideman asked what kind of say Arizona should have since in making decisions about the pharmacy support fee, since the state does not support students via the PSEP pharmacy program. Chair Shaff said the ultimate decision on support fee levels is made by the full commission. Commissioner Sideman said that if Nevada, Alaska, and Hawaii agree to a strategy, then Arizona supports them. Shaff said that shortage of pharmacists is a big issue in Nevada. He talked to Jane Nichols, who recommended to Mock and Schultz that the change be phased in so students have a chance to be informed. In the meeting with the certifying officers, it was recommended that pharmacy be left in Group B for right now, while Alaska, Nevada, and Hawaii plan for it in their budgets over the next several years.

Commissioner Sokugawa asked how the support fees for Group A are determined. Schultz said that staff considers both the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA) index (similar to the Consumer Price Index) and the percentage of tuition differentials that the fee covers at the cooperating institutions. For public institutions, they try and make some incentive payment to at least cover tuition, so the schools will have an incentive to enroll PSEP students. Commissioner Sokugawa asked if WICHE could use a percentage of resident tuition for all institutions in one professional field. Mock said WICHE uses a flat fee for all participating institutions in a particular field because it would be too complex to administer separate fee rates for each institution with over 100 participating programs in 14 different fields.

Schultz introduced the second part of the action item. Currently, graduate programs in library studies, architecture, public health, and nursing remain relatively underused in PSEP for two reasons. First, the fees are too low to attract student participation. Second, only one or two states fund students in these fields. Because these cooperating programs have had few or zero students enrolled in them over the past 10 to 15 years, they have grown unresponsive to WICHE's administrative requests (related to reporting tuition and fees rates and yearly contact updates, for instance). In addition, the fact that participating pharmacy programs (for example) can ask the student to pay the balance of nonresident tuition minus the support fee at both public and private institutions is confusing to students and applicants when they compare it to the Group A fields. Schultz recommends moving the programs in the Group B fields to the Western Regional Graduate Program. Students would benefit in two ways. First, they would pay only resident tuition. Second, these fields and programs would be available to students from all WICHE states, except California. For architecture and graduate library studies (the non–health care fields), staff proposes inactivating them in PSEP and inviting the distinctive programs to become a part of WRGP this fall, when staff seek other WRGP
program nominations. For health care fields, including public health and graduate nursing, staff proposes to lift the distinctiveness criteria and allow them into WRGP. Staff proposed the changes take effect as of fall 2008.

Chair Shaff asked for discussion on whether the committee members are comfortable with recommending to the Committee of the Whole that pharmacy remain in Group B until 2010, when the fees could be increased; inactivating architecture and graduate library studies as Group B fields; and moving the graduate nursing and public health programs into WRGP, if the participating institutions agree to participate in the graduate program exchange. Schultz indicated that the Wyoming commissioners had indicated previously that they endorse this change. Commissioner Sokugawa asked if they were moving in the direction of eliminating Group B. Shaff and Mock responded that they planned to eliminate it over time.

COMMISSIONER LIND MOVED TO ACCEPT THE CHANGE TO INACTIVATE THE FIELDS OF ARCHITECTURE AND GRADUATE LIBRARY STUDIES IN GROUP B; AND TO TRANSITION THE FIELDS OF GRADUATE NURSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH TO THE WESTERN REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAM. COMMISSIONER SOKUGAWA SECONDED THE MOTION. The motion passed unanimously. Shaff will bring this recommendation to the next session of the Committee of the Whole.

INFORMATION ITEM
Report on the State Scholars Initiative (SSI)

Terese Rainwater, SSI program director, said WICHE was awarded the $6.6 million federally funded grant in October 2005. SSI is a national program that uses business leaders to motivate students to complete a rigorous course of study in high school. WICHE received a no-cost extension to continue as SSI program administrator through September 30, 2008.

Fourteen states originally received up to $300,000 over two years through SSI, including Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. Last year, 10 other states were added: Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming. (WICHE states participating in SSI are Arizona, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. New Mexico and Washington participated in earlier years, and staff is hoping to reengage Washington in the program.)

Rainwater reviewed the SSI Core Course of Study. It includes four years of English; three years of math (algebra 1 and 2 and geometry); three years of lab science (biology, chemistry, and physics); 3.5 years of social studies (U.S. and world history, geography, economics, and government); and two years of the same foreign language. She said it is similar to the course of study recommended by the National Commission for Excellence in Education, which produced the report *A Nation at Risk*; the only variation is that SSI is more specific in math and science and requires foreign language instead of technology. She highlighted a recent ACT report, *Rigor at Risk*. There is a need to improve the quality of core courses that really matter for college and work readiness. SSI requires specificity within the core courses in high school curriculums.

Rainwater said working with participating states to gather data on student course-taking is a primary component of SSI, and the program staff will have new data by November 2007. The program is growing from the pilot phase in many states to multidistrict or statewide implementation. The program is being sustained in many states with other sources of funding, and there has been huge growth in the number of schools and businesses participating. Rainwater highlighted SSI’s achievement in the various states. SSI staff has developed a media kit, and they utilize the SSI website and newsletters for communication. Last year’s SSI monitoring visit by the Department of Education was very successful; the next monitoring visit will be held on June 20 at WICHE. Currently, staff is planning a national SSI summit in Boston that will focus on a rigorous and relevant high school coursework. Staff will commission several briefing papers for the summit.
INFORMATION ITEM
The American TeleEdCommunications Alliance

Mock told the committee members that WICHE plans to end its participation in the American TeleEdCommunications Alliance as existing contracts with vendors expire. The program started in 2001 as a partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and a national program administrator, MICTA, in a collaborative purchasing initiative for technology and telecommunications products. Membership in the alliance is open to all nonprofit organizations throughout the country. The first two to three years were successful, and hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the U.S., as well as libraries, churches, and hospital associations, became members of the purchasing collaborative. Over the past six years there have been a number of changes in the markets for products offered through the initiative, or in the products themselves. For example, long distance telephone service rates have gone down dramatically, so there is less incentive to purchase long distance through a collaborative, particularly as many organizations transition to a voice-over-Internet protocol (VOIP) environment.

These changes, along with staff and operating changes that have occurred at MICTA, have led WICHE staff to recommend that WICHE discontinue its participation in the alliance. The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) pulled out of the alliance last year. The Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) continues to support ATA contracts related to course management systems. MHEC continues to subscribe to some other contracts with the alliance. A few institutions in the WICHE region still purchase through some ATA contracts, but most of the contracts expire in 2008. WICHE plans to terminate its involvement in ATA after the contracts expire.

Chair Shaff thanked Mock, Schultz, and Rainwater for their reports. The committee was adjourned.
DISCUSSION ITEM
Proposal to Provide Hawaii Students with Full Community College Enrollment Reciprocity in the Western Undergraduate Exchange

Summary
Staff proposes that WICHE commissioners review Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) reciprocity policies that no longer serve the WICHE region’s best interests. Of foremost concern is the following: according to WICHE policy, Hawaii students are not eligible to enroll at participating community colleges through WUE.

Background
WICHE’s policy states that Hawaiian students are not eligible for WUE enrollment at participating two-year WUE institutions.

The State of Hawaii signed the WUE agreement in 1988, shortly after the first WICHE states signed in 1987. Hawaii’s participating four-year institutions – the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the University of Hawaii at Hilo – did not offer associate’s degrees and still don’t. Hawaii community colleges were invited to join WUE but chose not to at the time. Because of this, other WICHE states elected not to receive Hawaiian students into their community colleges. Community colleges in the states of Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington chose not to participate in WUE either, but because some of their four-year institutions were/are offering associate’s degrees, it was determined that students from those states were eligible to enroll in community colleges in other WICHE states through the WUE program.

Below is a list of four-year institutions that offer associate’s degrees and that are located in WICHE states that don’t have community colleges participating in WUE.

Oregon:
• Oregon Institute of Technology (two associate’s degrees).

South Dakota:
• Black Hills State University (six associate’s degrees).
• Dakota State University (six associate’s degrees).
• Northern State University (six associate’s degrees).
• South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (one associate’s degree).
• South Dakota State University (two associate’s degrees).
• University of South Dakota (three associate’s degrees).

Washington:
• Eastern Washington University (two associate’s degrees).

Currently, despite the WICHE policy stating that Hawaiian students are not eligible to enroll in two-year institutions through WUE, many do enroll. Former WICHE staff indicates that in the past, WICHE attempted to monitor their enrollment in two-year institutions but eventually decided to unofficially leave it up to enrolling two-year institutions with excess capacity in their programs to decide whether or not they wanted to enroll Hawaiian students through WUE.

Participating WUE institutions are still in the process of reporting their enrollment numbers for fall 2007 as of this writing, but for the 2006 academic year, 100 students from Hawaii were enrolled in two-year institutions through WUE. A total of 3,768 students from all WICHE states were enrolled in two-year WUE institutions. The states receiving Hawaiian students in 2006 were as follows:

• Arizona (61 students from Hawaii).
• Colorado (one student from Hawaii).
• Nevada (24 students from Hawaii).
In November 2005 WICHE commissioners approved an action item to allow full reciprocity for students from California to enroll at WUE institutions in all states. Prior to that time, some WICHE states were not accepting students from California because many years ago, when the state first began its participation in WUE, only one California institution participated (California Maritime Academy). Now, there are six four-year institutions from the California University System that participate, and interest is growing. Despite the absence of participation of California community colleges at this time, California students were never officially barred from enrolling at two-year WUE institutions. In fact, as of fall 2006, 429 were enrolled in two-year WUE colleges.

Not allowing Hawaiian students to enroll in two-year WUE institutions is an old policy that no longer makes sense. It adversely affects Hawaiian students’ access to programs that have capacity or are not offered in the students’ home state. It is also affecting two-year WUE institutions in WICHE states outside of Hawaii that do have excess capacity in their programs. These institutions would enthusiastically welcome Hawaiian students along with those from other WICHE states and would also benefit by further diversifying their student body.

**Future Action**
At the May 2008 WICHE Commission meeting, staff plans to bring WICHE commissioners an action item that requests that all of the participating community colleges in WUE provide students from Hawaii with full reciprocity, thus offering them the same opportunities to enroll through this regional program as students from other participating states.

In the meantime, staff will increase its efforts to encourage community and technical colleges from California, Hawaii, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington to join WUE. Staff will also canvass its WUE liaison officers in other WICHE states to determine the level of interest among its participating two-year institutions regarding enrolling students from Hawaii, along with those from all the other WICHE states.
DISCUSSION ITEM
Focusing Increased Attention on Academic Rigor and Relevance:
WICHE’s State Scholars Initiative

Background
On October 1, 2005, WICHE became the program administrator for the State Scholars Initiative (SSI). The initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. The State Scholars Initiative brings business leaders into the nation’s classrooms, where they work with educators to motivate students to complete a rigorous course of study in high school – one that will give them choices in work, college, and life. State Scholars was created to address a particular reality: American businesses and our economy are demanding more of workers – more skill, a more flexible knowledge base and, above all, a greater capacity to learn. As program administrator, WICHE supports state-level business/education partnerships in their implementation of the State Scholars Initiative model. The model motivates students to take rigorous courses that reflect the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommendations: four years of English; three years of math (algebra I, geometry, algebra II); three years of basic lab science (biology, chemistry, physics); 3.5 years of social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, and government); and two years of the same language other than English.

The 22 states that are currently participating in SSI are receiving funds and operating SSI projects, or they have completed their SSI projects and remain in the SSI network: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming. WICHE is responsible for providing technical assistance, monitoring, oversight, and cost reimbursement to the SSI projects in these states. Two additional states were previously funded, and they created and completed SSI projects: New Mexico and Washington.

National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance
On April 29-30, 2008, WICHE and the State Scholars Initiative will host the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance in Boston, MA. The purpose of the summit is twofold: to examine the role and effectiveness of the business community in driving national education reform conversations; and to discuss policy reform efforts to increase academic rigor and to improve academic relevance in high school. Summit briefs written by national experts will be commissioned to provide the theoretical, demographic, and practical foundations for the summit. The summit will draw on national business and education leaders to serve as thinkers and speakers who will develop strategies for the improvement of high school rigor and relevance. Though the summit is invitational, participants from all states and territories, not just SSI states, will be asked to attend. Several questions will guide the summit, including:

1. Do students learn what they need to know in high school?
2. How should academic rigor be defined?
3. How should the quality of high school coursework be defined?
4. What is the best way to measure student performance and competencies at the end of high school?
5. What incentives are available that will serve to encourage participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields?
6. How can we maximize the resources available at community colleges?
7. How can we maximize the connection between traditional academic programs and career and technical education?

There are six summit outcomes:

1. Guidance toward a strategic vision for sustainability of the State Scholars Initiative.
2. Expansion of the State Scholars Initiative to a nationally representative program.
3. Strengthened understanding in the community about the value of a rigorous course of study, the value of business involvement, and the definition of the relationship between rigorous coursework and student competency.
4. Continued emphasis on STEM fields.
5. Continued emphasis on the connection to community colleges.
6. Continued emphasis on the benefits of offering a rigorous sequence of career and technical education courses in a career cluster to complement the State Scholars Initiative Core Course of Study for all students.

**WICHE’s Federal Funding and Staffing**

The total amount of federal funding provided to WICHE for State Scholars is now $6.6 million: $2.1 million will fund WICHE’s administrative costs, and $4.5 million is supporting state programs. WICHE has successfully completed years one and two. In addition, WICHE has received a continuation award of $600,000 for a third year and will continue as the national SSI program administrator through September 30, 2008.

In December 2005 Terese Rainwater was hired as SSI program director (1.0 FTE). Christian Martinez joined the staff in January 2006 (1.0 FTE), along with Michelle Médal as administrative coordinator (1.0 FTE); Jere Mock oversees the program (.20 FTE on the grant). The grant also covers .65 FTE of the WICHE Communications staff’s FTE for Annie Finigan’s, Candy Allen’s, and Deborah Jang’s involvement.

**The SSI State Network**

Since the beginning of WICHE’s program administration, the SSI network has expanded from 14 to 22 states (a list of the participating state business/education organizations follows on p. 7-12). Each of the state programs is administered by a state-level business/education partnership and supported by up to $300,000 in federal funding over a two-year period.

Of the states that joined the State Scholars Initiative during WICHE’s program administration, all 10 have launched the program through statewide kick-off events, secured business volunteers and support, presented to students, and begun data collection. Wyoming held its statewide kick-off event on September 27, 2007; and Nebraska held its statewide kick-off event on September 28, 2007. The next state directors’ meeting will be held in conjunction with the national summit in April 2008.

As part of its oversight responsibilities, WICHE has conducted a series of state site-monitoring visits to ensure the quality of program implementation and provide technical assistance. Monitoring/technical assistance visits have been conducted in the following states: Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming. WICHE also hosts a monthly state directors’ conference call, in which state partnerships learn how to address program needs and share best practices.

**National SSI Advisory Board**

On August 23, 2007, the State Scholars Advisory Board met via conference call to discuss SSI state implementation and the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance. The next in-person meeting of the advisory board is April 29, 2008. The members of the advisory board are: Mike Cohen, president, Achieve; Brian Fitzgerald, executive director, Business-Higher Education Forum; Christine Johnson; Charles Kolb, president, Committee for Economic Development; Marshall Lind, WICHE commissioner and chancellor emeritus, University of Alaska Fairbanks; Leon Lederman, resident scholar and Nobel Laureate, Physics Illinois Math and Science Academy; Barry Munitz, chair of the California P-16 Council, former chancellor of the California State University, and former president of the J. Paul Getty Trust; Jane Nichols, vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education; Raymund Paredes, commissioner of higher education, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Suellen Reed, superintendent of public instruction, Indiana Department of Education; Piedad Robertson, president emeritus, Education Commission of the States; Arthur Rothkopf, senior vice president, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Roger Sampson, president, Education Commission of the States; Janis Somerville, senior associate, K-16 Initiative, NASH/Ed Trust; David Spence, president, Southern Regional Education Board; Susan Traiman, director of education and workforce policy, Business Roundtable; Deborah Wilds, president and chief operating officer, College Success Foundation; and Steve Wing, director of government programs, CVS Pharmacy. (Roger Sampson joined the board in September 2007 and Liz Dietz, former president of Xap, resigned from the board the same month.)

**Evaluation**

SSI state performance is monitored by two independent third-party evaluators: Karen Paulson, senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS); and Diana Robinson, senior research associate at the Regional Development Institute of Northern Illinois University (NIU). Diana Robinson also evaluates WICHE’s performance. Copies of the 2007 annual evaluation reports are available.
Other Recent Activities
In October WICHE presented at a briefing entitled “Preparing Students for Success: How the State Scholars Initiative Helps” for the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. The briefing, which was very well received, was delivered by a panel whose members included SSI Director Terese Rainwater, WICHE Executive Director David Longanecker, and Office of Vocational and Adult Education Assistant Secretary Troy Justesen, as well as SSI Advisory Board member Steve Wing and two state directors, Linda Noonan of Massachusetts and Betsy McLearn of Virginia. The live audience included some 40 key decision makers from the Office of Postsecondary Education, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Additionally, the briefing was broadcast to the entire Department of Education, both national and regional offices. SSI will be streaming the briefing on our website.

WICHE also produced an SSI DVD, targeted at 8th grade students, delivering the message that taking a rigorous course of study like the State Scholars Core Course of Study is important; the DVD is slated to be disseminated this fall. Additionally, WICHE is working on the 2007 State Scholars Year in Review and the Why Foreign Language policy brief. Lastly, WICHE produces a national newsletter three times a year. The next newsletter will be released in January 2007. Copies of the September 2007 newsletter are available.

The SSI Network Chronology
WICHE staff oversees the efforts of 13 of the 14 original state-level organizations, most of which began implementing the program in 2003. They include:

- Arkansas Business Education Alliance
- Arizona Business & Education Coalition
- CBIA Education Foundation (an affiliate of the Connecticut Business Industry Association)
- Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- Partnership for Kentucky Schools
- Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
- Michigan Chamber of Commerce
- Public Education Forum of Mississippi
- New Jersey Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (an affiliate of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce)
- New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence
- Oklahoma Business Education Coalition
- The Education Partnership of Rhode Island
- Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The eight state business-education partnerships that joined the State Scholars network in March 2006 are:

- The Fund for Colorado’s Future*
- Committee for SECURE Louisiana
- Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- North Carolina Business Committee for Education*
- Future Force Nebraska
- Utah K-16 Alliance
- Virginia Career Education Foundation
- The Education Alliance of West Virginia

The four state business-education partnerships that joined the State Scholars network in November 2006 are:

- Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- New Hampshire College & University Council
- South Dakota State Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- The Wyoming P-16 Council

(*In August 2006 two business-education partnerships withdrew from the national State Scholars Initiative network: The Fund for Colorado’s Future and the North Carolina Business Committee for Education. After receiving extensive technical assistance, Colorado and North Carolina were not comfortable signing the SSI state contract. Ultimately, the role of business in both states was an accommodation, not the centerpiece of their State Scholars programs.)
INFORMATION ITEM
Student Exchange Program Updates

WUE
The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is a regional program that enables students in participating states to enroll in designated two- and four-year public institutions and programs in other participating states at special, reduced tuition levels. The WUE tuition rate is 50 percent more than the institution’s regular resident tuition. This year, WUE celebrates its 20th year of the signing of the WUE tuition reciprocity agreement. The program continues to thrive: in 2006-07, more than 21,500 WUE students saved some $131 million in tuition costs. Students could choose from some 135 participating WUE institutions in fall 2007, including two new California State University (CSU) institutions: Dominguez Hills and Bakersfield. In spring 2008 students will also have the option of attending WUE’s newest institution, CSU San Bernardino. WUE institutions are in the process of reporting their fall 2007 enrollments. The WUE website has been revamped and offers two interfaces for our various constituent groups. The first section caters to students and parents and includes general program information and access to the WUE online database, as well as estimated WUE savings for students and their families. The second interface caters to participating institutions and high school and college counselors who promote the program, as well as state officials and policymakers. In addition to the information mentioned, this section also describes the advantages of participating in WUE, from an institution’s and a state’s perspective, and has a section on frequently asked questions/answers for prospective and participating WUE institutions, as well as downloadable promotional materials. This section also links to WUE enrollment reports, including the new formats available that show enrollment trends by program, using standardized classification of instructional programs (CIP) codes. These are very useful for state and institutional enrollment planning.

WICHE staff presented the WUE program at the June Northern California Education “REACH” (Regional Alliance for Completing Higher Education) conference in Weed, CA. The audience included admissions officers and academic advisors of the state’s northern community colleges, as well as two California State University (CSU) institutions that enroll their transfer students: CSU Humboldt and CSU Chico. Both participate in WUE. Staff of the University of California–Davis was also present; UCD also accepts community college students. Several community colleges expressed interest in joining WUE, despite California’s heavily subsidized resident tuition, which makes resident rates very affordable. Staff will continue to follow up on their interest. WICHE will also make efforts to invite community college participation of institutions in Hawaii and Washington. Finally, staff is following up with several California State University institutions that have expressed interest in WUE in the past, including the Northridge and Long Beach campuses.

Staff is also seeking opportunities to present the WUE program and the philosophy behind regional exchange to high school and community college counselors who promote the program to potential WUE students.

WRGP
The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) includes master’s and doctoral degree programs that are not widely available throughout the West. To be eligible for WRGP, programs that aren’t related to health must be “distinctive,” meaning they must be offered at no more than four institutions in the WICHE region (exclusive of California). Participating programs are particularly strong in meeting the emerging social, environmental, and resource development needs of the West and include many innovative interdisciplinary programs. WRGP is an exceptional educational resource for the West, allowing master’s and Ph.D. students who are residents of the 14 participating states to enroll in high-quality programs on a resident tuition basis. Along with the significant benefits provided to students and the enlarged student pool offered to innovative programs, the WRGP review process has been useful for states and institutions engaging in program review for academic-planning purposes. In fall 2006 there were 457 students enrolled in some 175 programs at 39 participating institutions through WRGP. Since the program’s inception in 1985, we estimate that more than 3,350 students have participated.
WRGP programs are not available to California students at this time because currently no California programs receive WRGP students through this arrangement. WICHE would be pleased to welcome California programs in the future and has encouraged interested ones to apply during the fall 2007 application period.

In the past WICHE accepted only distinctive programs to WRGP. However, given the severe workforce shortages in many of the health care professions, the WICHE Commission voted in May 2007 to waive the previous distinctiveness requirement for health-related offerings, as long as they are of good quality. WICHE is encouraging all high-quality health-related programs in the region that have excess capacity or that wish to diversify their enrollments to join WRGP.

WRGP Call for Nominations of New Programs
WICHE released a call for nominations of new WRGP programs for 2008 and 2009 in mid-September. Staff anticipates that the revised policy, which does not require health programs to be unique, will generate a large number of program applications this round.

Programs applying for WRGP undergo a review and approval process during the period from in December through February. WICHE will release a final list of new WRGP programs in March or April 2008. New programs will have the option of enrolling WICHE students at the WRGP (resident) rate beginning in fall 2008; some may chose to begin in fall 2009.

PSEP
The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) provides students in 12 Western states (all WICHE states except California, Oregon, and South Dakota) with access to a wide range of professional programs that otherwise might not be available to them because the fields of study are not offered at public institutions in their home states.

PSEP students pay reduced levels of tuition – usually resident tuition in public institutions or reduced tuition at private schools. The home state pays a support fee to the admitting schools to help cover the cost of the students’ education. Each state determines the fields and the number of students it will support.

With the commissioners’ decision at the May 2007 meeting to inactivate underused fields (architecture, graduate library studies, graduate nursing, and public health), PSEP now offers exchanges exclusively in the health care professions. Through PSEP students have access to professional degree programs in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic medicine, physician assistant, and pharmacy.

During the 2007-08 academic year, 772 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling over $14.5 million. Last year states invested $13.4 million to support 745 students. The increase is largely due to Arizona and Hawaii’s success in obtaining additional funds to support more students in the health professions. Arizona obtained an increase of approximately $600,000, and Hawaii obtained an additional $250,000. Complete details on PSEP participation (by sending state and receiving institutions) will be available in WICHE’s 2007-08 Student Exchange Program Statistical Report. It will be released by the end of 2007 in hard copy and will also be available on the WICHE website. The report will also include basic enrollment statistics for the WUE and WRGP programs.

WICHE recently distributed its new PSEP brochure for the 2008 and 2009 academic years; commissioners were mailed a copy of the new brochure in September. The inactivation of the non–health care fields of architecture and graduate library studies now affords WICHE and its member states opportunities to promote the program as a health care education access program. Staff is also working with the state certifying officers to create partnerships with their state professional health care associations, the area health education network directors, and state offices of rural health policy. These professional association contacts will be helpful in promoting the program to future health care workers; copies of the new brochure will be sent to them as well.
Six new programs joined PSEP over the summer. The majority hail from private institutions in the fields of occupational therapy, pharmacy, and physician assistant studies. They include:

- Touro University Nevada’s School of Occupational Therapy.
- Loma Linda’s School of Pharmacy in Southern California.
- University of California San Diego’s Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- The University of Southern Nevada’s College of Pharmacy.
- Touro University Nevada’s School of Physician Assistant Studies.
- Touro University California’s Physician Assistant Studies Program.

**Setting the PSEP Support Fees for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 Biennium**

During its May 2008 meeting, the WICHE Commission will consider and approve PSEP support fees for the 2009 and 2010 biennium. Ten fields are now available through PSEP. WICHE states continue to depend on PSEP to meet several key objectives. PSEP helps them to:

- Develop a health care professional workforce.
- Provide affordable access to a wide range of professional programs that otherwise might not be accessible to students in some states.
- Offer students tuition assistance to private health care professional programs available within their home state when a public program is not available.
- Enhance the quality and prestige of participating programs by enabling them to attract exceptional students from throughout the West.
- Enable states to avoid the costs of establishing new professional schools.

Staff and certifying officers take into consideration many factors as they prepare the recommendations, including:

- The relationship between support fees and today’s nonresident tuition levels, as well as future anticipated tuition increases.
- The impact on enrollments if a greater tuition burden is shifted to students.
- The creation of new professional programs that have absorbed more in-state students and the availability of seats in out-of-state programs.

Setting support fees involves balancing the diverse needs of states, students, and institutions. States that support large numbers of students through PSEP face mounting fiscal pressures as they try to provide access to professional education for their residents. The receiving institutions’ costs of delivering professional education continue to rise, necessitating greater financial incentives to preserve slots for nonresident students.

Students are bearing heavier financial burdens as tuition and fees continue to increase at both public and private institutions. Students generally pay resident tuition at public institutions and reduced tuition at private institutions; the “sending” states provide a support fee to cover the difference between resident and nonresident tuition. Historically, the participating institutions have received an additional financial incentive exceeding the nonresident tuition levels. As tuitions have increased at differing rates across institutions, the incentives have become more variable, and some support fees are no longer meeting all tuition differentials at our cooperating public programs.

Support fees for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 biennium were approved by the full commission in May 2006 and included a 3.4 percent increase for each year of the biennium, along with a $1,000 increase in the first year of the biennium (2007-08) for occupational therapy and physician assistant support fees. Fees, previously approved by the WICHE Commission, are outlined in the chart on the next page.
*Group A includes those PSEP fields in which WICHE students would have a difficult time gaining access to public professional schools without the financial incentive provided to schools by PSEP.

** Group B includes professional fields where access is not as significant a problem but where states wish to offset high nonresident and private institution tuition charges for their residents. Plans are to migrate pharmacy to Group A by 2010.

Over the next couple of months, staff will analyze the tuition and fees of participating schools using the 2007-08 tuition and fees information from cooperating schools. Staff considers both the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA) index (similar to the Consumer Price Index) and proposes fee levels that will cover the tuition differentials at the cooperating institutions. Staff will discuss proposals for the 2009-10 support fees with WICHE’s certifying officers and participating programs to seek their feedback prior to the May commission meeting.

We anticipate there may need to be minor adjustments in funding to accommodate the growing length of programs, especially in the field of physician assistant and possibly physical therapy. The schools of osteopathic medicine challenged the support fee levels in 2006 because their support fees are significantly lower than allopathic medicine support fees. The 2007-08 support fee difference between the two professions was $8,900. Staff anticipates this issue will resurface. Despite the fact that all colleges of osteopathic medicine in the West are private institutions, commissioners and state officials may also want to consider that a growing number of osteopathic medicine schools are developing programs with a rural and general practice emphasis. Given the critical workforce needs in rural areas, particularly in the West, it may be in our states’ interest to decrease student debt (by increasing tuition assistance levels through PSEP) and to create additional incentive programs to attract graduates into rural practice areas.

The states of Alaska, Hawaii, and Nevada will also need to review the level of support fees in pharmacy. When pharmacy was first supported through PSEP, the workforce needs were not at the critical levels they are today. At the May 2007 meeting, staff proposed to approximately double the support fee in pharmacy and move it to the Group A category. Because of state budget uncertainties and the opening of several new pharmacy schools in the West, supporting states decided to table the discussion until the May 2008 meeting, to see if they could fund a potential increase when new support fees are approved for the next biennium. Since our May 2007 discussion, the University of Southern Nevada (a private institution) has joined PSEP and will now be an option for pharmacy students from the states of Alaska, Hawaii, and Nevada (states can support students at private institutions located within their home state). The University of Hawaii at Hilo’s new pharmacy school enrolled its first class this fall 2007. Hawaii has committed to continue its support for new PSEP pharmacy students through the 2010-11 academic year. By fall 2011 Hilo’s school of pharmacy should be fully accredited, and the state will likely cease supporting students in pharmacy at that time.

Once WICHE staff has developed its proposal for new support fees, we will distribute it widely to all of the participating states and institutions so that there is ample time for comment prior to the commission action on the fees during the May 2008 meeting.

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**Health Care Workforce Issues and the West’s Rural Needs**

WICHE continues to develop new strategies to enhance our exchange programs; to help our member states respond to workforce needs, particularly in the rural West; and to broaden educational access for students.

Attracting health care professional graduates to rural and underserved areas is a challenge, even with tuition assistance to reduce initial student debt load: low reimbursement rates and lower salaries in underserved and rural areas are major deterrents for professionals. Lack of employment opportunities for spouses and few urban amenities are also important factors.

WICHE continues to explore partnerships with federal and state agencies and private funders, seeking regional strategies to alleviate these critical health care workforce shortages.

As a first step toward a better understanding of the recruitment tools currently used throughout our region, staff completed the *Inventory of Rural Health Practice Incentives in the Western WICHE States*. Incentives available in our region include: scholarships/tuition assistance with service paybacks; loan repayment; tax credits; direct financial incentives, such as residency stipends and paid malpractice premiums; rural facilities grants; and retention grants. Funding for the programs and levels of funding vary widely among states; in addition to state funds, some incentives are privately funded. All states use the federally funded National Health Service Corps (NHSC) scholarship and loan repayment programs to help staff their underserved areas. Some states also operate a NHSC State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) to attract primary care professionals, whereby the federal government matches state and community dollars one for one.

Through its research, staff found that given the severity of the shortages, current funding levels of incentives programs seem woefully insufficient to stem the erosion of rural health care in the West. However, before policymakers of WICHE states expand existing programs, the region should:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of our current rural incentive programs.
- Learn what other states are doing and replicate the best incentive models.
- Share resources to develop regional recruiting partnerships.
- Consider additional strategies to attract and retain rural health care providers:
  - Develop or expand pipeline programs to attract students from rural areas who are interested in returning to serve.
  - Make rural rotations mandatory for students, beginning with the first year of their professional education.
  - Increase compensation for rural providers, who are typically reimbursed at lower rates.
  - Develop strategies to provide vacation/sabbatical relief for rural providers to prevent burn-out.
  - Offer continuing education opportunities for professional growth and colleague interaction for place-bound rural providers.
  - Maximize use of telemedicine to reduce the isolation of rural health care providers and to connect them with specialists located in urban areas.

WICHE also plans to convene the residency directors and medical school deans of its cooperating programs to encourage them to put a greater emphasis on rural curriculum and rural rotations and residencies, as well as to examine faculty development issues related to rural residencies.

Finally, WICHE continues its plans to convene a Western Health Professionals Advisory Council, which will include institutional representatives, practicing health professionals, legislators, and state and federal government representatives of programs with a shared vision. The committee is modeled after WICHE’s Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council, which has been very worthwhile in developing regional partnerships and promoting cooperation in veterinary education. The goal of the new committee will be to develop regional strategies related to pipeline issues, curriculum development, and attracting professionals to underserved and rural communities.

**Health Information Technology in the West**

WICHE is looking at strategies to help states and institutions prepare the health information technology (HIT) workforce in the West. Electronic health records and telemedicine, which are critical for efficient and high-quality health care delivery, are even more important in the rural West. Unfortunately, the number of programs currently available to train HIT professionals greatly lags behind workforce needs. WICHE is examining ways to share resources...
of existing programs in the region and help institutions use distance education to deliver their programs to more individuals in the West.

To help inform its efforts, staff will release a workforce brief focused on health information technology. It will be the second brief of WICHE’s new series *A Closer Look at Health Care Needs in the West*. The first brief focused on pharmacy workforce issues and was released at the May 2007 WICHE Commission meeting.
INFORMATION ITEM

Update: WICHE Internet Course Exchange

WICHE continues to support the sharing of electronically delivered courses and programs through the Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE). The WICHE ICE Steering Board, which represents the 13 higher education institutions and university systems that comprise WICHE ICE’s membership, approved the WICHE ICE Operations Manual at their April 2007 meeting. The operations manual includes the policies and procedures necessary for successful course and program exchanges through WICHE ICE, along with information and resources for ICE members. Members are currently focusing on putting the policies and procedures in place to implement WICHE ICE at their institutions. Each institution has formed an implementation team, and members of those teams met at the WICHE offices on October 8-9 to develop strategies and share best practices regarding WICHE ICE implementation. Representatives from member institutions include registrars, business and finance deans, provosts and vice presidents of undergraduate affairs, and WICHE ICE Steering Board members and coordinators.

WICHE is also exploring possibilities for new program exchanges that meet the needs of students in Western states. Representatives from math and science teaching centers in Western states met at WICHE on October 10 to explore opportunities for collaboration in teacher preparation and professional development for secondary teachers. Additional program exchanges under consideration for WICHE ICE include graduate-level social work with a focus on rural education, programs in Basque studies, and allied health fields. WICHE also continues to support partnerships that were initiated by the Northwest Educational Outreach Network (NEON), including a graduate certificate in supply chain management and sharing doctoral-level nursing courses through the Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus).

Additional institutional and system memberships in the WICHE Internet Course Exchange are pending. Current members include:

- Bismarck State College
- Boise State University
- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- Idaho State University
- Lewis-Clark State College
- Montana State University–Bozeman
- Montana University System
- North Dakota University System Online
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- University of Nevada Reno
- University of Utah
- University of Wyoming
INFORMATION ITEM
Update: Master Property Program and Property and Casualty Program

The Master Property Program (MPP) is offered by WICHE to Western institutions in collaboration with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). The MPP offers an insurance and risk management program that provides comprehensive property coverage specific to higher education needs and enhances institutions’ risk management and asset protection strategies. MPP tailors its engineering and loss control services to member institutions’ requirements, as well as to the group as a whole. The program has generated more than $30.5 million in savings for participating institutions, and members can also earn dividends based on annual loss ratios. Members currently include 90 campuses (43 primary policies), with a total insured value of $56.9 billion. Five institutions in the WICHE region joined MPP as of the July 2007 program renewal: Lewis & Clark College (OR), Pima County Community College system (AZ), Seattle Pacific University (WA), University of Northern Colorado, and Westminster College (UT). The Nevada System of Higher Education joined the program in 2004.

Since July WICHE has worked with our MPP program administrator, Marsh, Inc., to respond to submissions from Colorado State University (CSU), the Oregon University System (OUS), and Willamette University (in Oregon) for their property insurance coverage. CSU and OUS did not join the MPP this year, and Willamette University is still considering the program. WICHE staff has also met with additional institutions to provide more information on the MHEC/WICHE insurance programs, including the University of Wyoming and representatives from the Colorado Department of Higher Education. WICHE will continue to contact eligible institutions with more information on the program.

As a complement to the Master Property Program, the Property and Casualty Program (P&CP) was introduced in 2004 to meet the needs of smaller institutions with enrollments averaging around 7,500 students. The P&CP offers a package program and lower deductibles to meet the unique needs of smaller institutions.
INFORMATION ITEM
Update: Northwest Academic Forum

The Northwest Academic Forum (NWAF) is composed of 31 master’s and doctoral-level institutions from 10 states; the institutions are represented by their provosts, vice presidents of academic affairs, and state academic officers. The 2007 NWAF annual meeting was held on April 26-28 at Portland State University and had the theme: “A Perfect World: Student Success through P-16 Alignment.” Speakers from the Education Trust, California State University System, Oregon State Senate, and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning engaged in discussions with NWAF members on data to support increased resources for student success and retention, college readiness, state policies that support linkages between K-12 and higher education, and accelerated learning options.

The NWAF Executive Committee met September 28-29 in Portland, OR, to begin planning for the 2008 NWAF annual meeting at Boise State University. At the 2008 meeting, NWAF members will discuss the impacts of global education, with the theme, “Local to Global: Partnerships and Strategies for Improvement.”

Current members of the Northwest Academic Forum include:

- Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- University of Alaska, Anchorage
- University of Alaska System
- University of Hawaii System
- Boise State University
- Idaho State Board of Education
- Idaho State University
- Lewis-Clark State College
- University of Idaho
- Montana State University–Bozeman
- Montana State University–Billings
- Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
- University of Montana–Missoula
- Minot State University
- North Dakota University System
- North Dakota State University
- University of North Dakota
- Valley City State University
- University of Nevada–Las Vegas
- University of Nevada–Reno
- Eastern Oregon University
- Oregon State University
- Oregon University System
- Portland State University
- Western Oregon University
- South Dakota Board of Regents
- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- Washington State University
- University of Washington
- University of Wyoming