Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Monday, November 10, 2008
3.30 - 5.30 pm
Salon ABC

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

www.wiche.edu
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Programs and Services Committee Meeting

Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Marshall Lind (AK), vice chair
Roy Ogawa (HI), ex officio
Jane Nichols (NV), ex officio

Committee vice chair (AK)
John Haeger (AZ)
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Joseph A. Garcia (CO)
Helene Sokugawa (HI)
Michael Rush (ID)
Kerra Melvin (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)

Presiding: Marshall Lind, vice chair
Staff: Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
   Terese Rainwater, program director, State Scholars Initiative
   Margo Schultz, program coordinator, Student Exchange Programs
   Pat Shea, director, WICHE Internet Course Exchange and Northwest Academic Forum

Agenda

Approval of the Programs and Services Committee meeting minutes of May 19, 2008 7-3

Discussion Items:

Student Exchange Programs: Focusing in on new developments in medical and dental education and related workforce trends in the West and program updates – Margo Schultz 7-9

The State Scholars Initiative: A closer look at successful state implementation strategies and program updates – Terese Rainwater 7-12

Strategies to foster institutional participation in the WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE): Findings from the business and marketing plan development process and program updates – Pat Shea 7-16
Other unit updates

Other business and adjournment
Commissioner Shaff called the meeting to order.


ACTION ITEM
Approval of the FY 2009 Programs and Services Workplan

Jere Mock, vice president of Programs and Services, reviewed the proposed workplan by first describing her division’s initiatives to assist states and higher education institutions in the West to broaden access, foster innovation and information technology, develop an educated workforce, and achieve cost savings and efficiencies through collaborations. She also reviewed new initiatives that are proposed for commissioner consideration.

WICHE’s three regional exchange programs broaden access to higher education for nearly 23,000 students annually. They are: the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). An initiative that focuses on supporting state business-education partnerships to help students become better prepared for higher education and other pursuits is the national State Scholars Initiative; WICHE received a $6.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Vocational Education in October 2005 to administer the program and fund each of the participating states at $300,000 over two years (24 states have participated in SSI). WICHE will administer the program until mid 2009. A major outcome during 2008 was the hosting of the State Scholars Initiative National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance. The summit brought together over 200 participants: business leaders, policymakers, and educators from 36 states and territories. (More information regarding the Student Exchange Programs and SSI follows in other sections of the minutes.)

In addition, the Programs and Services staff manages several other regional initiatives that foster resource sharing and interinstitutional collaborations across the West, including the WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE). An online course and program sharing consortium with 14 initial institutional and system members, WICHE ICE 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; students use the advising, registration, and financial aid services provided at their home campuses.

Mock said WICHE ICE course exchanges are developing in a number of academic disciplines, such as social work, math and science teacher education, and health fields. WICHE staff works with a regional 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 per student per course fee that also is paid to WICHE to support our involvement. A recent grant from the Sloan Foundation will enable staff to develop business and marketing plans for WICHE ICE.

Programs and Services staff members are also exploring ways to address workforce shortages in several healthcare fields, with particular emphasis on the needs of rural and frontier communities in the West. Staff produces annual workforce briefs, which focus on high-growth professions in each state. This year staff developed briefs on current and anticipated workforce needs in fields including pharmacy, health information technology, and medical education. Staff will develop two additional briefs in the coming months focused on the oral health workforce and veterinary medicine. Mock described another new WICHE resource, a regional inventory of state-level incentives for rural healthcare practitioners that has been disseminated throughout the West and that will be updated as new incentive programs are implemented in our region.

Mock described some other projects that have been added to the WICHE workplan over the past couple of 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). Institutions in the West that have been recruited by staff for the MPP include Lewis & Clark College in Oregon, the Nevada System of Higher Education, Pima County Community College System in Arizona, Seattle Pacific University in Washington, University of Northern Colorado, Westminster College in Utah, and Willamette University in Oregon. Oregon’s Reed College is also exploring participation in the MPP.

Programs and Services’ staff uses a variety of resources to communicate with WICHE constituents, including the organization’s Website, NewsCap, and other print and electronic resources. They also work closely with the Policy unit to inform and involve legislators and governor’s offices’ staff.

Mock said new initiatives under development, or in the feasibility/planning stages, include efforts to collaborate with state departments of labor and state workforce development councils to expand the number of adults with college degrees through online education using WICHE ICE; to partner with Western states on initiatives designed to recruit and retain healthcare practitioners in rural and underserved communities throughout the West; and to expand and build on the State Scholars Initiative with public and private-sector funding.

Chair Shaff asked for a motion to approve the workplan as presented by Mock. COMMISSIONER LIND MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE FY 2009 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WORKPLAN. COMMISSIONER GARCIA SECONDED THE MOTION. The motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of Support Fees for PSEP for 2009-10 and 2010-11

Carl Shaff introduced Margo Schultz, program coordinator of WICHE’s three Student Exchange Programs. Schultz reviewed the fee-setting process for WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). She explained that the proposed increase is based on the HECA inflation index, which increased by 3.4 percent between 2006 and 2007. Support fee setting is a balancing act; the goal is to keep students’ financial burden as low as possible, meet public schools’ tuition differentials so that they have sufficient incentive to save seats for WICHE students, and keep support fee rates affordable for states so that they can support as many PSEP students as possible.
In fields where the resident/nonresident tuition differential is not met at several public institutions, staff typically proposes base fee adjustments. However, staff decided not to propose any base fee increases for 2009 or 2010 for reasons outlined below. Feedback on the proposed fees was solicited from the deans of the participating schools and the state higher education offices. Staff then analyzed the feedback, made adjustments, and notified all affected parties of the proposed fees and the timeline for WICHE Commission review.

Schultz explained that the evaluation of support fee levels for this round of fee-setting was problematic in several fields: dentistry, occupational therapy, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, and physician assistant.

WICHE staff is concerned about not increasing support fees beyond the 3.4 percent for dentistry, given that nonresident differentials are no longer being covered by the support fee at some of the institutions where there is heavy PSEP enrollment (CU Denver, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the University of Washington; 30 WICHE students were enrolled at CU Denver in 2007-08). However, the resident/nonresident tuition differentials at these schools are significantly greater than at other public institutions. At two of the institutions, the resident tuition is substantially lower than the average of $34,600; CU Denver residents pay almost $5,000 less than the average, and University of Washington residents pay about $8,400 less than the average resident tuition. The lower-than-average resident tuition contributes to a greater differential.

The University of Colorado Denver’s School of Dentistry recently instituted a state policy whereby students who enroll as nonresidents can no longer obtain Colorado residency for their second and subsequent years in school; once a student enrolls at the nonresident rate in their first year, they must remain a nonresident for the duration of their studies. Staff decided not to propose an adjustment increase that would compensate for these large differentials after speaking with some supporting states that send large numbers of dentistry students through the program. Foregoing an adjustment is a calculated risk, as WICHE students could eventually lose access to CU Denver because the institution can obtain the differential from non-WICHE students who are willing to pay the difference. Admission to CU Denver’s dental school is very competitive; it received almost 1,400 applications for 50 new seats for its 2008 entering class.

For occupational therapy and physical therapy, the tuition differential is not being met at a few public schools. Because the majority of WICHE students in these fields are enrolled at private institutions or at publics where the differential is being met, staff is not proposing a base increase in these two fields at this time.

Schultz noted a similar situation in the physician assistant field. But in addition there is a national trend towards increasing the length of physician assistant programs, from 24 to 27 months. Only a few WICHE programs have increased their length thus far; therefore, staff recommends forgoing a base increase at this time.

WICHE’s osteopathic schools of medicine (all private) have asked for increases because their fees are about $9,000 lower than support for allopathic medicine. Despite that difference, on average, WICHE osteopathic medicine students are paying about $2,000 less than their allopathic counterparts. Therefore, staff does not recommend a base increase.

Shaff said that the certifying officers’ meeting was held the previous day and that certifying officers made a unanimous recommendation to support the proposed fee increases and encouraged commissioners to support the proposed increases as well.

COMMISSIONER LIND MOVED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED INCREASE OF 3.4 PERCENT FOR SUPPORT FEES FOR THE 2009 AND 2010 ACADEMIC YEARS. COMMISSIONER SIDEMAN SECONDED THE MOTION. The motion passed unanimously. Sideman complimented staff on the thoroughness of their research and recommendations on the proposed fees.

Student Exchange Updates

Schultz continued with an update on the Student Exchange Programs. She reviewed the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) program, whereby students from the WICHE region enroll at participating institutions and pay 150 percent of resident tuition. There are currently 140 participating universities and community colleges, including two new ones that were recently added: California State University, Sacramento, and California State University, San
Bernardino. WUE enables participating institutions to fill empty seats and diversify their student bodies. In the past academic year, some 22,100 WUE students and their families saved an estimated $137.7 million in tuition.

Schultz thanked commissioners for voting to allow Hawaii residents access to WUE community colleges (November 2007), even though Hawaii community colleges do not currently participate. She met with community college chancellors in November 2007, and some of the underenrolled campuses expressed interest in participating but had concerns about the lack of available student housing.

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) offers lower-cost access to master’s and doctoral degree programs not widely available in the West. To be eligible for WRGP, programs that are not related to health must be “distinctive,” meaning they must be offered at no more than five institutions in the WICHE region (outside of California). WICHE staff received a total of 32 nominations for new programs in fall 2007 and conducted a peer review by graduate deans and faculty members from institutions throughout the region. Twenty-eight programs were selected for inclusion in WRGP, and another two programs were recommended, pending provisional accreditation. The remaining two programs did not meet WICHE’s criteria for program distinctiveness. The slate of programs was then reviewed by the academic officers in the state governing and coordinating board offices.

The new programs broaden the WRGP’s offerings in several areas: communications and journalism; computer sciences; engineering and the sciences; humanities; the social sciences and public affairs; and nursing and public health. WRGP now has a total of 21 nursing programs and five in public health. Of WRGP’s 203 programs, 35 are healthcare-related. Arizona State University’s professional science master’s in nanoscience, New Mexico State University’s master’s of applied geography with a focus in geospatial science, and Black Hills State University’s master’s in integrative genomics are some of the new programs. Finally, staff reorganized the WRGP handout by program family classification to help prospective graduate students identify programs in their specialty area more easily.

In the 2007-08 academic year, 779 students were enrolled though PSEP in 10 healthcare fields, with support fees totaling over $14.6 million. Schultz noted that current return rate data for a WICHE PSEP graduates is now available in WICHE’s 2007-08 Student Exchange Program Statistical Report (pp. 14-16). The average return rate for all reporting WICHE states was 59 percent. Return rates for payback states were the highest, averaging 74 percent and ranging as high as 94 percent, depending on the profession. Return rates for “honor system” states were lower, averaging 39 percent and ranging up to 75 percent, depending on the profession. Return rates were lowest in primarily rural states that do not require a service payback from their residents, including Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Schultz pointed out that some of the “honor states” consider PSEP primarily as an access program.

Schultz reported that Western University of Health Sciences will open optometry and dental programs in fall 2009, and Midwestern University will begin its dentistry program in fall 2008, followed by a new optometry program in fall 2009.

Finally, Schultz encouraged commissioners to read WICHE’s newest workforce brief on medical education for physicians (released May 2008). The brief is the third in a series that looks specifically at the West’s healthcare workforce needs (the first highlighted the health information technology workforce, and the second addressed the pharmacy workforce). The medical education brief highlights three interrelated workforce issues of importance to consumers, physicians, and medical schools that prepare individuals for a career in medicine: the shortage of physicians and the planned expansion of medical school enrollment; medical student indebtedness; and primary care physician service, with emphasis on care delivery in rural areas. WICHE also compiled companion surveys on school of medicine expansion plans and rural track medicine programs available in the West.

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

**Sustaining the State Scholars Initiative**

Terese Rainwater, program director for the State Scholars Initiative (SSI), reviewed recent accomplishments in SSI states, presented SSI data, reported on the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance, and discussed sustainability options. Rainwater reported that SSI has two goals: to increase the number of high school students taking a rigorous course of study and to engage the business community in this endeavor. Total funding for the
The initiative is $6.6 million, of which $2.1 million supports WICHE’s administration costs and $4.5 million supports SSI state implementation efforts. Twenty-four states have received federal SSI funding; of these, 20 are actively implementing the program. WICHE has been granted continuation funding from the U.S. Department of Education through March 31, 2009.

As WICHE concludes its third year of program administration, Rainwater noted that states continue to look for ways to reach students and connect their state programs with other policy efforts. She highlighted four WICHE states:

- Arizona: In December 2007 the state board of education approved new graduation requirements, beginning with the graduating classes of 2012 and 2013. Additional emphasis and discussion regarding academic rigor is expected to continue.

- South Dakota: South Dakota Scholars is coordinating statewide efforts with the South Dakota Department of Education regarding career planning, career clusters utilization, and career software availability so that all of these resources are universally available to students in the state. The department of education has expressed interest in sustaining South Dakota Scholars past federal funding. Since the beginning of 2008, five school districts have joined the program.

- Utah: In 2008 Utah Scholars received a state appropriation of nearly $1 million to create and fund the Regents’ Scholarship. The scholarship has two levels. It provides a $1,000 base scholarship to any student who completes the Utah Scholars Core Course of Study with a minimum GPA, and a scholarship equal to 75 percent of tuition for two years of full-time college enrollment to students who complete the Utah Scholars Core Course of Study with a 3.5 GPA and a 26 score on the ACT.

- Wyoming: Wyoming Scholars hired a new state director, who’s working on integrating the SSI Core Course of Study with the Hathaway Scholarship’s Success Curriculum. In 2008 Wyoming Scholars collected student outcome data as a result of the collaborative efforts with the Wyoming Department of Education.

Rainwater provided a brief history of SSI’s data collection efforts. WICHE began its program administration of SSI in October 2005. At that time WICHE received neither data nor a data collection plan from the previous program administrator. Since then WICHE, in concert with Northern Illinois University (NIU) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), has created and implemented a robust state performance data collection and evaluation plan. Three types of data are collected to better understand the effect that SSI has in participating states and school districts. These are: qualitative, student course-level, and perception.

First, qualitative data are collected about successful business-education partnerships, the level of business engagement, and promising practices. Findings include:

- Business volunteers found that the personal connection with students is the most effective business role.
- Nine out of 10 business volunteers planned to continue their involvement with the program.
- Business volunteers felt that rigor was important but underscored their need for a definition of rigor.

Rainwater noted that to be responsive to this last point, she, Dolores Mize, vice president for public policy and research, and Nancy Smith Brooks, program officer for the State Scholars Initiatives at the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education, wrote a policy brief, “Education Beyond the Rhetoric: Making ‘Rigor’ Something Real,” on academic rigor and relevance, which provided a definition of rigor.

Second, WICHE works with state business-education partnerships and participating pilot school districts to gather information on the availability of the SSI Core Course of Study to students and student enrollment in these courses. Data has been collected from 47 school districts and 10 SSI states representing 121,417 individual students with enrollments in over 1.3 million courses. She was pleased to report that these data are defensible, parallel, and understandable to experts and laypeople alike.

Third, perception data is collected from SSI constituents (business volunteers, educators, parents, community leaders, and students) to determine whether the initiative is influencing key stakeholder perceptions. Between September 24, 2007, and January 31, 2008, perception surveys were collected from eight states at 42 different SSI events. Rainwater reported that SSI is positively influencing student perceptions. After participating in a SSI-sponsored event, a solid
percentage of students plan to take a rigorous course of study in high school. In addition, SSI has positively influenced all adult stakeholders in their perspectives of the importance of taking rigorous courses in high school.

Both Year One and Year Two evaluation reports are available on the SSI Website (www.wiche.edu/statescholars/).

On April 29 and 30, 2008, SSI hosted the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance. The summit brought together over 200 participants from 36 states. All 20 active SSI states and 16 non-SSI states and territories sent teams. Participants were provided with several resources, including the policy brief on rigor mentioned above. Feedback from participants demonstrated that they found both the plenary speakers and the time allotted for state team discussion valuable. A summit proceedings document will be available later this summer.

Finally, Rainwater outlined four possible options for sustaining SSI. The first option would be that federal funding continues to support the initiative. While WICHE is pursuing all possible opportunities, it is unlikely that federal funding will continue. Since SSI is funded out the secretary’s discretionary funding, it is likely that the new administration will have other projects for which it will want to use these funds. The second option is that WICHE secures private funding. WICHE has submitted proposals to two different foundations but the proposals have not generated much interest. A third option is that another organization with a closely aligned mission would assume the program. The fourth option is that the program would shut down completely at the national level. SSI will continue to look for funding opportunities.

Rainwater thanked commissioners for their continued support. In particular, she thanked Marshall Lind and Jane Nichols for their service on the SSI Advisory Board.
Student Exchange Programs:
Updates

Western Undergraduate Exchange
WICHE’s Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is a regional program that enables students to enroll in designated two- and four-year public institutions elsewhere in the WICHE region at reduced tuition. The WUE rate is 50 percent more than the institutions’ regular resident tuition. Now in its 21\textsuperscript{st} year of operation, WUE is the nation’s largest program of its kind, with some 22,100 students participating in 2007-08. Last year WICHE staff estimated that students and their parents saved $137.7 million in tuition costs. Students choose from 138 WUE institutions. A detailed WUE enrollment report will be available in December 2008.

Margo Schultz, Student Exchange Programs coordinator, presented on WUE and student migration at the Pacific Northwest Association for College Admission Counseling’s (PNACAC) conference in May 2008. PNACAC serves the WICHE states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Staff will also submit presentation proposals for the other regional association meetings in 2009. These include the Western Association for College Admission Counseling, which serves the states of California and Nevada; the Rocky Mountain Association for College Admission Counseling, which serves the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming; and possibly the Hawaii Association for College Admission Counseling, as well as the Dakota Association for College Admission Counseling, which serves North and South Dakota.

Western Regional Graduate Program
The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) offers lower-cost access to master’s and doctoral degree programs that are not widely available in the West. Students from all WICHE states except California are eligible to participate, and they pay resident tuition. California residents are not eligible at this time because the state’s institutions have not offered any of its programs to the network. WRGP programs, with the exception of its healthcare programs, must be “distinctive” – available at no more than five institutions in the WICHE region (outside of California).

WICHE staff received a total of 32 nominations for new programs in fall 2007 and conducted a peer review by graduate deans and faculty member from institutions throughout the region. Twenty-eight programs were selected to be added to WRGP, bringing the total to 199 programs. The new programs broad the academic options in several areas: communications and journalism; computer sciences; engineering and the sciences; humanities; the social sciences and public affairs; and nursing and public health. There are now 35 healthcare-related programs available at the resident rate through WRGP.

Over the past few years there has been increased interest on the part of programs that would like to join the WRGP network. To accommodate this interest, staff will launch a special nominations round in November 2008 (typically nominations are solicited every other year). Staff will target several areas, including professional science master’s and healthcare-related programs, but will welcome nominations from all public graduate schools in the WICHE region. We will also invite programs at California institutions to participate. Staff at the Council of Graduate Schools has also offered to notify deans of graduate education about our upcoming round of program nominations.

Professional Student Exchange Program
The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) provides students in 12 Western states (California, Oregon, and South Dakota do not participate) with access to a wide range of professional programs; most of the programs 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.

In the 2008-09 academic year, 724 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling over $14.6 million. The programs available to students include dentistry, medicine, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, and veterinary medicine. Complete details on student enrollment and state and institutional participation will be available in WICHE’s 2008-09 Student Exchange Program.
Statistical Report, which will be released in January 2009 and available on our Website. Commissioners will receive copies in the mail. The report will also include enrollment statistics for WUE and WRGP.

North Dakota recently surveyed their professional school graduates who benefitted from reduced tuition through WICHE’s PSEP and other bilateral arrangements. If the data is comparable, we will incorporate the results with our fall 2006 PSEP alumni survey data, which provides return rates for PSEP graduates who come back to their home states to work. WICHE certifying officers are scheduled to do another alumni tracking survey in 2009.

New workforce brief on oral healthcare. Staff produces a series of publications, A Closer Look at Healthcare Workforce Needs in the West, to help policymakers and educational leaders understand workforce trends and available institutional capacity to educate more students in the healthcare fields. Briefs are available on the medical, pharmacy, and health information technology workforces. The newest brief will examine the West’s workforce needs related to oral healthcare. It analyzes the supply and demand of providers and addresses the maldistribution of practitioners and contributing factors, including the degree to which debt load discourages service to rural communities. The brief also discusses strategies to increase the number of providers; examines pipeline programs to boost interest in the profession, as well as rural and public clinic service; and looks at the efficacy of loan repayment and other programs that incent practitioners to work in underserved areas. Other sections address new workforce solutions, including integrated care, new care delivery models, the role of medical practitioners, and how higher education must respond to train new types of providers. A copy of the brief will distributed to commissioners at the November meeting and will be available for download on WICHE’s Website.

Regional feasibility study on loan forgiveness administration. In February 2008 WICHE began conducting a survey of participating states to learn more about the costs and processes involved in administering contractual payback programs and to explore the feasibility and costs of a regional payback service for interested states. Five WICHE states (Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming) do not currently require their PSEP graduates to return to their home state to practice (several are contemplating doing so); and six participating states require a service payback from their awarded students (Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii – effective AY 2008 – New Mexico, Nevada, and Washington).

Staff released results of the draft survey at the May 2008 certifying officers’ meeting. The survey results help WICHE member states better understand issues concerning the costs required to track graduates, including those related to collections processes for delinquent accounts; repayment terms and conditions; options related to where to channel collected monies received in lieu of service paybacks, including the possibility of establishing rural incentive programs with those funds; and agencies capable of administering loan repayment.

WICHE staff will pursue the possibility of arranging regional pricing from ECSI, a loan-servicing company under contract with Nevada and Washington and being considered by New Mexico. States currently working with the company like its services and have found it cost effective. Though the online service facilitates the administrative processes, state agency staff is required to oversee service payback and collections and to manually process annual employment verification for graduates. WICHE is contacting ECSI to arrange for a demonstration of their services via teleconference and the Web.

Enhancing incentives for healthcare professionals to serve in the rural areas. Programs and Services staff has explored state strategies to attract healthcare professionals to the rural West and other underserved areas. This is a challenge confronting all states in the WICHE region. 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 healthcare professionals. Lack of employment opportunities for spouses and few urban amenities are also important factors. WICHE completed the Inventory of Rural Health Practice Incentives in the Western WICHE States and released it in October 2007. Staff found that, given the severity of the shortages, the current funding levels of incentive programs are insufficient to stem the erosion of rural healthcare in the West. Since the inventory was released, we have witnessed:

- Interest in increasing the amount of funding for incentives that make a return to rural areas financially worthwhile for the recipients (e.g., New Mexico doubled the amount offered in one of its incentive programs; and the Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program also increased its award).
A move towards consolidation of the administration of these programs, to make it simpler for healthcare professionals to find and use local incentive opportunities.

New incentive programs, such as the rural vet med program pioneered by North Dakota in 2007, and similar programs now being set up in Washington and Wyoming.

Commissioners received copies of the original inventory at the November 2007 meeting. Staff will post an updated inventory on WICHE's Website in November 2008.

New regional schools and WICHE policy for incorporating programs not yet fully accredited. As reported in the May 2008 agenda book, several professional schools are opening in the region over the next two years. At their May 2008 meeting, certifying officers (state higher education agency staff that help to coordinate WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs) discussed whether or not schools should be encouraged to petition the commission for early admission to PSEP, prior to full accreditation. The certifying officers concluded that they appreciated the security that full accreditation offers to the prospective students, as well as the states’ investment in education. However, if high workforce needs justify expedited consideration of the programs (particularly in dentistry, osteopathic medicine, and optometry), the commission can vote to admit the new programs to PSEP prior to their full accreditation. The new schools include:

Dentistry:
- Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ (105 students in fall 2008).
- Western University in Pomona, CA (50 students in fall 2009).

Optometry:
- Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ (50 students in fall 2009).
- Western University (70 students in fall 2009).

Osteopathic medicine:
- A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Mesa, AZ (100 students in fall 2007).
- Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine in Yakima, WA (70 students in fall 2008).
- Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Parker, CO (150 students in fall 2008).

Podiatry:
- Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, CA (fall 2009).

Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council (VMAC) representation. The 2008 VMAC meeting was held in June and included several tours of the Colorado State University Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences facilities. In 2005 WICHE’s Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council amended its bylaws to include a state legislator from each of the WICHE states supporting or receiving students in veterinary medicine. Although some legislators have been extremely active and helpful, others have not been able to participate. Members agreed at their June 2008 meeting that the additional positions created in 2005 can be filled by a state legislator or an executive director of the state’s veterinary association. WICHE staff will be contacting commissioners to fill empty council seats well in advance of the spring 2009 meeting.
State Scholars Initiative: Updates

WICHE was selected as the program administrator for the State Scholars Initiative (SSI) by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) on October 1, 2005. WICHE supports 19 state-level business-education partnerships in their implementation of the State Scholars Initiative model. The initiative is funded under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. In October 2008 WICHE requested a grant extension through September 30, 2009.

The State Scholars Initiative seeks to achieve two primary objectives. First, it encourages students to take a rigorous course of study in high school to prepare them for college or work. Second, it engages business organizations and leaders to promote the importance of a rigorous course of study in high school for later success in life. Patterned after the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommendations, State Scholars requires that students take: 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.

Nineteen states are receiving federal 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, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, 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. Five additional states were previously funded, and they created and completed SSI projects: Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Washington.

National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance
On April 29-30, 2008, WICHE and the State Scholars Initiative hosted the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance in Boston. The purpose of the summit was 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.

As part of State Scholars’ post-summit activities, WICHE created and maintains a summit Web page that provides a video library of all the summit plenary speakers. In addition, all summit materials are posted here. Finally, in September 2008 WICHE released the summit proceedings, “No Longer at Risk: A Nation in Peril.”

Evaluation
SSI has a uniquely strong evaluation component, which encompasses WICHE’s performance as program administrator and states’ performance as participants in the program.

The evaluation of WICHE’s performance is conducted by Diana Robinson, associate director at the Center for Governmental Studies of Northern Illinois University (NIU). This evaluation focuses on how well the program is being run at the national level. Findings for Year Three include:

- WICHE continues to use a multifaceted and effective communication process to exchange SSI program and policy information with state contractors and advisory board members and to identify state partnership needs and improvement priorities.

- WICHE has undertaken a variety of activities during Year Three to showcase successful state-level SSI implementation both within and outside of the SSI network. Moreover, the technical assistance support and communication resources that WICHE provides the state-level partnerships have enhanced their effectiveness in disseminating project results.

- Clear, timely, and constructive communication between WICHE and DOE’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education continues to occur on virtually a daily basis throughout Year Three.
The evaluation of state performance is split between Diana Robinson and Karen Paulson, senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). State performance is evaluated on three different measures: the quality and success of business education partnerships; student course enrollment and completion data; and perception data from SSI constituents. Findings for Year Three include:

- The engaged SSI states have involved at least 621 employers at the state and local levels, an overall increase of 15 percent over the previous evaluation period.

- An increase of at least 9.8 percent in participation in the oldest cohort of states suggests that these mature programs continue to recruit employers long after federal funding has ceased.

- Data from both the NIU and the NCHEMS evaluations point to the importance of the personal connection between the business volunteers and the students in influencing students to take more rigorous courses.

- Results of the perception surveys indicate that SSI has had a positive influence on all groups involved – students, parents, businesspeople, teachers, and guidance counselors.

Copies of SSI 2008 annual evaluation report are available in paper and on the SSI Website.

Publications and Products
In preparation for the 2008-2009 school year, SSI released multiple publications to support state programs. In addition to releasing the summit proceedings, WICHE published the September 2008 SSI newsletter, which profiled multiple SSI states and their Scholars recognition events. Also in September WICHE released a short brief, entitled “Why Foreign Language?” At the request of SSI states, WICHE produced the brief, which presents research that underscores the value of studying a language other than English in high school. Finally, in October 2008 WICHE released the SSI Volunteer Management Database (VMD). Created especially for SSI states, the purpose of this online tool is to provide a means by which business leaders, school districts, and state business-education partnerships can more efficiently schedule presentations in schools and provide online training to business volunteers. Every SSI state was provided with a customized VMD for its use.

Sustainability
The State Scholars Initiative is one of a few national initiatives to collect and analyze student course-level data (if not the only one). This data, coupled with SSI constituent perceptions and an in-depth examination of SSI business-education partnerships, provide a wealth of information. As a federal program, however, SSI is funded only through March 2009, with a likely extension through September 2009. Therefore, WICHE has begun approaching corporations and foundations to see if they would be willing to assist in providing funds to transition the federal State Scholars Initiative to nonfederal funding and status.

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, Two, and Three. 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 March 31, 2009. WICHE has requested an extension of its SSI program administration through September 30, 2009.

In December 2005 Terese Rainwater was hired as SSI program director (1.0 FTE). Christian Martinez, hired in January 2006 as SSI program coordinator, tendered his resignation on August 22, 2008, to pursue a job opportunity at the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL). His last day at WICHE was September 5, 2008. In consultation with the SSI program officer, WICHE promoted Michelle Médal, former SSI administrative coordinator, to SSI associate project director. In addition, WICHE promoted Kay Hulstrom, former SSI administrative assistant, to SSI administrative coordinator. Their first day in their new positions was September 8, 2008. Jere Mock oversees the program (.20 FTE on the grant). The grant also covers .65 FTE of the WICHE Communications staff’s FTE for work by Annie Finnigan, Candy Allen, and Deborah Jang.
The SSI State Network
During WICHE’s program administration, 10 states have joined the State Scholars Initiative network (see the list of all participating state business education organizations at the end of this discussion item). Each state program receives up to $300,000 in federal funding over a two-year period and is administered by a state-level business education partnership.

Of the states that joined the State Scholars Initiative during WICHE’s program administration, all 10 have launched the program through statewide kickoff events, secured business volunteers and support, presented to students, and submitted both course-level and perception data.

As part of its oversight responsibilities, WICHE has conducted at least one state site-monitoring visit in every state that received federal funds during WICHE’s program administration. These visits were designed 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, share promising practices, and seek advice from other state directors.

National SSI Advisory Board
On April 29, 2008, the State Scholars Advisory Board met in Boston for their last in-person meeting. Advisory board members will be consulted on an individual basis during Year Four. 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, Nobel laureate in physics and resident scholar at the 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, program officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and Steve Wing, director of government programs, CVS Pharmacy.

The SSI Network Chronology
WICHE staff oversees the efforts of 10 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
- Washington Partnership for Learning+
WICHE has overseen the activities of seven of the 10 state business-education partnerships that joined the State Scholars network in March 2006, including:

- 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

WICHE also oversees the SSI activities of the four state business-education partnerships that joined the State Scholars network in November 2006, including:

- 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.
Programs and Services: Updates on Other Projects

WICHE ICE
WICHE continues to develop the Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE), which supports the sharing of electronically delivered courses and programs in the WICHE region. Through WICHE ICE institutions can expand their online offerings in response to students’ growing needs. The collaborative model fosters faculty engagement, institutional resource sharing, and innovation.

In recent months the primary focus of WICHE ICE has been on developing a business and marketing plan to sustain and expand its growth. Funded by an officers’ grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, this effort included a survey of 500 education leaders in the West about their current online offerings and future plans, interviews with key leaders in the online arena, development of a new ICE brochure, and additional work on the ICE database infrastructure supporting the exchange of courses. The final plan will be submitted to the Sloan Foundation at the end of November. A subcontract awarded by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) calls for WICHE ICE to play a role in a U.S. Department of Labor national demonstration project. During this two-year project, WICHE ICE will work with selected Colorado four-year institutions and community colleges to provide online courses in response to CDLE-identified workforce needs. Through ICE the Colorado schools may import courses from ICE members in other states if they do not have appropriate courses or capacity to respond quickly to CDLE’s needs. Other states involved in the national project include Maine, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania.

WICHE ICE continues its work in the development of a jointly offered certificate in rural social work at the postgraduate level and in the development of teacher preparation courses in math and science at both the preservice and in-service levels. In addition to these collaborative efforts, WICHE ICE encourages its members and others to bring additional ideas for partnerships and collaborations to its steering board for consideration.

Currently, WICHE ICE has 14 higher education institution and system members. A representative from each serves on the ICE Steering Board, which meets monthly by conference call and will meet face-to-face for its annual meeting in Boulder, CO, from March 30 to April 1, 2009. Members include:

- Arizona Universities Network
- Bismarck State College (ND)
- Boise State University (ID)
- Eastern Washington University
- Idaho State University
- Lewis-Clark State College (ID)
- Montana State University, Bozeman
- North Dakota University System Online
- South Dakota System of Higher Education
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- University of Alaska Fairbanks
- University of Nevada Reno
- University of Utah
- University of Wyoming

Northwest Academic Forum
Thirty-two master’s and doctoral-level institutions and 10 states participate in the Northwest Academic Forum (NWAF), represented by their provosts, vice presidents of academic affairs, and state academic officers. The 2009 NWAF Annual Meeting will be held April 22-24 at University of Alaska Anchorage. Program planning is underway, with a theme to be selected in late October. Individual speakers and panels will be invited to provide background and insight on particular topics, and then NWAF members will respond with their perspectives and present case studies from their institutions for the benefit of their colleagues.
Current members of the Northwest Academic Forum include:

- Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- University of Alaska System
- Boise State University (ID)
- Colorado 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 (ND)
- North Dakota University System
- North Dakota State University
- University of North Dakota
- Valley City State University (ND)
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- University of Nevada, Reno
- Eastern Oregon University
- Oregon State University
- Oregon University System
- Pacific University (OR)
- 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

Master Property Program
WICHE offers participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s (MHEC’s) Master Property Program (MPP) to colleges and universities in the West. Institutional members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to higher education needs while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. Members also have the opportunity to earn annual dividends based on the consortium’s comprehensive loss ratios. Currently, MPP institutions have total insured values of $62.3 billion, and $5.6 billion of those values are in the WICHE region. WICHE and MHEC members together have achieved savings of approximately $40.1 million in premiums. The MHEC program was created in 1994; WICHE has partnered with MHEC in offering the program since 2004. The program is currently underwritten by Lexington AIG and is jointly administered by Marsh, Inc., and Captive Resources, Inc., under the direction of a leadership committee that’s representative of the insured institutions.

Five institutions and two systems in the WICHE region are members of the Master Property Program:

- Lewis & Clark College (OR)
- Nevada System of Higher Education (two universities, one state college, four community colleges, and one research institute)
- Pima County Community College system (AZ) (six campuses and four learning and education centers)
- Seattle Pacific University (WA)
- University of Northern Colorado
- Westminster College (UT)
- Willamette University (OR)
WICHE staff continues to work with our program administrators to provide information on the MHEC/WICHE insurance programs to interested institutions. We are also working with the leadership committee to monitor the liquidity status of AIG, as Lexington is an AIG insurance company. In September the U.S. Federal Reserve announced it would make a loan to AIG for $85 billion; in exchange the government will receive warrants in AIG representing the right to buy as much as 80 percent of its stock under certain conditions. AIG’s insurance subsidiaries are separate legal entities and subject to strict oversight and regulation by governmental insurance regulators, which establish: a) capital and surplus requirements; b) restrictions on investments; and c) limitations on dividends and other distributions to, and transactions with, shareholders.

Although AIG’s insurance subsidiaries have had their financial strength ratings lowered by major rating agencies, the ratings are still good. S&P now rates the insurance subsidiaries as A+ ("these ratings remain on CreditWatch with negative implications"), and A.M. Best now rates them at A ("all ratings have been placed under review with negative implications"). The AIG insurance subsidiaries continue to meet the MPP program administrator’s financial guidelines and are comparable to the ratings of other key insurance carriers.

New Printing and Document Management Program
The Midwestern Higher Education Compact recently invited WICHE to participate in a three-year contract with four possible one-year renewals with Xerox Corp. for printing equipment and document management services. Under the contract all government agencies and institutions or systems of higher education in the MHEC and WICHE regions can use Xerox for their office printing needs. The contract also includes production-level printing services. MHEC first began working with Xerox in 2003 to provide costs savings and printing product improvements to colleges and universities in its region; it later conducted a national RFP process and negotiated a second contract with Xerox that takes advantage of the power of collective purchasing. In addition to hardware, including multifunction devices, laser printers, copiers, and fax machines, the contract covers Xerox services, including those designed to help manage and streamline records and administrative documents.

The full range of Xerox Global Services’ offerings will also be available, including Xerox Office Productivity Assessments that will examine copy, print, and fax volumes across an entire organization and identify opportunities to save money by consolidating equipment. Members can also utilize Xerox’s Document Advisor Services to help manage the information overload of student records and administrative documents that schools continually face.

An administrative fee will be assessed on all purchases resulting from the MHEC/WICHE contracts. The fees are 2 percent on gross sales of equipment under the small printer contract and 1 percent of gross sales on equipment under the large printer contract. Revenues from the fees will be split evenly between MHEC and WICHE.