Monday, November 2, 2009

3.30 - 5.00 pm  Programs & Services Committee Meeting
SHEPC Learning Center
Suite 100

Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Joseph Garcia (CO), vice chair
Roy Ogawa (HI), ex officio
Jane Nichols (NV), ex officio

Diane Barrans (AK)
Leah Bornstein (AZ)
Position vacant (CA)
Committee vice chair (CO)
Helene Sokugawa (HI)
Michael Rush (ID)
Kerra Melvin (MT)
Committee chair (NV)
Dede Feldman (NM)
Duaine Espegard (ND)
Tim Nesbitt (OR)
Jack Warner (SD)
Peter C. Knudson (UT)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)
Klaus Hanson (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Carl Shaff, chair
Staff: Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Margo Schultz, program director, Student Exchange Programs
Pat Shea, program director, WICHE Internet Course Exchange and Western Academic Leadership Forum
Guest: Mark Deutchman, professor, Department of Family Medicine, and director, Rural Track Program, University of Colorado School of Medicine

Action Item

Approval of the Programs and Services Committee meeting minutes of May 18, 2009  7-3

Discussion Item:
Helping rural residents get better access to healthcare: the proposed Rural Physician Pipeline Act and the University of Colorado School of Medicine’s Rural Track Program – Mark Deutchman  7-8

Information Items:
State Scholars Initiative  7-10
Student Exchange Program updates – Margo Schultz 7-17

Expanding participation in the WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE) and the Western Academic Leadership Forum (WALF) (see regional initiatives information item) – Pat Shea 7-21

New options to help institutions in the West reduce administrative costs (see regional initiatives information item) – Jere Mock 7-23

Other business

Adjournment
ACTION ITEM
Programs and Services Committee Minutes
Monday, May 18, 2009

Committee Members Present
Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Diane Barrans (AK)
Leah Bornstein (AZ)
Joseph Garcia (CO)
Helene Sokugawa (HI)
Michael Rush (ID)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
James Sager (OR)
Tad Perry (SD)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
Klaus Hanson (WY)

Committee Members Absent
Kerra Melvin (MT)
Pamela Kostelecky (ND)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)

Chair Shaff called the meeting of the Programs and Services Committee to order.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER RUSH AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10-11, 2008, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES. The motion carried unanimously.

Action Item
Approval of the FY 2010 Programs and Services Workplan

Terese Rainwater and Margo Schultz copresented the Programs and Services unit’s workplan on behalf of their vice president, Jere Mock, who was unable to attend the commission meeting.

WICHE’s three regional exchange programs broaden access to education for more than 24,700 students annually. These include the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).

Programs and Services staff also manages several other regional initiatives that promote interinstitutional collaborations in the West. One example is WICHE’s Internet Course Exchange (ICE), an online course and program-sharing consortium. ICE helps institutions to offer students increased access to online courses and programs at other institutions while remaining enrolled on their home campus. The students seamlessly register for the courses and receive credits and financial aid benefits, as though the courses were being offered by the students’ home campus. Twelve institutions and four consortia are currently offering courses through ICE. Additional members are being recruited to expand course offerings and participation. Several academic program collaborations are underway or planned in the areas of social work, math and science courses for teachers, healthcare IT, energy, and transportation. Staff is also developing new funding models for WICHE ICE. The new model will be discussed by the ICE Steering Board later this summer; it will better incentivize institutions to participate, and should ultimately increase the number of participating institutions, courses, and program collaborations. Staff is seeking external funding to support ICE, including National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and foundation grants.

WICHE’s Northwestern Academic Leadership Forum has expanded its membership to allow participation from all WICHE member states and is now called the Western Academic Leadership Forum. The institutional members...
are represented by their provosts and vice presidents of academic officers; state higher education agencies are represented by their chief academic officers. Members share information, resources, and expertise to address regional issues of concern. The next meetings will be held in Rapid City, SD (spring 2010), and Fort Collins, CO (spring 2011).

WICHE is currently addressing workforce issues through several initiatives. The unit publishes profession-specific workforce briefs in high demand fields. Thusfar, published briefs focus on primary care medicine, oral healthcare, health information technology, and pharmacy. A brief on veterinary medicine is forthcoming. Future briefs will address workforce needs in public health, allied healthcare, and optometry.

New fields are being added to WICHE’s student exchange programs, as needs are identified and programs are recruited. In WRGP, for example, staff are recruiting professional science master’s (PSM) programs which include two years of advanced science or mathematics, applied to an emerging or interdisciplinary area, combined with professional internships and “cross training” in business and communications. The goal of PSMs is to train highly marketable graduates for the U.S. workforce. A master’s of dental hygiene program to train faculty and independent practitioners will be offered by Eastern Washington University through WRGP, effective fall 2009. WICHE staff is exploring ways to coordinate the development and sharing of health information technology programs in the region, using WUE, WRGP and ICE.

Schultz said the WICHE staff continues to explore development of healthcare programs that address rural workforce shortages. PSEP is working in partnership with the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine (UCD SOM) on a “PSEP Plus” pilot initiative. In addition to the four years of traditional education for M.D.s, the program would also work with UCD SOM’s existing Rural Track Program that gives students the chance to do their rotations in rural areas. The proposal is to add additional rural preceptorships located in the student’s home state, as well as oral and mental healthcare components. At this time staff and state offices are looking into developing funding streams for these seats. Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have indicated some interest.

Two other initiatives are being explored. One is the possibility of developing a regional licensure and credentialing service that could assist WICHE states in licensing educational professionals and certify the competence of individuals serving in fields other than education, such as mental health or other health-related professions. The second is the possibility of PSEP service payback states contracting with WICHE’s central office to administer their graduates’ service payback in the healthcare professions. In light of tightening state budgets, if there are a critical number of states in need of this service, centralizing the administration into one office may provide economies of scale not achieved in individual state offices.

Following Schultz, Rainwater presented information about Programs and Services’ existing activities for the access and success category of the workplan. The State Scholars Initiative (SSI) supports state-level business education partnerships to help middle and high school students become better-prepared for postsecondary education and training. WICHE has administered this $6.6 million grant for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) since September 30, 2005. Rainwater reported that federal funding for SSI concludes September 30, 2009. Twenty-four states have received federal SSI funding and 19 are actively striving to sustain and bring their programs to scale. As the national program administrator for SSI, WICHE has provided technical assistance, monitoring, oversight, and cost reimbursement. The focus of the fourth and final year of program administration has been evaluating program effectiveness and actively seeking funding to sustain the initiative from June through September 2009. Sustainability efforts will relate to different dimensions of SSI, including: a sharpened science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focus; connections to ED’s “Race to the Top” agenda; and others.

Rainwater also presented information about existing activities for the finance priority area. WICHE is seeking to expand institutional participation in the Master Property Program – the property insurance and risk consortium developed by the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Finally, WICHE wants to continue to identify ways that will provide cost savings or expanded services to institutions and state agencies in the WICHE region, including opportunities to purchase products using competitively bid contracts via the MHEC-Tech program, such as the MHEC/WICHE Xerox contract for printing equipment.

Rainwater reported on communications activities for WICHE’s FY 2010 workplan. Electronic and print communications activities include: a redesigned WICHE Website; electronic dissemination of NewsCap; and production of conference materials, WICHE’s annual report, annual workplan, commission agenda books, publications spanning a range of topics, state factsheets, and other materials.
Commissioner Barrans asked if WICHE will analyze the interests of the incoming secretary of education’s priorities and see how SSI might evolve accordingly. Rainwater said that it was her understanding that the Race to the Top draft RFP would be released in August, and WICHE hoped to find ways to align SSI with Race to the Top initiatives. In addition, staff is arranging a meeting between David Longanecker and the new deputy assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Glenn Cummings, to try and identify ways to align SSI with OVAE priorities. Commissioner Bornstein asked about community college participation in the Western Academic Leadership Forum (WALF). She requested that staff continue to think about ways to include the community colleges in all WICHE programs and any activities that may develop after the formal SSI program discontinues. Schultz responded that, regarding WALF, she would share the commissioner’s request with Jere Mock and Pat Shea.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER BARRANS AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GARCIA TO APPROVE THE 2010 WORKPLAN. The motion carried unanimously.

Action Item

Approval of New Criteria for Early Participation in WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program by Provisionally Accredited Schools in High-Demand Fields

WICHE currently requires that professional programs receiving students through the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) have full accreditation status. Margo Schultz, program coordinator of WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs, presented a proposal to allow programs to enroll PSEP students prior to full accreditation, if they meet certain standards.

In November 2003 the WICHE Commission approved early participation of two dental schools: A.T. Still University (ATSU), Mesa, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. As a result of that precedent, WICHE was recently approached by several new programs to see if they too, might qualify for early participation. They included:

- A.T. Still University, Mesa (osteopathic medicine)
- Midwestern University, Glendale (dentistry and optometry)
- Western University of Health Sciences (dentistry and optometry)
- Rocky Vista University (osteopathic medicine)
- Pacific Northwest University of Health Science (osteopathic medicine)

Schultz explained the full accreditation process for a new program at the national/regional and state levels, as well as the different professional accreditation processes for dentistry, optometry, and osteopathic medicine. WICHE staff collected accreditation documentation and thoroughly reviewed the status of all seven of these programs. Complete details of this review process are available in the May 2009 agenda book, pp. 7-12 through 7-20.

WICHE staff requested that the commission adopt new criteria related to allowing professional schools to participate in WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program: if new and provisionally accredited schools in high-need healthcare fields are located in the WICHE region and request early participation in PSEP, staff recommends that these schools be allowed to participate in PSEP provided that:

1. The institution is either fully accredited by a regional accrediting agency or holds candidacy status and is actively pursuing regional accreditation. (Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status that demonstrates the institution meets all eligibility requirements. Although candidacy is awarded to institutions which show strong evidence that they can achieve accreditation within the candidacy period, it does not assure full accreditation; some institutions are denied. Full accreditation status can take up to seven years.)
2. The regional accrediting agency has authorized the institution to offer the new professional program (if applicable).
3. The new professional program has been approved by the state higher education agency assigned to review new programs (in states where this is applicable).
4. The professional program has received provisional (or initial) accreditation by its professional accrediting body and does not have any specific requirements or recommendations of major concern cited in its most recent accreditation report.
5. The proposed school offers a program of study in a critical need field where there is substantial competition for admission and the number of currently cooperating WICHE schools is proportionately small, compared to the demand for seats.
6. The proposed professional program prepares students to serve underserved, rural, and other vulnerable populations.

Staff further recommended allowing four provisionally accredited programs to participate in PSEP, effective for the 2010-11 academic year:

- Midwestern University, Glendale’s College of Dental Medicine
- Midwestern University, Glendale’s College of Optometry
- Western University of Health Sciences’ College of Dental Medicine
- Western University of Health Sciences’ College of Optometry

A fifth provisionally accredited program, the A.T. Still College of Osteopathic Medicine, could also be approved for participation in PSEP if the school complies with the requirements cited by the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation by July 2009 (resulting from the January 2009 site visit), as part of its continuing provisional accreditation status.

Although their professional programs have received provisional accreditation, Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences and Rocky Vista University have not yet applied for regional accreditation at the institutional level as of May 2009, so their requests could not be considered at this time. Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences planned to apply to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) later in 2009. Rocky Vista University was preparing its eligibility application to the North Central Association/Higher Learning Commission (NCAHLC), for submission by December 2009. WICHE staff could consider requests for early participation from these two schools once they become candidates for regional institutional accreditation, as long as their preliminary professional accreditation remains in good standing.

Commissioners discussed the proposed action item. Commissioner Rush expressed some concerns of supporting WICHE students in provisionally accredited optometry programs and asked if Idaho would be required to fund students with offers at these new programs. David Longanecker affirmed that if the commission approved the programs, WICHE would expect all states to consider enrolling WICHE supported students the provisionally accredited programs on an equal basis with the fully accredited ones. Commissioner Barrans proposed that the sixth criteria be removed; it requires that the new professional programs prepare students to serve underserved, rural, and other vulnerable populations.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER HANSON TO APPROVE THE PSEP ACTION ITEM WITH THE REMOVAL OF CRITERIA NUMBER SIX, AS RECOMMENDED BY COMMISSIONER BARRANS. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SOKUGAWA. COMMISSIONER RUSH OPPOSED THE MOTION; THE REST VOTED IN FAVOR. The action was also approved by the Committee of the Whole on May 19, 2009.

Schultz also briefly updated the commissioners on the three Student Exchange Programs and noted three important developments. First, WICHE staff received 30 new program nominations for the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) programs in fall 2008. After a peer review process, all programs were selected to be added to WRGP, bringing the total to some 220 programs by spring 2009. Examples of the new programs include: applied environmental geosciences, multimedia production, civil engineering for developing communities, natural resources conflict resolution, and many healthcare-related programs. The University of Alaska Anchorage nominated its e-learning graduate certificate but later had to withdraw the nomination because the program may be discontinued, due to budget issues. There are now 50 some healthcare-related programs available at the resident rate through WRGP; new ones include programs in specialized areas of nursing, mental health counseling, social work, audiology and speech pathology, and dental hygiene (with a focus on training future faculty).

Up until this year, no institutions in California had reciprocated by offering their programs through WRGP, so California students were not able to enroll at the discounted WRGP rate. California State University’s (CSU’s) East Bay campus broke new ground and nominated several programs to the network, all of which were WICHE peer-approved. They included an M.A. in multimedia production and an M.S. in recreation and tourism. As a result California residents are now eligible to enroll through WRGP, beginning in the 2010-11 academic year. WICHE staff will work with existing programs to prepare them for this change. (Note: CSU East Bay’s M.S. in education/online teaching and learning was also approved, but it was later withdrawn, as it may be discontinued, due to budget constraints.)
Finally, enrollment through all three Student Exchange Programs will likely be affected by the economic crisis. Several states have discussed reducing the number of students enrolled through WUE. In WRGP some programs which remain underenrolled could be discontinued; and Oregon State University removed all of its participating programs from WRGP in January 2009. PSEP enrollment for the 2009-10 is anticipated to decline, but the full effects of the recession are more likely to play out in the 2010-11 academic year, as state budgets continue to tighten.

Discussion Item
State Scholars Initiative Data and Sustainability

Since Rainwater had presented new data from SSI at a plenary session earlier in the day and because the committee was running short on time, the committee decided to forego this presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.
DISCUSSION ITEM
Helping Rural Residents Get Better Access to Healthcare:
The Proposed Rural Physician Pipeline Act and
the University of Colorado School of Medicine’s Rural Track Program

Staff invited Mark Deutchman, professor in the Department of Family Medicine and director of the Rural Track Program at University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine, to acquaint the Programs and Services Committee members with the concept of rural track programs, as well as with the proposed Rural Physician Pipeline Act of 2009 (S.1628), introduced by Senator Mark Udall of Colorado. Senator Udall’s staff would appreciate WICHE commissioners discussing the legislation with their congressional delegations. The Rural Physician Pipeline Act legislation ties in well with WICHE and U.C. Denver’s “PSEP Plus” program, which was reviewed by state officials from Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming in April 2009.

The Rural Track: Filling the Need for Rural Physicians
Rural communities have historically experienced lower health outcomes than their urban counterparts, due to issues related to workforce, access, infrastructure, and other resources. The lack of primary care physicians in rural areas plays a significant role in rural populations’ lower health outcomes. About 10 percent of physicians practice in the rural U.S., yet nearly a quarter of our citizens live there. Furthermore, the 15-state WICHE region is largely rural. Three-fourths of the region’s 565 counties are considered nonmetropolitan, and many counties in the Western states are vast, compared to those in other regions. Counties outside the WICHE region average 637 square miles in land area, while counties in the WICHE region average 3,359 square miles – more than five times that of their more eastern counterparts.

Rural areas struggle to compete with big cities in recruiting doctors, and the problem will continue to grow unless we reevaluate medical education. Our nation’s medical schools tend to nudge students into more lucrative specialty care or toward practice in higher-paying cities. While we need enough specialists to provide top-notch focused care for certain health problems, we must find a balance that will also encourage an adequate number of students to specialize in primary care and practice in underserved areas.

Fortunately, several institutions in the WICHE region have created programs to promote primary care and rural service options to medical students. Of particular note, the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine created its Rural Track Program, designed to encourage and support rural practice. Since the program’s inception in 2005, new cohorts have averaged 15 students per year. Students are matched with a rural preceptor, attend seminars focused on rural practice issues, participate in a four- to six-week summer rural preceptorship, and conduct scholarly research on a rural medicine–related topic. The program is forging relationships with local rural communities in need of primary care physicians. Participants are being tracked to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Students in the first rural track class graduated in May 2009, and all were matched with residency programs in specialties that will prepare them for rural practice.

Rural Physician Pipeline Act of 2009
The Rural Physician Pipeline Act of 2009 would create competitive grants for allopathic and osteopathic medical schools to establish programs that recruit students from underserved rural areas who have a desire return and practice in their hometowns. The act is modeled after several successful rural medical training programs, including those of the University of Colorado and Thomas Jefferson University in Pennsylvania.

The programs are designed to recruit, cultivate, and strengthen the rural commitment of future “homegrown” physicians by providing them with the specialized training necessary to excel in the rural United States. A March 2008 study in the Journal of Academic Medicine found that rural track programs have produced a multifold increase in the number of graduating rural physicians. Key components of rural track programs would include:

- Specialized rural curriculum that focuses on medical issues prevalent in underserved rural communities, such as trauma, obstetrics, ultrasound, oral health, and behavioral health. These skills are must-haves for the rural physician, who is often the sole practitioner in the area and does not have the luxury to make last-minute referrals.
• Required rural clinical rotations focusing on family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, surgery, psychiatry, and emergency medicine.
• A cohort component that supports like-minded students through social and educational activities. These cohorts have proven successful in fostering students’ commitment to practice in an underserved area.
• Incentives for community and local healthcare providers to give priority placement to students from medical schools with rural track programs for rotations.
• Required rural residency placement assistance in programs that support the rural medical education graduate.

PSEP Plus
The West’s rural areas have been hardest hit by persistent and growing labor shortages in the healthcare professions. In response, WICHE is exploring a pilot initiative to train primary care physicians committed to working in rural areas. Students of the program will be exposed to rural practice opportunities and will benefit from an enhanced rural curriculum with a strong mental health component through a partnership with WICHE’s Mental Health Program. They could also participate in preceptorships and rotations with mentors in their home state; and home state residencies would be available to them. This could be coupled with host community retention efforts, designed to increase the graduate’s likelihood of returning to a rural area in the home state to serve.

Last April state officials from Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming met and toured the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine and discussed the development of this “PSEP Plus” initiative, to be coordinated through WICHE and its Professional Student Exchange Program. The U.C. Denver School of Medicine launched its Rural Track Program in 2005. Student interest in the program has more than doubled, and early outcomes have been positive; all 12 students of the inaugural cohort were matched in residencies in fields that are critical to rural practice (family medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine, and general surgery). WICHE will continue to work with member states interested in U.C. Denver’s Rural Track Program; and in partnership with the University of Colorado Foundation, it will look at possible private-funding options to support students interested in the rural track.

Biographical Information on the Speaker
Mark E. Deutchman is the director of the Rural Track Program and is a professor in the Department of Family Medicine of U.C. Denver’s School of Medicine; he has a secondary faculty appointment in the School of Dental Medicine. Deutchman earned his medical degree from Ohio State University, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Landacre Society for Student Research. He is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians. After completing his family medicine residency in Spokane, WA, Deutchman spent 12 years practicing in White Salmon, a rural town in southwest Washington. During that time his practice spanned the full range of primary care, including the care of adults and children, obstetrics, and surgery. He also served as managing partner for an eight-provider clinic, emergency medical services coordinator for the county, ambulance service physician advisor, and volunteer fire fighter. In 1990 Deutchman took a teaching position at the University of Tennessee, Memphis, where he developed and directed a rural/OB fellowship. In 1995 he joined the faculty of the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus, Department of Family Medicine, where he has practiced the full range of family medicine and taught residents and students; he has also directed an OB fellowship in Denver. He also serves as Colorado’s Area Health Education Center associate director for multidisciplinary education. Deutchman was awarded Teacher of the Year by the Colorado Academy of Family Physicians in 1999 and the Exemplary Teaching Award for Full-Time Faculty by the American Academy of Family Physicians in 2000.
The State Scholars Initiative

On September 30, 2009, WICHE concluded its administration of the national State Scholars Initiative. In the last four years, SSI – a $6.6 million initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 – achieved numerous successes. Nearly half of all states participated in the program, and 18 remain active: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming (six other states – Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Washington – have completed their programs). Some 950 school districts have participated in the program, which encourages students to take a rigorous curriculum, patterned after 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.

One of the things that sets SSI apart from similar efforts is its use of businesspeople to motivate students. Over the last four years, business volunteers from over 600 companies have visited 8th grade classrooms and talked to students about the skills they will need to be successful both in college and the workplace and how taking a rigorous curriculum in high school can help. SSI has also involved parents, teachers, and counselors to reinforce this message.

WICHE and the SSI states have learned how to implement and improve the initiative in order to reach more students. Constituent perceptions, student course enrollment behaviors, state and school district data systems and policies, and business participants have yielded many lessons that will be valuable to future efforts utilizing the business community to help prepare students to be productive participants in tomorrow’s workforce.

The principal staff that managed WICHE’s involvement over the four-year grant period included: Terese Rainwater, director of SSI (1.0 FTE); Michelle Medal, associate project director (1.0 FTE); Kay Hulstrom, administrative assistant (.55 FTE); Deborah Jang, Web designer (.30 FTE); Annie Finnigan, communications manager (.25 FTE); Candy Allen, graphic designer (.20 FTE), and Jere Mock, vice president of Programs and Services (.20 FTE).

SSI Activities and Accomplishments
SSI’s activities and accomplishments at the national and state levels included: technical assistance, oversight and monitoring, data collection, state activities, and SSI’s capstone event, the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance. Throughout its work WICHE was advised by a group of national education, business, and policy leaders, whose expertise deeply enhanced the program.

Program History
The State Scholars Initiative was first funded by OVAE in 2002. At that time the Texas-based Center for State Scholars (CSS) was selected as the national program administrator. During CSS’s program administration, 14 states were selected to pilot SSI and received federal SSI funding. Due to concerns and problems identified by a Office of the Inspector General’s (OIG) report released in January 2006, CSS was terminated as SSI’s program administrator. In 2005 ED conducted an expedited grant competition to select a new program administrator for SSI, choosing WICHE in September of that year.

At the beginning of WICHE’s program administration, the 14 states selected by the CSS were receiving federal funding and implementing SSI projects in ways that weren’t always consistent with the program’s mission. Through the use of technical assistance, oversight, and monitoring, WICHE was able to bring each state into compliance and ensure program integrity. Working collaboratively with OVAE, WICHE provided a uniform set of expectations in the form of a revised state contract, new performance- and financial-reporting tools and deadlines, a new marketing and communications plan, and new expense reimbursement protocols.

During WICHE’s program administration, an additional 10 states joined the State Scholars Initiative network. In addition to meeting all program implementation requirements established for the first 14 states, these 10 new states were required to provide data on business-education partnerships, student enrollment, and SSI constituent perceptions. Although the states selected by CSS were invited to participate in data-collection activities, WICHE could
not compel them to do so. As a result the data was obtained from the 10 states selected during WICHE’s program administration. Each state project received up to $300,000 in federal funding over a two-year period and was administered by a state-level business education partnership. Of the states that joined SSI during WICHE’s program administration, all 10 launched their projects through statewide kickoff events, secured business volunteers and support, presented to students, and submitted course-level data. Nine of the 10 states submitted perception data.

**Technical Assistance**

Although states only received two years of federal funding, SSI required them to accomplish three demanding tasks: to implement the program in schools; influence state and local policy; and collect SSI data. WICHE provided a wide array of technical assistance to states and school districts to help them launch and successfully sustain the program and meet program goals. To support program implementation, WICHE convened state directors for monthly teleconferences and three in-person national meetings. At these meetings state directors were provided with opportunities to hear from national experts, share program challenges and possible solutions, describe their accomplishments and promising practices that could be replicated in other states, and discuss implications of national research for state and local policy. In addition, WICHE developed a mentorship program, in which experienced state directors were matched with new state directors.

To support state and school district efforts to publicize SSI and garner national and state awareness, WICHE developed a comprehensive communication plan that included marketing materials, media kits, implementation tools, a comprehensive national Website with links to state programs and educational reform resources, and other products. In all, WICHE created and disseminated over 43 products and publications, including policy briefs, newsletters, and a DVD targeted to 8th and 9th graders and featuring a wide range of professionals – including Leon Lederman, SSI Advisory Board member and 1988 Nobel laureate for physics – talking informally about the importance of a rigorous education.

In addition, WICHE created products to support program implementation. The SSI Volunteer Management Database (VMD) was developed in collaboration with Northern Illinois University (NIU) especially for SSI states. This online tool provided a means by which business leaders, school districts, and state business-education partnerships could more efficiently schedule presentations in schools and provide Web-based training to business volunteers. Every SSI state was provided with a customized VMD. The federal grant has provided funding to support states’ use of the VMD through October 2010.

As with any pilot, one challenge for SSI was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program through the collection of data. In conjunction with two independent, third-party evaluators, WICHE provided extensive technical assistance to states on how to collect the required SSI data on course completions. WICHE also provided states with national, state, and customized school district reports and other data.

Finally, WICHE provided technical assistance focused on scalability and sustainability. WICHE worked with The Grantsmanship Center to develop a customized grant-writing training program, designed to address the challenges of sustaining pilot programs. As a result of this training, many states applied for and received grants from foundations, corporations, and state agencies to support SSI activities. Of the 24 states that received SSI funding, 18 are actively striving to sustain their projects and bring them to scale. For example:

- New Hampshire Scholars created a strategic plan that seeks to sustain program activities while simultaneously bringing the program to scale statewide. Toward this end, they have created a statewide advisory board of directors to guide sustainability and expansion activities.
- South Dakota Scholars coordinated its efforts with the South Dakota Department of Education’s statewide efforts in career planning and in utilizing career clusters. Participating SSI school districts received training on the state’s career software and its connection to SSI’s Core Course of Study and goals.
- Utah Scholars received a $500,000 appropriation in one-time funds from the state’s legislature to expand the program, as well as a nearly $1 million appropriation to create and fund the Regents’ Scholarship, available to any student who completes the Utah Scholars Core Course of Study.
- Commonwealth Scholars (VA) developed a statewide program model whereby multiple school divisions and universities are engaged in the program through a regional consortia implemented by community colleges and led by the Virginia Community College System.
WICHE also provided technical assistance to non-SSI states that were interested in SSI program implementation, policy options to support academic rigor and relevance, and data collection, including: Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, as well as to the Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C.

**Oversight and Monitoring**

Oversight and monitoring were important parts of WICHE’s administration of SSI, which is a cost-reimbursement program. Each state had a contract with WICHE outlining the requirements of participating in the program. WICHE reviewed and approved every state’s budget and requests to alter approved budgets, as well as all personnel hired, all subcontractors hired, all monthly reimbursement requests, and all marketing and communications activities. Finally, WICHE reviewed and approved any changes made to the program. For instance, several states requested course equivalencies to fulfill the requirements of the SSI Core Course of Study. As part of its oversight and monitoring responsibilities, WICHE conducted at least one site-monitoring visit in every state that received federal funds during its program administration.

**Data Collection**

The State Scholars Initiative required states to collect business-education partnership, course enrollment, and perception data. Data were collected from 47 school districts in 10 SSI states, representing over 1.4 million course enrollments from fall 2006 through fall 2008. Data show that the vast majority of students successfully completed their coursework. In addition, WICHE conducted nearly 19,000 perception surveys at SSI events, to find out how students, parents, and business volunteers view the program. Perception and overall course completion data were shared with states, enabling them to show the value of the program to decision makers.

One of the central questions for SSI data collection was whether or not more students were enrolling in the required SSI courses. For example, were more students enrolling in physics? Finding the answer to this kind of question turned out to be one of the most significant challenges of WICHE’s program administration. As a result of exhaustive efforts on the part of states, school districts, and SSI’s independent third-party evaluators, WICHE has learned many lessons about the challenges of collecting student course-level data. These include:

- In general, there are as many data systems in a state as there are school districts.
- Data systems are designed to answer administrative, not educational, questions. Schools can often answer a question like, “What is the gender of your bus driver?” but are frequently unable to answer ones like “How many students are taking physics this semester versus last semester? This year versus last year?”
- Data systems are often changed without sufficient planning, training, and technical assistance and without an understanding of how to transfer data from the previous system to the new one.
- Identifying courses is challenging since there is no unified method for coding courses and no method for determining which courses are assigned to a given course category.
- Determining student achievement can be difficult since some states only report whether a student has passed or failed; they do not provide grades.

**State Activities**

The State Scholars Initiative made significant strides in strengthening high school students’ academic achievement by focusing on increasing students’ college-going rates, reducing remediation, and stimulating interest in taking a rigorous course of study. To help further motivate students, SSI state partnerships have developed a remarkable array of incentives, academic support programs, and recognitions. In addition, states, businesses, and postsecondary institutions have created scholarship opportunities for students who complete the SSI Core Course of Study.

Another essential piece of SSI’s work at the state and school district level is that it has made postsecondary academic planning a fact of life for thousands of students who might otherwise have been ill-prepared to succeed in college – and it has helped their parents understand the value of such planning, too. In addition to working with students and their families, SSI projects have focused on state policy that promotes academic rigor. State partnerships worked to influence state policymakers’ understanding of academic rigor and sought to build new alliances across K-12, postsecondary, and corporate communities. Several SSI states – including Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, and Oklahoma – have used the State Scholars Initiative Core Course of Study to support the development of statewide rigorous high school default curricula.
National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance
To increase awareness about the importance of a rigorous curriculum, SSI hosted the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance in Boston in April 2008. Some 300 participants from 36 states and territories attended, hearing presentations from such experts as Leon Lederman, Nobel Prize winner in physics, and Charles Kolb, president of the Committee for Economic Development – both SSI Advisory Board members. The summit (whose proceedings are posted at www.wiche.edu/statescholars/summit/proceedings.pdf) examined the role of the business community in driving national education reform conversations and fostered discussions of policy reform to increase academic rigor and improve academic relevance in high school. Participants explored topics including the effects of globalization, the need to increase enrollments in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) courses, changing student demographics, rigorous curriculum, and competency-driven assessment, as well as data collection and analysis.

SSI Promising Practices
Development and dissemination of promising practices was an essential part of SSI program administration and state project implementation. SSI’s success has depended on the support provided by the business community, educators, and policymakers – and on how well they understood what worked. SSI’s leaders and volunteers played an essential role as they carried the message about the importance of a rigorous curriculum into classrooms, school district offices, legislative hallways, and corporate boardrooms. They publicized the benefits of taking rigorous courses in the midst of an ever-widening array of educational initiatives that compete for the attention of policymakers, superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students. In addition, they provided financial support for project activities and scholarships, as well internships and employment opportunities to Scholars.

To facilitate the sharing of practitioner wisdom, WICHE gathered promising practices from all SSI partnerships via national and state meetings, telephone interviews, performance reports, products and activities, and state director conference calls. The knowledge that WICHE collected was synthesized and presented in its report, “State Scholars Initiative Program in Review: Lessons Learned and Promising Practices.” Highlighted promising practices include recommendations to:

- Gather SSI constituent data and use it to inform program activities and implementation.
- Leverage the resources of the business community to transform student perceptions and course-taking behaviors.
- Create effective program communication.
- Align with higher education and P-16 networks.
- Utilize SSI to influence broader state policy.

Evaluation Findings
Throughout its administration of SSI, WICHE maintained a robust evaluation component, which encompassed a performance review of both WICHE and the SSI states’ performance.

State Performance
SSI is one of a very few national initiatives that has collected and analyzed student course-level data. This data, coupled with SSI constituent perceptions and an in-depth examination of SSI business-education partnerships, provided a wealth of information.

SSI state performance evaluations were conducted by Diana Robinson, associate director at the Center for Governmental Studies at NIU, and Karen Paulson, senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). State performance was 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. In addition to submitting annual reports, the evaluators wrote a summative report encompassing all four years of WICHE’s program administration. Evaluation findings demonstrated that SSI states were effective across a range of activities, from changing student course-taking behaviors to affecting stakeholder perceptions and influencing state education reform. The most significant challenge was accessing student-level data. Main findings included the following.

Finding 1. The SSI program model is effective in changing student course-taking behavior. Data on 1,458,724 student enrollments gathered by SSI over the past three years indicate that students are changing their course-taking patterns by taking rigorous courses in high schools, and SSI, in part, is responsible for these changes. The real-world, bottom-line presentations that businesspeople make to 8th grade students help students make the connection between a strong education and future earnings potential.
Finding 2. SSI positively affects stakeholders’ perceptions about rigor and course-taking. The 18,691 perception surveys returned over the course of WICHE’s program administration of SSI indicate that the program makes a positive difference. It is successfully communicating the importance of a rigorous high school course of study to students, parents, and businesspeople; and it is reinforcing what teachers and guidance counselors already know.

Finding 3. Student-level data for informed policymaking and program improvement are difficult to access. Current student data systems are ill-equipped to answer even basic questions about student course-taking. States and local school districts lack the people, money, and time to maintain data for purposes other than transactions (e.g., student scheduling and using report screen information) and simple reporting at the state and federal levels.

Finding 4. SSI is an effective driver of education reform. SSI is influencing more rigorous graduation requirements, strengthening states’ default curricula by adding career and technical education or service-learning options, and strengthening coalitions around high school reform. With federal support ceasing on September 30, 2009, funding will end before the effect of the program on a full cohort of students will be known. While many other positive outcomes are described in this report relating to student course-taking behavior, stakeholder perceptions of rigor, and state-level education reform efforts, definitive findings on the core evaluation questions related to student outcomes and progression will not be forthcoming. While federal funding will conclude in the fall of 2009, the vast majority of SSI states will sustain their projects. It is hoped that the lessons learned from the collective experience to date may be useful in guiding future education investments at the national and state levels, as well as in continuous improvement efforts of the many SSI projects in operation.

WICHE’s Performance
The evaluation of WICHE’s performance, conducted by NIU’s Diana Robinson, focused on how well the program was being administered at the national level. Findings included the following.

Finding 1. SSI has met or exceeded all federal program expectations. SSI has been implemented by WICHE in a manner that fully addresses both the programmatic intent of the program and the administrative requirements set forth in the Federal Register and related accountability documents.

Finding 2. WICHE was the right organization at the right time to assume administrative responsibility for SSI. WICHE possessed a number of critical capabilities uniquely suited to the task at hand. These included the managerial capability to assume immediate control of the program while quickly putting in place an exceptionally qualified staff team, the programmatic infrastructure needed to support SSI, politically sensitive leadership and incisive program guidance, and a rich policy and research capacity.

Finding 3. Commitment, communication, and continuity at all levels were core to the successful administration of SSI. Three themes emerged early in this evaluation and were reinforced throughout the four years of WICHE’s administration: commitment to the success of SSI by the individuals responsible for implementing it at all levels; multilateral and multimodal communication; and continuity in project management by WICHE and OVAE.

Finding 4. Meaningful evaluation activities and related data enhanced WICHE’s ability to successfully administer SSI. In addition to creating a communication structure that ensured monthly opportunities to reflect on progress, formative evaluation activities provided information used by OVAE and WICHE to address emerging challenges and take advantage of potential program improvement opportunities.

Finding 5. WICHE, in partnership with OVAE, was able to attain rigorous administrative oversight while addressing program capacity. WICHE restored the SSI program to a high level of accountability and responded to every federal requirement and expectation. However, this occurred at some cost to long-term program impact. Although more might have been done to ameliorate certain of SSI’s administrative requirements, a remarkable balance was attained between administrative accountability and maximizing program impact.

Performance Measures
Data collection, a critical piece of the State Scholars Initiative, was conducted by NCHEMS’s Karen Paulson. The 2005 Federal Register notice (p. 45377) for the State Scholars Initiative set forth two performance measures focused on student-level data and SSI course availability:
4. Performance Measures: The grantee must collect data, and report annually to the Department, on the effectiveness of the Initiative:

(i) The number and percentage of students in participating schools, districts, and states who have four-year high school course enrollment plans that include the Initiative’s rigorous course of study. If four-year high school course enrollment plans do not exist in a participating school, then the number and percentage of students who have a one- or two-year high school course enrollment plan that includes components of the rigorous course of study.

(ii) The availability of classes that comprise the rigorous course of study in participating schools, districts, and States.

These performance measures are directly related to the collection of student-level data and were addressed in the NCHEMS evaluation report, “State Scholars Initiative Year Four Final Evaluation Report.”

Performance Measure 4i

The State Scholars Initiative requires students to enroll in the SSI Core Course of Study, comprised of 15.5 years of study in mathematics, lab-based science, English, social studies, and a language other than English. To fulfill these SSI requirements, students must enroll in four years of high school; therefore, 100 percent of students in SSI-participating schools and districts effectively have a four-year high school course enrollment plan, the SSI Core Course of Study. Identifying which students have a specific four-year high school enrollment plan is more problematic. A limited number of schools and districts participating in SSI require students to sign contracts pledging that a student will take the SSI Core Course of Study; in these cases the contract would then be the four-year high school enrollment plan. But the schools and districts that require contracts often may not keep this information in an electronic form; usually it is a signed piece of paper stored in each student’s file in the guidance office. Because only a limited number of SSI schools and districts require students to sign contracts, and those schools and districts that do, do not keep that data electronically, it is unknown how many students specifically have a four-year high school enrollment plan. SSI targets 8th graders and assumes the best: that 100 percent of students in a participating State Scholar Initiative school or district will complete the SSI Core Course of Study. Until student data are available upon graduation, it is unknown whether they have achieved this outcome.

Performance Measure 4ii

In fall 2008, during Year Four of WICHE’s program administration, all classes that comprised the rigorous course of study in the State Scholars Initiative were available in all 27 districts in six reporting SSI States including: SSI – B (Louisiana (two districts) and Virginia (eight divisions)) and SSI – C (Missouri, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming (four districts each)).

Data gathered for fall 2008 from 27 districts in six states show that 9th through 12th grade students enrolled in the individual courses and course types that comprise the SSI Core Course of Study in the following percentages:

- 83.5 percent in English courses,
- 13.0 percent in other mathematics courses,
- 24.2 percent in algebra I,
- 14.6 percent in algebra II,
- 21.4 percent in geometry,
- 11.8 percent in higher mathematics courses,
- 30.2 percent in other science courses,
- 29.0 percent in biology,
- 14.0 percent in chemistry,
- 5.0 percent in physics,
- 40.3 percent in language other than English courses, and
- 68.8 percent in social studies courses.
Conclusion
Of the 24 State partnerships that received SSI funds, 18 are actively striving to bring their projects to scale and to sustain their project activities. SSI data collected by two independent, third-party evaluators at NCHEMS and NIU demonstrate that the SSI program model has a positive effect in changing student behavior, positively affects stakeholder perceptions, and is an effective driver of education reform. More information on the initiative, SSI state briefs, and all of the reports and publications are available on the WICHE website (www.wiche.edu/ssi).

1 The 24 state-level business-education partnerships involved in SSI since 2003 have been grouped into three cohorts, based on when they were brought into the SSI network: Group A; Group B; and Group C. Group A includes the 14 states selected by CSS prior to 2006: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. Group B includes the six states selected by WICHE in March 2006: Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia. Group C includes the four states selected by WICHE in November 2006: Missouri, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
INFORMATION ITEM
Student Exchange Program Updates

Western Undergraduate Exchange
The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is a regional tuition-reciprocity agreement that enables students from WICHE states to enroll in participating two- and four-year public institutions at 150 percent of the enrolling institution’s resident tuition. WUE has been operating for more than 20 years and is the largest program of its kind in the nation. The program continues to thrive: in 2008-09 more than 23,600 WUE students saved some $151.1 million in tuition costs.

Students can choose from more than 140 participating WUE institutions. In fall 2009 Eastern New Mexico University Portales’s main campus joined the network. Previously, only its Roswell campus enrolled WICHE residents through WUE.

Given the impending increases in resident tuition at California institutions, WICHE staff anticipates an increased interest on the part of California residents to enroll through WUE. Jere Mock and Margo Schultz recently were interviewed by a reporter from the San Jose Mercury News for an article on WUE, which ran in September 2009 (www.mercurynews.com). Several California community colleges had expressed interest in participating in WUE in the past, but the extraordinarily low resident tuition rates that are a product of a highly subsidized higher education system mean that community colleges would not be able to recover their costs at the WUE rate. Even if we do see a substantial increase in community college tuition in the state, it is unlikely that it would reach a level where the institutions recover their costs. For example, in the 2009-10 academic year, resident tuition was $26 per credit hour, which would be $39 per credit hour at the WUE rate.

Western Regional Graduate Program
The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) is an exceptional educational resource for the West, allowing master’s and Ph.D. students who are residents of the 15 participating states to enroll in 226 high-quality programs at some 40 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2008 almost 400 students enrolled through WRGP. Staff is still finalizing fall 2009 enrollment numbers for WRGP programs but anticipates an increase, largely due to the fact that California residents are now eligible to enroll through WRGP, thanks to California State University East Bay’s offering of two WRGP programs, effective fall 2009.

WRGP is a tuition-reciprocity arrangement similar to WUE, in that students can enroll directly in the program through WRGP and are not dependent upon the approval of their home state funding to participate. This represents a tremendous opportunity for WICHE states to share distinctive programs (and the faculty who teach them) and build their workforce in a variety of disciplines, particularly healthcare. Fifty-two WRGP programs are healthcare-related, in the fields of graduate nursing, mental health, public health, speech language pathology and audiology, and other areas. 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).

The next call for nominations for new WRGP programs will be in fall 2010. Notification will be sent to all graduate deans at public institutions in the WICHE region. If you know of a particular program that is interested in applying, please have them contact the director of the Student Exchange Programs, so that we can assure direct notification when the RFP opens next fall.

Professional Student Exchange Program
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. Through PSEP students have access to professional degree programs in 10 fields, all of them related to healthcare: medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic medicine, physician assistant, and pharmacy.
During the 2009-10 academic year, 698 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling over $14.1 million. The economic recession that has worsened since the end of last year has clearly taken a toll on the number of students supported through PSEP. In the 2008-09 academic year, WICHE states invested $14.6 million to support 757 students through PSEP. This represents an erosion of 59 PSEP seats in various fields (or a 7.8 percent decrease) in the current academic year. Depending on state budgets, the situation could worsen in the 2010-11 academic year. This is troublesome, given that states are fighting to build or even maintain their current healthcare workforce in order to serve their residents.

As a result of the commission’s approval of the Student Exchange Programs action item in May 2009, four new provisionally accredited programs have joined PSEP. They include:

- Midwestern University, Glendale’s College of Dental Medicine
- Midwestern University, Glendale’s College of Optometry
- Western University of Health Sciences’ College of Dental Medicine
- Western University of Health Sciences’ College of Optometry

The University of Utah’s pharmacy program has elected to no longer participate in PSEP. It had not enrolled a student through PSEP since the 2000-01 academic year. There are still 16 cooperating schools of pharmacy, giving WICHE students plenty of access to pharmacy education.

Setting PSEP Support Fees. During its May 2010 meeting, the WICHE Commission will consider and approve PSEP support fees for the 2011 and 2012 biennium. WICHE states continue to depend on PSEP to meet several key objectives. PSEP helps them to:

- Develop a healthcare 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 healthcare 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 support fee 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 have been facing mounting fiscal pressures, particularly over the last year or so, 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. But 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 2009-10 and 2010-11 biennium were approved by the full commission in May 2008 and included a 3.4 percent increase for each year of the biennium. No special adjustments were accorded to any of the fields. Fees, previously approved by the WICHE Commission, are outlined in the following chart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td>$22,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>28,300</td>
<td>29,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry</td>
<td>15,100</td>
<td>15,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteopathic Medicine</td>
<td>18,800</td>
<td>19,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapy</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>10,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician Assistant</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>11,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatry</td>
<td>13,100</td>
<td>13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>28,100</td>
<td>29,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>6,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the next couple of months, staff will analyze the tuition and fees of participating schools, using the 2009-10 tuition and fees information collected from cooperating institutions. Staff considers both the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA) index (similar to the Consumer Price Index but calculated for higher education costs) and proposes fee levels that will cover the tuition differentials at the cooperating institutions. Staff will seek feedback on proposals for the 2011 and 2012 support fees with WICHE’s certifying officers and deans of participating programs prior to the May 2010 commission meeting.

The states of Alaska, Hawaii, and Nevada are encouraged to review the level of support fees in pharmacy. Given the low support fee in pharmacy, more and more students are electing not to use WICHE support. This is particularly true for students from service-payback states (Hawaii and Nevada).

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. At the May 2008, no action was taken to increase the pharmacy support fee.

Hawaii will cease supporting students in pharmacy as soon as the University of Hawaii at Hilo’s new pharmacy school is fully accredited (projected for fall 2011).

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 2010 meeting.

**Health information technology: programs and collaboration.** WICHE is looking at strategies to help states and institutions prepare the health information technology (HIT) workforce in the West. To inform its efforts, WICHE published a workforce brief focused on health information technology in November 2007. Since then, the Obama administration has mandated a five-year window for implementation and meaningful use of electronic health records (EHRs). Providers will likely be scrambling to meet these deadlines so that they are not penalized.

The number of programs currently available to train HIT professionals is lagging behind workforce needs. The majority of the available programs in WICHE states are at the associate’s level, where graduates can obtain the registered health information technician (RHIT) national certification. While these individuals are important to the HIT implementation process, the workforce supply of registered health information administrators (RHIA) are most compromised, due to the shortage of bachelor’s and master’s degree programs producing these graduates. Currently, there are very few bachelor’s and master’s HIT programs in the West.
WICHE was invited to the National Rural HIT Workforce Summit in Washington, D.C., in September 2009. The group is very interested in giving WICHE a role to convene an advisory board of educators of HIT programs, with the goal of coordinating the development of programs and sharing them, as well as existing faculty. WICHE’s ICE (Internet Course Exchange) is the logical tool to help deliver these programs via distance education, especially to incumbent workers, particularly those in rural areas.
INFORMATION ITEM
Programs and Services Regional Initiatives

WICHE Internet Course Exchange
The WICHE Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE) offers students of its member institutions increased access to online courses and programs while they are enrolled at their home institution. Currently, there are 13 institutional and four consortia members for an overall participation of more than 30 institutions.

During the last six months the primary focus of the ICE Steering Board and staff has been on developing a new financial model to encourage and support collaboration among the members. In this new model, adopted in August, WICHE will take on responsibility for financial transactions among its members. For this service it will retain a 15 percent administrative fee for each of the three types of exchanges:

- **Seat exchange.** Members with excess capacity in online courses may offer seats in them to other members at an agreed-upon, common wholesale price. For FY 2010 the price is set at $150 per credit hour for undergraduate courses and $200 per credit hour for graduate courses. The enrolling institution is encouraged to offer these imported seats to its students at its regular tuition so that it is transparent for the student.
- **Course exchange.** Members may contract with other members to create and supply a new online course or an entire section of an existing online course. The wholesale price and the number of enrollments are negotiated by the institutions involved. Again, the enrolling institution is encouraged to offer these imported seats to its students at its regular tuition so that it is transparent for the student.
- **Program exchange.** Members may contract with other members to jointly develop and deliver a full academic program. In this exchange the members agree to both a negotiated wholesale price and a common retail price for enrolling in courses in the program.

Other activity has focused on collaborative initiatives, where members are finding refuge in, and support from, the ICE model as they seek ways to retain and expand their online offerings when declining budgets force more cuts to their programs. For example, the five-institution social work consortium is working on the joint development of a certificate program targeting K-12 social workers. The math and science initiative has a proposal pending with the National Science Foundation to pilot the development of enrollment-sharing in two online lab courses in science. Two engineering consortia have approached ICE about the use of its platform to support the exchange of seats and courses in the area of sustainable energy. And conversations are underway among the business deans at member schools about the exchange of online courses in areas of need for upcoming terms. Both the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXxus) and the Colorado Department of Labor/U.S. Department of Labor demonstration project continue to use the ICE platform to make more online courses that respond to workforce needs available to students at their home institutions.

The WICHE ICE Website (www.wiche.edu/ice), redesigned over the summer, provides more information about how the program works, as well as new resources for members. A members’ only section, with many interactive tools to support communication, was launched at the end of September.

ICE members include:
- Adams State College
- 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
- Montana University System
- North Dakota University System Online
- Regis University
- South Dakota System of Higher Education
The ICE annual meeting will be held in March or April 2010 in Boulder.

**Western Academic Leadership Forum**

The Western Academic Leadership Forum (WALF) gives academic leaders in the WICHE states a venue for sharing information, resources, and expertise as they address issues of common concern across the region and work together on innovative solutions. Originally, this group consisted of provosts, academic vice presidents at master’s and doctoral-level institutions and chief executives and chief academic officers for system and state governing boards. In September the executive committee expanded membership criteria to include academic leaders at bachelor’s institutions and is soliciting the involvement of prospective members.

Planning for the WALF annual meeting, to be held April 21-23, 2010, in Rapid City, SD, is underway. The program, themed “Academic Leadership: Charting a Future in a Sea of National and International Initiatives,” will allow attendees the opportunity to hear from experts on new initiatives and then from panels of member representatives about the practical implications of such initiatives and the approaches they are taking to incorporate them into their institution’s culture, especially with the extraordinary budget shortfalls most are facing.

In addition to planning for the annual meeting, the executive committee has just launched a new project to develop an academic leader’s toolkit. This strategic-planning tool is envisioned as a new resource to help guide decision making about retaining existing programs and developing new ones; determining which courses to offer on campus and which to offer at a distance; and when participating in collaborative ventures with other institutions makes more sense than going it alone. A subcommittee appointed to refine the vision, set the scope of the project, and develop a few pilot tools will make a presentation at the WALF annual meeting in the spring.

Current members include:

**Alaska**
- Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- University of Alaska System
- University of Alaska Fairbanks

**Arizona**
- Arizona Board of Regents

**California**
- California State University System

**Colorado**
- Colorado State University

**Hawaii**
- University of Hawaii System

**Idaho**
- Boise State University
- Idaho State Board of Education
- Lewis-Clark State College
- University of Idaho

**Montana**
- Montana State University, Bozeman
- Montana State University, Billings
- Montana University System
- The University of Montana System
WICHE offers participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s Master Property Program (MPP) to colleges and universities in the West. The program is available to two-year, four-year, public, and private institutions of higher education, subject to approval by the MPP leadership committee. Institutional members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to their specific needs while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. The base program rates are typically below industry averages, which helps members to reduce their insurance costs while improving their asset protection. Members also have the opportunity to earn annual dividends, based on the consortium’s comprehensive loss ratios. Currently, 47 MPP institutions have total insured values of $63.5 billion.

WICHE and MHEC members together have achieved savings of approximately $51.5 million in premiums and dividends (the estimated savings for the 2008-09 period is $11.5 million). The MHEC program was created in 1994; WICHE has partnered with MHEC in offering the program since 2004. The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) joined the MPP earlier this year. The program is currently underwritten by Lexington AIG and is jointly administered by Marsh and Captive Resources under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the participating insured institutions. Jon Hansen, risk manager of the Nevada System of Higher Education, and Craig Kispert, associate vice president for business and planning at Seattle Pacific University, represent WICHE MPP member institutions on the leadership committee.

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

Nevada
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- University of Nevada, Reno

New Mexico
- New Mexico Higher Education Department

North Dakota
- Minot State University
- North Dakota University System
- North Dakota State University
- University of North Dakota
- Valley City State University

Oregon
- Oregon State University
- Oregon University System
- Pacific University
- Portland State University
- University of Oregon
- Western Oregon University

South Dakota
- South Dakota Board of Regents
- South Dakota School of Mines and Technology

Utah
- Utah State Board of Regents

Washington
- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- Washington State University
- University of Washington

Wyoming
- University of Wyoming

Master Property Program
AICHE offers participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s Master Property Program (MPP) to colleges and universities in the West. The program is available to two-year, four-year, public, and private institutions of higher education, subject to approval by the MPP leadership committee. Institutional members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to their specific needs while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. The base program rates are typically below industry averages, which helps members to reduce their insurance costs while improving their asset protection. Members also have the opportunity to earn annual dividends, based on the consortium’s comprehensive loss ratios. Currently, 47 MPP institutions have total insured values of $63.5 billion.

WICHE and MHEC members together have achieved savings of approximately $51.5 million in premiums and dividends (the estimated savings for the 2008-09 period is $11.5 million). The MHEC program was created in 1994; WICHE has partnered with MHEC in offering the program since 2004. The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) joined the MPP earlier this year. The program is currently underwritten by Lexington AIG and is jointly administered by Marsh and Captive Resources under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the participating insured institutions. Jon Hansen, risk manager of the Nevada System of Higher Education, and Craig Kispert, associate vice president for business and planning at Seattle Pacific University, represent WICHE MPP member institutions on the leadership committee.

Five institutions and two systems in the WICHE region are members of the Master Property Program:
• Lewis and Clark College (OR)
• Nevada System of Higher Education
  • Community College of Southern Nevada
  • Desert Research Institute
  • Great Basin College
  • Nevada State College at Henderson
  • Truckee Meadows Community College
  • University of Nevada, Las Vegas
  • University of Nevada, Reno
  • Western Nevada Community College
• Pima County Community College system – six campuses and four learning and education centers (AZ)
• Reed College (OR)
• Seattle Pacific University (WA)
• University of Northern Colorado
• Westminster College (UT)
• Willamette University (OR)

Representatives of the member institutions, including risk managers and facilities managers, are invited to attend the Master Property Program’s annual Loss Control Workshop on March 10-12, 2010, in St. Louis. The workshop program focuses on facilities and risk management issues relevant to higher education; speakers will include national experts in insurance, construction, facilities management, energy conservation, engineering, fire and disaster prevention, property inspections, appraisals, claims handling, and loss prevention.

WICHE staff continues to work with the program administrators to provide information on the MHEC/ WICHE insurance programs to interested institutions.

**WICHE Expands Purchasing Options Through MHEC-Tech**

The Midwest Higher Education Compact recently invited WICHE to participate in additional group purchasing arrangements to help colleges and universities in the West contain or reduce their administrative costs. WICHE-region institutions are eligible to purchase under new MHEC contracts with Dell, Xerox, Systemax Computers (also known as Global Government & Education Solutions and CompUSA), and Juniper Networks.

Several of the purchasing agreements are also available to K-12 organizations; local, county, and state governments; and nonprofit organizations. The agreements aggregate volume purchases to lower product costs and reduce the time institutions must spend developing and conducting bids themselves. MHEC undertakes the time and expense of the RFP process, and institutions can purchase the goods or services knowing that the due diligence in selecting the vendor has already been done.

Contracts that are available to institutions and organizations in the WICHE region include:

• A full line of new or refurbished Dell computer equipment and components as well as services including installation, maintenance, support, and training. The contract extends through June 30, 2012. For more information, visit www.mhectech.org/mhectech/dellmstr20090801.pdf.
• A three-year contract with four possible one-year renewals with Xerox for printing equipment and document-management services. The contract also includes production-level printing services. In addition to hardware – including multifunction devices, laser printers, copiers, and fax machines – the contract covers Xerox services, such as productivity assessments and document advisories to help manage and streamline records and administrative documents. The full range of Xerox Global Services’ offerings are also 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 schools continually face. See www.mhectech.org/mhectech/08xerox_mstr2.pdf and www.mhectech.org/mhectech/070108xeroxmstr.pdf.
• Systemax (Global Government & Education Solutions and CompUSA) products and services are available under a three-year contract that ends on June 30, 2010. A full product list, including desktop and notebook
computers, monitors, LCDs, servers, tape backups, and many other types of equipment and services, is available at www.mhectech.org/mhectech/2009augmhecglobalgovedmstr.pdf.

- Juniper Networks high-performance network infrastructure and components also may be purchased under a contract that extends through December 31, 2011, and covers a range of software, online tools, and hardware. More details are available at www.mhectech.org/mhectech/20090511juniper.pdf.

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

**WICHE Website Redesign**

To aid our constituents across the region, WICHE launched a redesigned and much-enhanced Website in August. The Drupal platform on which it is structured is a content management system, designed for multiple tiers of users, administrators, and WICHE authors.

The new site navigation offers paths for its various constituent groups to find program information, state highlights, policy and data resources, upcoming events, WICHE publications, presentations, newsfeeds, and details about the organization and its personnel. In addition, there are tools for members of working groups to engage in online discussions and other interactive features, including blogs, wikis, and polls. Most of these areas are restricted to registered users of specific projects and programs, such as Non-traditional No More, College Access Challenge Grant, the Western Academic Leadership Forum, and the WICHE Internet Course Exchange. There is also a commissioner log-in, which grants access to privileged documents. The “Ask WICHE” feature predominantly draws questions from students and parents asking about the Student Exchange Programs.

Through external feedback and internal collaboration, the new site continues to be fine-tuned and will evolve to meet new needs as they become apparent.