Monday, November 8, 2010

3.30 - 5.00 pm
SHEPC Learning Center
Suite 100

Programs and Services Committee Meeting
Carl Shaff (NV), chair
Diane Barrans (AK), vice chair
Jane Nichols (NV), ex officio

Committee vice chair (AK)
Thomas Anderes (AZ)
Roy Ashburn (CA)
Joseph Garcia (CO)
Roy Ogawa (HI)
Robert Kustra (ID)
Clayton Christian (MT)
Duaine Espegard (ND)
Susanna Murphy (NM)
Committee chair (NV)
Tim Nesbitt (OR)
Jack Warner (SD)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)
Klaus Hanson (WY)

Agenda
Presiding: Carl Shaff, chair
Staff: Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Margo Schultz, director, Student Exchange Program
Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE and Western Academic Leadership Forum

Action Item
Approval of the Programs and Services Committee meeting minutes of May 17, 2010 7-3

Discussion Items:
The Master Property Program: Helping institutions to reduce costs and increase their asset protection – Jere Mock 7-6

Speakers: Elizabeth Conlin, senior vice president and client executive, Marsh USA; Jon Hansen, WICHE consultant and retired risk manager, Nevada System of Higher Education

New developments in student transfer – Pat Shea 7-7

Speaker: Stephen J. Handel, senior director of higher education relationship development and community college initiatives at the College Board
Information Items:
Programs and Services regional initiatives: WICHE ICE, Western Academic Leadership Forum, and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders – Pat Shea 7-8

Student Exchange Programs update – Margo Schultz 7-13

Other business

Adjournment
### Committee Members Present
- Carl Shaff (NV), chair
- Diane Barrans (AK)
- Joel Sideman (AZ)
- Roy Ashburn (CA)
- Roy Ogawa (HI)
- Michael Rush (ID)
- Dede Feldman (NM)
- Duaine Espegard (ND)
- Jack Warner (SD)
- Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
- Klaus Hanson (WY)

### Committee Members Absent
- Joseph Garcia (CO), vice chair
- Vacancy (MT)
- Tim Nesbitt (OR)
- Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)

### Guests: WICHE Certifying Officers
- Louise Lynch (AZ)
- Jeannine Sherrick (NV)
- Becke Wolf (UT)
- Lisa Shipley (WY)
- Craig Vaske (WY)

### Guest Speaker
- William Hersh, M.D., professor and chairman, Department of Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology, Oregon Health & Science University

### Staff Present
- Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
- Margo Schultz, director, Student Exchange Programs
- Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE and Western Academic Leadership Forum

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

Commissioner Hanson motioned TO APPROVE THE MAY 17, 2010, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES. Commissioner Feldman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

### ACTION ITEM
**Approval of Programs and Services Workplan for FY 2011**

Jere Mock presented highlights of the Programs and Services unit’s workplan for FY 2011. WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs broaden educational access for nearly 26,000 students annually. These include the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). The WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE), the newest exchange, enables institutions to broaden access to online courses and programs through a regional network of institutions. New institutions and programs are being recruited to participate in each of the programs; a new support fee model is being explored for PSEP; and new strategies to address emerging state workforce needs through multistate collaborations are under consideration.

WICHE’s Western Academic Leadership Forum (formerly the Northwest Academic Forum) provides academic leaders in the WICHE region a venue to share information, resources, and expertise as they address issues of common concern and work together on innovative solutions. Forty-seven institutions, systems, and coordinating/governing boards participate. The forum’s new counterpart for academic leaders of two-year institutions, systems, and state boards was launched in April 2010. An executive committee, with one representative from each state, will identify initial areas of focus, define member services, help recruit members, and explore potential funding sources during FY 2011 for this consortium.

WICHE also engages institutions and state agencies in several cost-savings initiatives. Staff members are working to expand the Western institutions’ participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s (MHEC’s) Master Property Program, a property insurance and risk management consortium. WICHE also partners with MHEC to enable institutions, K-12 entities, and government agencies to buy hardware and software from the MHECtech purchasing collaborative through an array of competitively bid contracts for hardware, software, and technology services from several industry-leading companies. Staff is exploring the potential for a regional program that would promote interstate collaborations around energy-saving initiatives and the development of new academic programs to support alternative/sustainable energy workforce development. Strategies to achieve greater economies of scale
around targeted administrative functions at the institutional and state agency level are other cost-saving efforts under consideration.

Mock also reported on communications’ activities incorporated in the FY 2011 workplan. Further development of the redesigned WICHE Website is planned, along greater use of social media and a continuation of the electronic dissemination of publications spanning a range of topics, as well as WICHE’s annual report, state factsheets, and other materials.

A motion was made by Commissioner Barrans TO APPROVE THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES’ 2011 WORKPLAN. Commissioner Sideman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Approval of Support Fees for PSEP for 2011-12 and 2012-13**

Margo Schultz, director of WICHE’s three Student Exchange Programs, reviewed the fee-setting process for WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program. She explained that the proposed increase is based on the HECA inflation index, which climbed by 1.5 percent between 2008 and 2009. Support fee setting is a balancing act. The goal is to keep students’ financial burden as low as possible; meet public institutions’ 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 2011 or 2012 because of the economic difficulties experienced by most WICHE states, and for other reasons, outlined below. Feedback on the proposed fees was solicited from the deans of the participating schools and the state higher education agencies. 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, physical therapy, and physician assistant.

As in May 2008, WICHE staff has concern about not increasing support fees beyond the 1.5 percent for dentistry, given that nonresident differentials are no longer being covered by the support fee at some of the institutions: University of Colorado Denver (32 WICHE students), University of Nevada, Las Vegas (0), and the University of Washington (5). However, the resident/nonresident tuition differentials at these schools are significantly greater than at other public institutions. In most cases the resident tuition is substantially lower than the overall WICHE dentistry school average, contributing to a greater differential.

For the past few years, the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Dentistry has operated under 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 high numbers of dentistry students through the program. Forgoing an adjustment is a calculated risk, as WICHE students could eventually lose access to UC Denver because the institution can obtain the differential from non-WICHE students who are willing to pay the difference.

The majority of WICHE occupational therapy students are enrolled at private institutions (31:3); therefore, staff does not recommend an increase at this time. The same is true of physical therapy (PT): the majority of WICHE students are enrolled at private institutions or at publics where the differential is being met (22:18), so staff is not proposing a base increase in PT. The vast majority of physician assistant students are enrolled at private institutions (18:6), so staff does not recommend an increase in this field either. Tuition differentials are not being met at several of the public institutions enrolling PSEP students in these fields.

Commissioner Barrans asked if WICHE might consider a different model to calculate support fees, given that it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet differentials in public programs in so many of the fields. Schultz responded affirmatively and noted that at the certifying officers’ meeting held the previous day, the group discussed forming
a committee to look at new ways of calculating the fees that would not involved meeting resident/nonresident differentials. Shaff said that the certifying officers’ meeting, they made a unanimous recommendation to support the proposed fee increases and encouraged commissioners to support them as well. All concurred that the proposed increases are necessary in light of the 5 to 15 percent tuition increases that most healthcare professions programs are anticipating for the coming year.

Commissioner Sideman moved TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED INCREASE OF 1.5 PERCENT FOR SUPPORT FEES FOR THE 2011 AND 2012 ACADEMIC YEARS. Commission Hanson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Approval for WICHE to Seek Funding for a Western Scholars Program**

Mock reviewed an action item requesting authorization for staff to seek and receive funding for a new initiative called Western Scholars, as a continuation and expansion of certain aspects of the federally funded State Scholars Initiative. Staff submitted a grant proposal on May 8 to the U.S. Department of Education’s Investing in Innovation competition. The grant requests $29.8 million over five years to serve 2,800 high-need students in 20 high schools in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Utah from 9th grade through their first year of college with intensive academic and student support services. If the grant is received, the students will be required to take a rigorous high school curriculum, will receive frequent tutoring and academic counseling, will be able to enroll in up to six remedial courses, will have opportunities for dual enrollment in college courses, and will participate in credit-based testing options.

Several organizations partnered with WICHE to develop this proposal: a consortium of high schools; the Colorado GEAR UP program; the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching at Columbia University’s Teachers College; and the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. The corporate partner for this initiative is Gallup, which will provide an innovative student portal and database along with several assessments that will help students to understand how their talents align with potential majors and careers. The Department of Education plans to announce the awards for the Investing in Innovation competition in September.

Commissioner Sideman moved TO APPROVE THE WESTERN SCHOLARS ACTION ITEM. Commissioner Feldman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Updates and Presentation on the Health IT Workforce**

Schultz said that WICHE staff will solicit additional graduate programs to join the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) next fall. Programs must be distinctive or healthcare-related (and not covered in PSEP) for consideration. WICHE staff is especially interested in recruiting programs in graduate nursing, nurse practitioner, health information technology, sustainable energy programs, and professional sciences masters programs. Finally, Schultz encouraged commissioners to take a look at the new PSEP brochure, which was simplified and published in January 2010.

Pat Shea, director of WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE) and Western Academic Leadership Forum (WALF), provided updates on the WALF’s recent annual meeting at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. She also described the new regional forum that WICHE is creating for academic leaders of community colleges and two-year systems and state boards in the West. She and Mock met with the group’s newly appointed executive committee members during the American Association of Community Colleges meeting in April. The committee, composed of one representative per state, will convene again in July at WICHE to further develop the forum’s focus, define member services, and explore potential funding sources. Like the Western Academic Leadership Forum, the new community and technical college forum will be funded from membership dues and grants.

The final highlight of the meeting was a presentation by William Hersh, professor and chair of the Department of Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology in the School of Medicine at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). He gave an overview of health information technology (HIT) workforce needs and higher education’s efforts to respond to these needs. He said $84 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds have been awarded recently to 16 universities and community colleges to support the training of more than 50,000 new HIT professionals. The ARRA funding is in support of national goals to adopt electronic health records. Hersh described OHSU’s plans to use a recent federal grant of $5.8 million to create a national dissemination resource for HIT curricula at OHSU and to expand the university’s health informatics programs.
DISCUSSION ITEM

MHEC Master Property Program
Helping Institutions to Reduce Costs and Increase their Asset Protection

In 2004 the WICHE Commission approved expanding the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s (MHEC’s) property insurance and risk management program to the WICHE region. The MHEC Master Property Program (MPP) was established in 1994 to help colleges and universities to reduce their property insurance costs and broaden their coverage while improving their asset protection strategies. Last year the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) opted to make the program available to institutions in New England.

The MPP now includes 48 members (with 100 campuses) with total insured values of over $73.1 billion. It has generated more than $59.1 million in savings for the participating institutions. Lexington/Chartis is the program underwriter; Marsh and Captive Resources LLC administer the program under the direction of an oversight committee that is representative of the insured institutions. GAB Robins handles all property claims for the member institutions. Institutions in the WICHE region that are MPP members include:

- Arizona: Pima Community College District
- Colorado: Colorado College
- Nevada: Nevada System of Higher Education, 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 College
- Oregon: Lewis Clark College, Reed College, Willamette University
- Utah: Westminster College
- Washington: Seattle Pacific University
- Wyoming: University of Wyoming

The risk managers at Seattle Pacific University and the University of Wyoming represent the WICHE member institutions on the MPP Oversight Committee. Additional details about the program and its benefits are in the MPP brochure that’s provided in the meeting package.

Staff encourages other systems and institutions in the WICHE region to learn more about the program and seek a quote to determine if the MPP can reduce their insurance and risk management costs. Elizabeth “Beth” Conlin, MPP program administrator and Marsh senior vice president and client executive, will provide an overview of the program during the Programs and Services Committee meeting and will describe its governance, program components and coverages, and cost allocation and dividend elements, as well as the process for seeking program quotes. Jon Hansen, recently retired risk manager of the Nevada System of Higher Education who is assisting WICHE in marketing the program to additional institutions, will be on hand to describe how institutions in Nevada and other members have benefitted from their participation.
There is universal concern among policymakers in the United States about the low college degree completion rates, especially for students who begin their education in two-year institutions. There is also widespread debate about the reasons for these low rates and the extent to which changing the conversation about transfer and articulation could improve the situation.

Although many states have developed or are working on articulation and transfer systems for institutions within their state, there is a lack of multistate partnerships for this purpose. Building on the WICHE and Hezel Associates’ recently completed research on policies and practices in transfer and articulation, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, WICHE recently applied for a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant of $749,949 to implement three new transfer and articulation strategies among institutions volunteering to participate across the region. These strategies include:

1. Creating a transfer and articulation process based on mapping general education core curriculum to Liberal Education and America’s Promise’s (LEAP’s) “essential learning outcomes,” authored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

2. Establishing agreements that provide a seamless path into participating four-year schools for students who have earned an A.A. or A.S. degree at a community college in the WICHE region.

3. Developing pathways for students in two pilot disciplines – biology and elementary education – to complete their first 60 hours at community colleges and then transfer to four-year schools for completion.

To provide the larger context on promising new policies and best practices in transfer from a national perspective, and to provide an opportunity for commissioner input on these issues, Stephen J. Handel, senior director of Higher Education Relationship Development and Community College Initiatives at the College Board, will give a presentation during the committee meeting. Handel leads the College Board’s efforts to establish partnerships with higher education institutions and organizations that advance educational access and equity for all students and develops policies and programs that serve community college students and educators. Prior to joining College Board, Handel served as the University of California system’s first director of community college transfer enrollment planning and undergraduate outreach.
WICHE Internet Course Exchange

The WICHE Internet Course Exchange (WICHE ICE) is a robust administrative tool designed to support collaboration among institutions offering online courses. Through ICE participating institutions expand their students’ access to high-quality online courses and programs taught by other member institutions. Seamlessly, students enroll, obtain advising, and use financial aid from their home campus, which transcripts the course. Currently, there are 11 institutional members and four consortia members for an overall impact on more than 30 institutions.

Acting as the broker for the exchange of course and student information and funding among the members, WICHE ICE charges a 15 percent administrative fee for its services. Members pay annual dues and may participate as either an enrolling institution (EI), a teaching institution (TI), or both. They may engage in one or all three of the 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 2011 the price is set at $150 per credit hour for undergraduate courses and $200 per credit hour for graduate courses. The EI is encouraged to offer these imported seats to its students at its regular tuition so that the exchange is transparent for the student. Since these seats would otherwise be empty, the TI earns additional revenue.

- **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 EI is encouraged to offer these imported seats to its students at its regular tuition so that the exchange is transparent for the student. Since the EI counts the FTE for the students it enrolls in these exchange courses but has no expenses for course development or an instructor, it may also earn additional revenue.

- **Program exchange.** Members may contract with other members to jointly develop and deliver a full program. In this exchange the members agree both to a negotiated wholesale price (the price one institution charges another institution for a seat) as well as a common retail price (the price institutions charge a student for a seat) for enrolling in courses in the program.

ICE continues to pursue opportunities to support existing and newly developing online programs that are struggling because of declining budgets. By partnering across institutions, the participants ensure the financial viability of certain online courses and programs. This is especially true for niche subject areas, where a single institution’s enrollment in a certain course or program is low. By aggregating enrollment across two or more institutions, the enrollment can be high enough to make these courses or programs sustainable. Areas of interest include social work, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, Native American studies, business, and foreign languages. A proposal to the National Science Foundation to pilot cross-campus development of, and sharing enrollment in, two online lab courses in science is pending. Both the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXUs) and the Colorado Department of Labor/ U.S. Department of Labor demo project continue to use ICE to make more online courses responding to workforce needs available to students at their home institutions. The latter will conclude its work in December.

The WICHE ICE Website (www.wiche.edu/ice) provides much more information about how the program works, as well as new resources for members. A listserv supports communication among members.

ICE members include:

- Adams State College (CO)
- Arizona Universities Network
- Bismarck State College (ND)
- Boise State University (ID)
- Lewis-Clark State College (ID)
The ICE annual meeting will be held March 10-11, 2011, in Boulder.

**Western Academic Leadership Forum**

The Western Academic Leadership Forum (the Forum) 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. This group consists of provosts; academic vice presidents at bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral-level institutions; and chief executives and chief academic officers for system and state coordinating and governing boards. It is funded via membership dues and a grant from TIAA-CREF.

The Forum Executive Committee met in the WICHE Learning Center September 30 to October 1 to develop the program for annual meeting, to be held April 13-15, 2011, at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins. The agenda for that meeting, “The Politics of Student Success: Meeting the Challenges from Readiness to Completion,” will be available on the Website later this month.

During September and October, WICHE staff built the Academic Leaders Toolkit (www.wiche.edu/alt) from the prototype designed by the Forum Toolkit Committee. This Web-based repository will contain profiles of successful decision-making tools and processes used by academic leaders and will be an important strategic-planning resource for them. Tools in a broad range of categories – such as program evaluation, creation and elimination; faculty recruitment and retention; and student outcomes assessment – will help academic leaders better address their increasing range of responsibilities. During the fall the members of the executive committees for both the Forum and the Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (see below) will invite submissions for the toolkit. A public launch is tentatively planned for January.

More about the Forum’s upcoming annual meeting and general information about the organization can be found at www.wiche.edu/walf.

Current members include:

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

**Arizona**
- Arizona State University
- Arizona Board of Regents

**California**
- California State University system
Colorado
- Metropolitan State College of Denver
- Colorado State University, Ft. Collins
- Colorado State University, Pueblo

Hawaii
- University of Hawaii system

Idaho
- Boise State University
- Lewis-Clark State College
- University of Idaho

Montana
- Montana State University, Billings
- Montana State University, Bozeman
- The University of Montana
- Montana University system

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

New Mexico
- New Mexico State University

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

Oregon
- Oregon State University
- Oregon University system
- Pacific University
- Portland State University
- The University of Oregon

South Dakota
- Black Hills State University
- Dakota State University
- Northern State University
- South Dakota Board of Regents
- South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
- South Dakota State University
- The University of South Dakota

Utah
- Utah State Board of Regents
The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance) held its first official meeting July 7-8, 2010, in the WICHE Learning Center. Its members include academic leaders of two-year schools and their related systems and state coordinating and governing boards. Modeled after the Western Academic Leadership Forum, which donated $10,000 in seed money to launch the Alliance, it provides a venue for sharing information, resources, and expertise among community colleges and technical schools. Together, the members address issues of common concern across the region and work together on innovative solutions. Like the Forum, it is funded from membership dues and grants.

During the July meeting, the members developed a mission statement and set the goals and objectives for the organization. In addition, they defined the pressing need for a project addressing transfer and articulation across the West. As a result WICHE submitted a proposal to the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), requesting $749,976 for a three-year project to create a WICHE Interstate Passport that would reframe the conversation about the transfer and articulation process to one based on student outcomes. Institutions will participate on a voluntary basis. If successful, the project will serve as a national model.

During this initial year, a leadership team of three serves as chair. A listserv facilitates communication among the members. Like the Forum, the Alliance is soliciting submissions for the Academic Leaders Toolkit (www.wiche.edu/alt), tentatively planned for public launch in January.

More information about the organization can be found at www.wiche.edu/waccal.

Charter members with representatives on the Alliance Executive Committee are:

- Alaska: University of Alaska, Fairbanks
- Arizona: Coconino Community College
- California: California Community Colleges
- Colorado: Colorado Community College system
- Hawaii: University of Hawaii Manoa
- Idaho: College of Southern Idaho
- Montana: Montana University system
- Nevada: Great Basin College
- New Mexico: Santa Fe Community College
- North Dakota: Williston State College
- Oregon: Oregon Board of Education
- South Dakota: Lake Area Technical Institute
- Utah: Salt Lake Community College
- Washington: Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Wyoming: Laramie County Community College
INFORMATION ITEM
Student Exchange Programs Update

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 23 years and is the largest program of its kind in the nation. The program continues to thrive: in 2009-10, 24,670 WUE students and their families saved some $173.4 million in tuition costs. Students can choose from some 145 participating WUE institutions.

WUE institutions report their WUE enrollments through October. WICHE staff will have estimates of the 2010-11 academic year enrollments for the November 2010 commission meeting. We anticipate that enrollments will continue to increase. Given the pressures on the California higher education system, California residents are very interested in enrolling through WUE.

Western Regional Graduate Program

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) is an outstanding educational resource for the West, allowing master’s, Ph.D., and graduate certificate students who are residents of the 15 participating states to enroll in some 220 high-quality programs at some 45 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2009 502 students enrolled through WRGP. Staff is still finalizing fall 2010 enrollment numbers for WRGP programs but anticipates an increase, largely due to the fact that California residents became eligible to enroll through WRGP in fall 2009, thanks to California State University East Bay’s offering of two WRGP programs.

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).

WICHE staff invited public institutions in the WICHE region to nominate their graduate programs for participation in the WRGP network in September 2010. Notification was sent to graduate deans, provosts, academic vice presidents, WICHE state higher education executive offices, and interested department chairs. The nomination deadline is November 1, 2010; staff will report on the nominations at the November meeting.

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 2010-11 academic year, some 700 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling over $14.3 million (staff will present final numbers at the November commission meeting). The economic recession continues to adversely affect the number of students supported through PSEP, despite the unprecedented need for healthcare professionals. Compared to the previous academic year, numbers appear to have remained constant, with no growth in the number of students supported.
Student Exchange Programs Marketing

WICHE staff is developing fresh marketing approaches for WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs. In addition to increasing outreach to prospective students and their parents, WICHE staff also wants to increase awareness with legislators and other stakeholders as to the benefits of tuition reciprocity and student access programs. One strategy involves gathering testimonials on the benefits of the programs from current students, graduates, institutional leaders, and policymakers and posting them on WICHE’s Website. Other strategies involve increasing the programs’ presence in social media and on our WICHE states’ college-mentoring Websites. Finally, staff is increasing its outreach with regional high school counseling associations and is also seeking funding for additional projects, such as a “WUE Ambassadors” program, in which a small number of counselors from WICHE states would be selected to attend a one-day workshop on WICHE’s offerings and become “experts” in their states, tasked with spreading the word about WICHE’s student access programs.

New Support Fees–Setting Model

Support fees for WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program are currently set to meet the resident/nonresident differentials of our public cooperating programs. It is becoming increasingly difficult to meet these differentials, particularly in a time of reduced state support for higher education. This has become especially problematic with public institutions located in Colorado, Utah, and Washington. If we increase the support fees to meet these differentials, then the incentives to enroll WICHE PSEP students at other institutions where the differentials are much lower are too generous.

This has prompted WICHE staff to explore a different model for setting support fees. The most straightforward possibility would be to have the institution credit the support fee to the student’s full nonresident tuition and have the student pay the balance. This is already done at WICHE’s cooperating private programs and by some pharmacy programs at public institutions. The effects of such a policy at the current rates would vary, depending on the field. Occupational therapy and physician assistant students would pay slightly more. Students studying dentistry, allopathic medicine, physical therapy, and veterinary medicine would pay slightly less, on average, than under the current model. Students studying osteopathic medicine, optometry, and podiatry would not be affected because WICHE is only working with private institutions in those fields. Pharmacy students enrolling at public institutions that have generously written off the unmet differential with the support fee could be worse off. It will also be important to examine the number of students adversely affected, not just the averages.

To best inform our discussions, staff is working with certifying officers who are also coordinating with their state higher education offices. Staff will also work with representatives from the enrolling programs at our cooperating institutions. And finally, staff discussed their support fees–setting methods with staff of the Southern Regional Education Board, which operates a similar program.

Ultimately, the new proposed model must be simple, with standard fee rates by field (no variation between institutions in the same field), and easy for states to budget on a biennial basis. Commissioners may also want to consider some fee adjustments (either lowering the fee or slightly increasing the fee) to come to a more standardized coverage rate for students across the professions. Staff will keep commissioners apprised of their discussions and will present a discussion item at the May 2011 meeting.