Monday, November 8, 2010

3.30 - 5.00 pm
SHEPC Conference Room
Suite 225

Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Robert Burns (SD), chair
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA), vice chair
Thomas Buchanan (WY), ex officio

Susan Anderson (AK)
David Lorenz (AZ)
Appointment pending (CA)
D. Rico Munn (CO)
Steven Wheelwright (HI)
M. Duane Nellis (ID)
Kim Gillan (MT)
William Goetz (ND)
Viola Florez (NM)
Jane Nichols (NV)
Ryan Deckert (OR)
Committee chair (SD)
William Sederburg (UT)
Committee vice chair (WA)
Deborah Hammons (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Robert Burns (SD), chair

Staff: Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis
Brian Prescott, director of policy research
Cheryl Graves, administrative assistant
Carl Krueger, project coordinator
Patrick Lane, project coordinator
Brandi Van Horn, research analyst

Action Item

Approval of the Issue Analysis and Research Committee meeting minutes of May 17, 2010 8-3

Information Items:
Update on the National Research and Development Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment grant proposal 8-7

Update on the Adult Degree Completion Program Network grant 8-9
ACTION ITEM
Issue Analysis and Research Committee Minutes
Monday, May 17, 2010

Committee Members Present
Robert Burns (SD), chair
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA), vice chair
Viola Florez (NM)
Dan Harrington (MT)
David Lorenz (AZ)
William Sederburg (UT)
Ryan Deckert (OR)
Patricia Brown Heller (AK)
D. Rico Munn (CO)
William Goetz (ND)
Deborah Hammons (WY)

Committee Members Absent
Steven Wheelwright (HI)
Arthur Vailas (ID)
Jane Nichols (NV)

Staff Present
Brian Prescott, director of policy research, Policy Analysis and Research
Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis, Policy Analysis and Research
Brandi Van Horn, research analyst, Policy Analysis and Research

Chair Burns convened the Issue Analysis and Research Committee on May 17, 2010, and a quorum was established.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of the Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting Minutes of November 2, 2009

Chair Burns asked members to review and approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Commissioner Heller motioned TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 2, 2009, ISSUE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING. Commissioner Lorenz seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously by the committee.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of a New Project: Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange

Prescott provided an overview of a new project, Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange. The project is a multistate data exchange that will connect K-12, postsecondary, education, and workforce data systems in the following four states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Hawaii. The project will be funded at approximately $1.5 million over three years by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Commissioner Heller asked if the grant was competitive, and Prescott’s response was that there was no RFP issued for the project. Chair Burns asked if Hawaii’s data was unique in comparison to the rest of the Western states. Prescott stated the Hawaii is like the other states already involved with connecting their K-12 and higher education data systems. Prescott also mentioned that the unit’s goal is to provide a road map for the nation on how to do this sort of data exchange. Prescott and other project members will be looking for additional states to involve as the project moves forward.

Commissioner Goetz moved TO APPROVE THE NEW PROJECT. Commissioner Deckert seconded the motion. The project was approved unanimously.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of a New Project: Serving Student Soldiers of the West – Policy and Practice Solutions

Michelau introduced a new project titled Serving Student Soldiers of the West – Policy and Practice Solutions. She explained that the unit would like to engage in a project to increase access to higher education for military personnel and their families, with a focus on the West. The project would be funded at about $1 million over three years, and she is currently considering Lumina Foundation and the Wal-Mart Foundation as potential funders. Michelau stated that the unit plans to collaborate with other organizations that have expertise in this area, such as the Service
Members Opportunity Colleges and the American Council on Education (ACE). A critical aspect of those partnerships would be the formation of an advisory board. Michelau mentioned that there is a lot of room for more discussion regarding the project and sought permission from the committee to seek funding for the project.

Vice Chair Kohl-Welles asked if seeking funding from Wal-Mart would be controversial and politically sensitive and asked if the unit considered any other funding options. Michelau explained that Wal-Mart has funded other educational organizations in the past, which is why it was considered. She also asked if obtaining funding from Wal-Mart would be problematic for the commission. No one stated that receiving funding from this foundation would present a problem for the commission.

Commissioner Sederburg mentioned that it would behoove the unit to incorporate the academic pathway movement and military training into this project; also, there is some overlap between the military’s standardized tests and the ACT/SAT tests. Michelau indicated that collaborating with organizations such as ACE would assist the unit in addressing some of the issues surrounding standardized testing and transfer credit. ACE has considerable expertise and experience in transcript evaluation for military personnel. A unified approach is important when looking at state-level policy because of the variation in coursework policies by institution and military branch.

Commissioner Florez said she and her colleagues have been working in New Mexico for quite some time to determine how to align military credentials. The legislature has extended eligibility for the state’s financial aid program to military personnel returning from duty. New Mexico has sites on all its campuses that work with military personnel. She expressed support for the project.

Commissioner Lorenz asked if the study will only examine military personnel or if it will include the family members too. Michelau responded that she would like to include family members in the study; however, this will be contingent upon funding.

Commissioner Hammons asked if the unit could support staff salary increases with funding from grants. Prescott responded that they typically try to build an increase of 3 to 4 percent into any grant proposal. Michelau reported that even when the unit has soft money from grants, Longanecker has resisted offering salary increases to individuals who are funded by grants.

Chair Burns asked if there is any potential for funding from the U.S. Department of Defense or similar organizations for this project. Michelau stated that the unit will look to those agencies for funding.

Commissioner Sederburg questioned whether the committee should approve the $1 million amount, given that the project’s budget and activities are not fully developed, rather than simply giving the Policy unit authority to seek funding for a project. Prescott said they believed the committee would want to have some sense of the fiscal scope of the activity and what kind of impact it would have on organizational and staff resources. Vice Chair Kohl-Welles agreed, and suggested that the action item be amended to make it clear that the $1 million is just approximate at this point.

Commissioner Kohl-Welles moved TO APPROVE THE NEW PROJECT, GRANTING AUTHORITY TO SEEK APPROXIMATELY $1 MILLION IN FUNDING OVER THREE YEARS. Commissioner Sederburg seconded the motion. The project was approved unanimously.

**ACTION ITEM**
**Approval of Issue Analysis and Research Activities in the 2011 Workplan**

Prescott stated that most of the items in the workplan should be familiar to the commissioners. Michelau mentioned that the unit has been working on the Non-traditional No More project for about three years. Additionally, the unit has submitted a preproposal to Lumina Foundation for a program to increase adult degree completion. The unit has yet to be invited to submit a full proposal. Michelau stated that the unit will build upon the work done in the Non-traditional No More project and will seek additional funding beyond Lumina Foundation if needed.

Prescott mentioned that the Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF) evaluation is basically complete. He chose to leave the project on the workplan until all events associated with it have concluded, including a forthcoming publication in Change magazine, which is a condensed version of the COF report, and a COF presentation at a financial aid research meeting.
Michelau stated that the upcoming Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting will be held on October 5-6, and that Policy expects good participation. There are states with LAC vacancies, and she will be contacting the commissioners to get those positions filled.

Commissioner Sederburg asked if Michelau and Prescott had a sense of how much WICHE is impacting the states. He asked how many other states are using WICHE data and information. Prescott stated that it depends on the extent to which a state views WICHE as a resource to do things that are outside their routine. For example, the unit worked with Colorado and its COF program. And Hawaii has approached the Policy unit to do some work with data systems. Michelau mentioned that if commissioners know that WICHE staff is working in certain areas, staff can often work commissioners’ projects or ideas into the unit’s grant proposals as well. Commissioner Sederburg asked what instigates the unit’s projects. Prescott said that the unit’s work is typically guided by the commissioners via the workplan and from individual states with specific needs. The Policy unit would be open to exploring ways to respond to the interest of a commissioner if they felt the unit would be well-positioned to provide valuable assistance to the commissioner’s state.

In discussing items that are “on the horizon,” Michelau mentioned that residency policies have been on the workplan for the last five years. The unit tried to get funding to do a study in all 50 states (including with Lumina) but hasn’t been able to get a grant. She asked the commissioners how to handle this issue. Commissioner Sederburg stated that the project would be a really low priority. Commissioner Lorenz added that it sounds like the unit’s plate is pretty full already and he was not sure there would be added value from such a project. Michelau stated that the commissioners could remove the item or leave it on. Commissioner Sederburg asked how many people are in the unit and wondered whether the unit should focus on only a few important items. Prescott mentioned that the “on the horizon” items are brainstorming ideas for potential projects. Michelau stated that some of the work regarding residency policies might be captured in other projects and that it might not make sense for it to remain a standalone project. Commissioner Munn asked what was meant by “residency policies”; if they were policies impacting undocumented students, he was reluctant to remove the item, as it would relevant to the Western states.

Commissioner Deckert moved TO APPROVE THE WORKPLAN UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION FOR EXISTING ITEMS, NEW DIRECTION ITEMS, AND ITEMS ON THE HORIZON, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE “RESIDENCY POLICIES” ITEM. Commissioner Lorenz seconded the motion. The project was approved with 10 in favor and one opposed.

Information and Discussion Items

Prescott described the High School Graduate Projections methods review project, which had already been approved. The unit is considering whether the existing methodology is appropriate and exploring ways to more effectively make the data available to constituents. The unit was under the impression from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that it was interested in providing funding, but ultimately Gates’ interest was only in funding the data systems project. The unit would move forward with the project using funding already committed by ACT and College Board. The next edition is being planned for the year 2013.

Prescott also described another initiative: A Statement of Common Purpose, in which the Council of Chief State School Officers and State Higher Education Executive Officers would collaborate with other organizations to develop model data standards for K-12 and postsecondary education. Chair Burns asked if the project would address issues such as how to define high school graduation rates. Prescott stated that the project is more about standardizing data elements (i.e., what is a remedial course?).

Next, Prescott reminded the committee that at the previous commission meeting, there was a discussion about the unit’s data resources (the Fact Book, Benchmarks, and Tuition & Fees publications) and the extent to which they remained useful. The unit plans to streamline the Fact Book, ensure the Benchmark’s figures are useful, and streamline the Tuition & Fees report by dramatically reducing the number of tables and weighting the tuition figures by enrollment. Prescott invited the committee to comment on the unit’s plans and review a survey associated with the review. Prescott also mentioned that he has been involved in discussions with Patrick Kelly at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) about their respective data resources. He proposed that WICHE and NCHEMS consider creating a data resource that might be cobranded.

With regard to the Center for Urban Education (CUE) Equity Project, Prescott mentioned that the unit has a subcontract with CUE, which has a grant from the Ford Foundation to support the project. The project examines how
state-level policies impact underrepresented students, using tools created by CUE. Prescott mentioned that there is an affiliates’ program associated with the project and invited the commissioners to provide him with names of early-career policy professionals who might be interested in participating in the project.

Prescott mentioned that as a member of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, an advisory board for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection within the National Center for Education Statistics, he is aware that there’s interest in looking at whether the IPEDS Human Resource Survey is providing useful information. He invited the committee members to inform him if this resource is beneficial to them.

Finally, Michelau briefed the committee on the Statewide Articulation and Transfer project. She mentioned that Lumina Foundation would like to have a meeting regarding the project next year and that it is interested in determining the effectiveness of Web portals. She solicited feedback on the types of next steps that would be appropriate in this area.

Chair Burns adjourned the meeting.
INFORMATION ITEM

Proposed Project:
Partner in National Research and Development Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment

During the August 2010 Executive Committee conference call, the Policy unit presented an action item that would allow WICHE to partner with the University of Pennsylvania to develop the National Research and Development Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment, in response to a request for proposals from the U.S. Department of Education. The Executive Committee voted approval to seek, receive, and expend funds to support WICHE as the administrator and fiscal agent for the National Data Exchange, an activity to be conducted in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania’s Learning Alliance, NCHEMS, and SHEEO. The proposal was submitted in September 2010 and awards are expected to be announced in January. The following is a description of the proposed project, its relationship to WICHE’s mission, staff impact, and other relevant details.

Project Description

WICHE proposes to build upon its work in developing statewide database networks – particularly its continuing work in developing a four-state pilot multistate data networks for sharing elementary/secondary, postsecondary, and workforce data across state lines – by competing for the U.S. Department of Education’s proposed National Research and Development Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment. WICHE would partner in this effort with the Learning Alliance at the University of Pennsylvania, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) organization. Collectively, these four partners would create, maintain, and nurture a national postsecondary education and employment exchange. This entity, much like the four-state pilot currently underway, would allow all states to share data amongst themselves; but equally important it would allow the research community to examine issues from a state, regional, and national perspective.

Relationship to WICHE Mission

The program directly supports WICHE’s mission to expand educational access and excellence in the West by growing the research capability of WICHE and of other Western researchers into those factors that contribute to expanding access and excellence in the West. This project would expand WICHE’s leadership in the database management arena beyond the work we have accomplished to date under prior and current grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Background

In 2007 the Western SHEEOs, at the regional breakfast meeting held that summer in conjunction with the annual SHEEO meeting, suggested that it would be of value to them if WICHE were able to help coordinate and inform the rapidly emerging interest in the development of state student unit databases. Up to that point, most of the attention at the federal level had been focused on the development of stronger state databases for elementary and secondary education. But a number of Western states had begun collaborations between elementary/secondary education and postsecondary education. Indeed, a number of the SHEEOs indicated strong interest within their states in also including data that would follow students into the workforce. At that time there was very little national or federal discussion of databases that were this inclusive; but the Western SHEEOs were unanimous in their support of including workforce data in any efforts that WICHE pursued.

In late 2008 WICHE received a grant from the Gates Foundation to support a collaborative regional effort consistent with the SHEEOs’ interest. In December 2008 WICHE convened a meeting, inviting the individuals from the 15 WICHE states who were responsible for all three levels of data aggregation: elementary/secondary, postsecondary, and employment. Fourteen states participated, and though not all states were fully represented for all three areas, most were. The meeting provided useful information to the states on such issues as privacy requirements, data element alignment, and database governance. One recommendation coming out of the meetings was that WICHE seek funding to explore the possibility of interstate data sharing because the significant interstate mobility of the U.S. population, particularly between contiguous states, limited the utility of discrete state-by-state databases in informing
public policy. All 15 states expressed some level of interest in participating in such an project, but WICHE felt it would be better to begin with a pilot effort, and selected four states (Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington), three of them contiguous, to partner in an initial proposed pilot interstate data exchange. WICHE also explored including the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) as a partner in this project because of NSCRC’s exceptional experience and capacity in database management and data storage. Working with the four states and NSCRC, WICHE developed a proposal for the Gates Foundation, for which WICHE received approval and funding in June 2010. These Gates-funded efforts provide the base for WICHE’s partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, NCHEMS, and SHEEO on this proposal to establish a National Data Exchange.

**Staff and Fiscal Impact**

The proposed National Data Exchange would be one of four components within the National Research and Development Center on Postsecondary Education and Employment. We sought funding of approximately $500,000 per year for a five-year grant period, which would represent approximately 25 percent of the overall funding requested from the federal government for the center. The remaining 75 percent would support the other components of the center, which would include replicating the National Employer Survey, a national network for early identification of employment trends and employer needs, and a technical assistance component to infuse evidence-based practice into the alignment of higher education practice and employment needs. WICHE, as the fiscal agent and operational manager for the National Data Exchange, would garner support for a portion of the salaries and benefits of three current employees and one new employee (totaling 1.2 FTE per year). This presumes that the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center becomes the data repository and provides the matching and de-identification of data for the various state databases. If this does not occur and some or all of these functions are picked up by WICHE, the staff and fiscal resources to WICHE would be substantially larger. WICHE would be fully remunerated for all services provided to this project; thus, no in-kind contribution from WICHE would be required.
media release

WICHE Awarded a Lumina Foundation Grant to Develop a Learning Network Designed to Help Adults Complete College Degrees

Commitment Focuses on Creating a Learning Network to Share Successful Strategies

Boulder, Colorado — As part of a new nationwide effort, Lumina Foundation for Education has awarded the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) a four-year grant to develop a learning network to support Lumina’s Adult Degree Completion strategy. The network will be made up of regional organizations, state agencies, city programs, nonprofit organizations and others working to help those adults who have earned a significant number of college credits but left postsecondary education before finishing return to complete their degrees.

Thirty-seven million Americans between the ages of 25 and 64 have earned some college credits in their effort toward a degree or credential but, for a variety of reasons, have not successfully completed their higher education. While the U.S. job market once eagerly found places for these workers, the “Great Recession” has destroyed that security, yet future workforce needs will require even more degreed employees.

“There is growing evidence that adults who have gone to college but not received a degree are looking for a second chance but need the right kind of information and motivation to help them succeed,” says Lumina President/CEO Jamie Merisotis. “This vital work aligns directly with our goal to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees or credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Given demographic trends and attainment rates among young adults, it is highly unlikely that the nation can meet its growing need for college-educated workers only by focusing on recent high school graduates.”

Specifically, the network will serve as a mechanism for effective networking, communication, and dissemination of information about successful adult degree completion strategies. It will include an interactive Website; meetings/conferences; Webinars to highlight effective strategies for serving adults; policy briefs and reports on lessons learned; a repository of higher education policies related to adult learners; a listserv to expedite network communications; presentations at regional and national meetings; the use of social and communications media to engage grantees and other stakeholders in relevant discussions; and other activities to be determined once the network is operational.
“With many exciting programs now serving this population, there is a great need to disseminate innovative new strategies and ideas, particularly ideas for which there is evidence of success,” says WICHE President David Longanecker. “As we begin to look toward a recovery from the recession, the need to serve this population is greater than ever before. WICHE is looking forward to providing the forum in which these ideas are shared nationwide.”

WICHE’s grant is one of 19 announced today by Lumina. The new network will include these grantees, plus other states and organizations actively involved in this area, including five states (Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, North Dakota, and South Dakota) that previously worked closely with WICHE in its related effort, Non-Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners. Abstracts of all 19 grants are available at www.luminafoundation.org.

About WICHE and Lumina Foundation for Education

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (www.wiche.edu) and its 15 member states work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life. Our programs – Student Exchange, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, Policy Analysis and Research, and Mental Health – are working to find answers to some of the most critical questions facing higher education today. WICHE’s 15 member states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Lumina Foundation for Education (www.luminafoundation.org) is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college—especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change.

Contact
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DISCUSSION ITEM
Summary of FY 2011 Workplan Activities
Issue Analysis and Research Committee

Existing Activities

Adult degree completion strategy. WICHE will develop and manage a learning network to support Lumina’s Adult Degree Completion Program, composed of 11 “core” and five “affiliated” grants. The network will implement mechanisms for effective networking, communication, and dissemination of the Adult Degree Completion Program. Key components will include: 1) an interactive Website to serve as a resource for grantees and others working to increase adult degree completion; 2) meetings and conferences for grantees and others invited to participate in network activities; 3) Webinars to highlight effective strategies for serving adults; 4) policy briefs and reports on lessons learned; 5) a repository of higher education policies related to adult learners; 6) a listserv to expedite network communications; 7) presentations at regional/national meetings; 8) social and communications media use to engage grantees and other stakeholders in discussions about adult degree completion; and 9) activities to be determined once the network is operational, in consultation with Lumina (e.g., hosted “lab” visits to best-practice locations and leveraging activities with programs such as the College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network).

Annual Tuition and Fees report. WICHE’s Policy Analysis and Research unit annually produces a report detailing tuition and fees charges for every public institution in the West. The report includes charges for resident and nonresident graduate and undergraduate students in a number of tables, allowing easy comparisons and some historical information. The unit has made several changes over the years to ensure a higher quality of data and is always looking for ways to make the report more usable and effective. Currently, we are examining how we might contemporize the report to allow for the calculation of enrollment-weighted averages and also to make it available online.

Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners. With funding from Lumina Foundation for Education, Non-traditional No More is working with Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, North Dakota, and South Dakota to identify their “ready adult” population – those adults who are close to having enough credits to obtain a degree but have not yet returned to college. The project employs two strategies: identifying ready adults and building a path to college success. The first strategy is designed to help states and institutions identify their ready adults. This work includes mining state data systems and engaging partnerships with other public or private data system partners to identify each state’s ready adults. The second strategy focuses on academic policies, financial aid/financing, student support services, and communications (marketing and information strategies designed to reach out to the ready adult population).

Legislative Advisory Committee. WICHE created the Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) in 1995 to inform the WICHE Executive Committee and staff about significant legislative issues related to higher education; provide input on WICHE initiatives; and advise staff on program and participant considerations related to WICHE’s policy workshops. In addition, WICHE staff serves the LAC by informing members about emerging policy issues in the West. The LAC meets annually, and members are invited to various WICHE activities, such as regional and national policy forums.

State Policy Inventory Database Online. State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIIDO), the nation’s only online searchable database of higher education policies, provides state and national policymakers, education leaders, practitioners and education consumers with an inventory of state-level policies and resources in key policy issue areas related to access and success in higher education.

Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity methodology review and expansion. Knocking is widely used throughout the nation by postsecondary institutions, state agencies, legislatures, governor’s offices, K-12 schools, media, libraries, businesses, and others interested in the future size and composition of enrollment demand for higher education. In the wake of the most recent edition’s publication in March 2008, Policy Analysis and Research unit staff has made numerous presentations on its findings (and related demographic information) and continues to respond to media and other inquiries. The unit has also received commitments from its traditional partners, ACT and the College Board, to review the methodology to ensure that the projections continue to be based on the most appropriate data and estimation methods and to prepare the next edition of the publication.
College Access Challenge Grant Consortium and Network. The College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) is a federally funded formula grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. Earlier this year Congress passed the Student Financial Aid and Responsibility Act, which increased annual funding for the CACG program from $66 million to $150 million, boosted the minimum annual grant award to $1.5 million, and extended the program through FY 2014. States can participate through the consortium, which involves WICHE administering the state program, or through the network, which is a collaborative council composed of designated staff from each of the states. While the level of WICHE-related services differs, both options allow CACG states the opportunity to learn from each other, share best practices and lessons learned, and receive current, evidence-based research. The CACG Consortium is composed of Alaska and Wyoming, and the CACG Network is made up of Alaska, Nevada, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. States are still welcome to join either the consortium or network.


Association for the Study of Higher Education Institutes on Equity and Critical Policy Analysis. WICHE has partnered with the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California and the Association for the Study of Higher Education to assist in the development of an Institute on Equity Research Methods and Critical Policy Analysis. The institute expects to engage scholars and researchers on higher education in order to more appropriately and effectively frame the issues of educational inequities for public policy debates.

Education Equity and Postsecondary Student Success: A CUE and WICHE Partnership for Policy Research and Analysis. As subcontractor to CUE, WICHE will assist on this Ford Foundation–funded project aimed at helping states to employ CUE’s innovative approaches for making policies more intentionally equity-minded. WICHE’s responsibilities include: consulting with CUE on the overall direction of the project; gathering state-level data for populating CUE’s data tools; and organizing and leading an affiliates’ program of promising scholars and policy analysts. WICHE is currently analyzing data from the Nevada System of Higher Education to track student progress by race/ethnicity through a set of momentum points (i.e., successful remediation, 30 credits, 60 credits, transfer, etc.) and will use the findings to inform a conversation in Nevada about improving equitable outcomes.

Benchmarks: WICHE Region. This annual document tracks 15 indicators of progress toward improving access and success, affordability, and higher education finance from a regional perspective.

Electronic Fact Book: Policy Indicators for Higher Education. This online repository of data relevant to higher education policy is regularly updated. Its domains include access, affordability, demographics, economic indicators, faculty, finance, preparation, progression, and workforce. Data are provided at the state level for all WICHE states.

Policy Insights. Policy Insights is a short report series covering a wide array of timely higher education policy issues.

Electronic Policy Alerts and Stat Alerts. Policy Alerts and Stat Alerts are WICHE’s periodic e-mail notices of new policy and data-related reports.

Policy Publications Clearinghouse. The Policy unit maintains a database of policy publications in a continuing effort to serve as a clearinghouse for the WICHE states. The documents include studies, reports, surveys and policy briefs published by various research and public policy organizations.

New Directions

Technical assistance with state financial aid program design and funding (single-state support, as requested). The Policy Analysis and Research unit has become recognized as experts on the shared responsibility model for distributing need-based financial aid, as well as other state grant aid funding approaches. We occasionally
receive requests to assist states with rethinking their program design. Such projects are typically done on a contract basis, depending on how well they fit in with existing workload.

**Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity**

**methodology review and expansion.** The Policy Analysis and Research unit is seeking funding to conduct a review of the cohort survival ratio (CSR) methodology that the Knocking series has used to make projections throughout its 30-year history. Given changes in data and technology, it is prudent to examine whether there is a better, more accurate approach to making these projections. In addition, the current proposal includes an effort to expand the analyses to disaggregate by income and other useful characteristics and to contemporize the delivery of the projections through a dynamic, Web-based interface.

**Facilitating Development of a Multi-State Longitudinal Data Exchange.** With funding from the Gates Foundation, this project is working with states (initially, four are proposed – Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Hawaii) to collaborate on a data exchange that would enable states to track the production, stock, and flow of human capital at a regional level. Rather than losing track of individuals who move across state lines, this exchange would pioneer an interoperable data system capable of assessing education and workforce outcomes overall and for targeted groups – such as underrepresented student populations. WICHE will facilitate the creation of a workable design and a governance structure that provides the needed analytical capacity while assuring the protection of privacy.

**On the Horizon**

**Exploration of issues related to undocumented students.** WICHE staff will explore data, policies, and issues related to undocumented students, as this is an issue that is of interest and concern to policymakers and higher education leaders in the West.

**Research and analysis of outcome-based funding approaches.** Increasingly, states are recognizing that enrollment-based funding formulas do not create particularly powerful incentives for institutions to prioritize degree/certificate completion. A few states are making adjustments (or are considering doing so) in their financing strategies to reward institutions for retaining and graduating students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. The Policy Analysis and Research unit is interested in researching how such policies have impacted educational attainment, as data allow.

**Exploring strategies for improving the delivery of remedial and developmental education.** Remedial education is currently very expensive for states and institutions, and the results are unsatisfactory. WICHE intends to develop a project that would build on current emerging practices in the field to help states more effectively and efficiently target remedial education to students, particularly adult learners.

**Identifying the most effective college persistence and success projects and working to bring them to scale.** As the United States responds to the current economic crisis and the increased demand for a more educated workforce, many are looking to postsecondary education and training for solutions. For the last several years, multiple college access and success initiatives have been implemented at both state and institutional levels. The evidence from these initiatives strongly suggests that proactive interventions can substantially improve student success. Despite this, American higher education has been slow to adopt proven strategies. And as a result, educational attainment, as measured by degree completion, remains constrained. WICHE is seeking funding to launch a program that identifies the most effective – and cost-effective – college persistence and success projects and bring them to scale.

**Developing more effective Web portals.** WICHE and WCET are currently examining state Web portals designed to help students navigate the transfer process. Future work will build on this effort.

**Serving Student Soldiers of the West – Policy and Practice Solutions.** With many veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq, states and postsecondary institutions are faced with how to best serve them at a time of increased demand for higher education and tight fiscal times. WICHE is proposing a project that will work to increase access to and success in higher education for military students and their families in the Western region. Specifically, the project aims to increase the awareness of state and institutional policymakers about the demographics, needs, and challenges of the military population in higher education; identify state and institutional policies that create barriers to or enhance access and success for military students and their families; and assist states and institutions in developing clear, seamless degree pathways for military personnel, veterans, and their families.
**Policy and Mental Health collaboration on recidivism reduction in the prison population.** State corrections policy has endured significant changes in the past 25 years. Historically, it was based on a belief that those who are incarcerated should be rehabilitated if possible. But the 1980s brought a significant shift in philosophy to one that focused more on punishment than on rehabilitation. State policymakers heeded the call to be “tough on crime” and passed much more punitive legislation, including mandatory sentencing and “three strikes, you’re out” laws, which over time has resulted in increased pressure on state budgets. In 2001, however, there was yet another shift in public opinion. The 9/11 attacks propelled terrorism onto the forefront of the public’s mind. *Public Agenda* reports that in 2006, 80 percent of Americans felt that defending the U.S. against terrorism should be a top priority for Congress, while 62 percent felt that reducing crime should be. With corrections taking a larger share of state budgets and the public no longer focused as much on crime, the time might be right for state policymakers to revisit their stance on the issue. WICHE is exploring a project related to reducing recidivism through higher education in an effort to develop more effective and sustainable policy resulting in reduced pressure on state budgets, less crime, and in some cases, maybe even economic development strategies.

**Workforce credentialing systems.** ACT has been pushing a National Workforce Readiness Certificate based on its WorkKeys assessments (and there exist similar initiatives). The Policy Analysis and Research unit has been trying to stay abreast of such developments and would be interested in helping states forge stronger ties between postsecondary education and the business community (through the development of a common language surrounding competency that this activity helps promote) and in conducting research on the efficacy of such efforts.

**Forging collaborations between Western higher education agencies and institutions and state departments of labor and workforce development.** The Policy Analysis and Research unit recently wrapped up the Ford Foundation–funded project called *Escalating Engagement*, which in part focused on highlighting higher education’s workforce development mission. It also sought to help states strengthen the connection between the activities of their higher education institutions and their workforce development training programs. We hope to build upon that body of work by proposing a new project that more explicitly focuses on how state workforce needs can be met specifically through better service to racial/ethnic minorities and other underrepresented populations. It is apparent that, in many states, failure to adequately prepare these fast-growing populations in high-demand fields (not just get them a degree) could severely impair their economic prosperity in the long run. At the same time, the fast-growing, traditionally underrepresented populations present an opportunity to meet those workforce demands, if only states could find scalable models of particular effectiveness. Additionally, there are too few resources available to states to help them understand not only how to dismantle silos related to workforce development and higher education but also how state-level and federal policies related to the two areas can be made complementary. The Policy Analysis and Research unit is interested in pursuing the capacity to build upon its expertise in these areas as part of a project targeting underrepresented populations.

**Expanding the Rocky Mountain Collaborative to Transform the Health Professions Workforce initiative.** Building off a successful meeting in April 2009 of representatives from six WICHE states, this effort is aimed at helping states expand the pipeline of underrepresented populations into health professions fields. Pending our ability to secure additional funding, WICHE would be interested in replicating the meeting, including lessons learned, in other member states.

**Assessing the landscape for state policy on student learning outcomes.** International benchmarking is an increasingly valuable source of information in a globally competitive marketplace, as shown by the visibility and perceived relevance of the educational attainment figures released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Likewise, the public is demanding to know what they are getting out of higher education in terms of learning outcomes. And with heightened attention to increasing graduation rates and numbers, concern has risen about whether such pressures could lead to reductions in the quality of education offered and received. While the current efforts to enhance state-level student record databases will provide much better information on the quantity of higher education’s output, these efforts will do little to address issues of quality. Yet it will be just as important for states, institutions, and students themselves to know whether students are learning what they need to know and what they must be able to do. The next wave of policy will almost certainly focus on issues of measuring and improving student learning.
Discussion Items:
Update on data resources review (Fact Book/Benchmarks/Tuition & Fees)

Collaboration with the National Governors Association and Lumina Foundation for Education to develop strategies for outreach to new governors

Progress toward FY2011 workplan (highlights): 8-11
• Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange
• Educational Equity and Postsecondary Student Success: A Center for Urban Education and WICHE Partnership for Policy Research and Analysis
• Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners
• College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Consortium and Network
• Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems
• State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) and Policy Publications Clearinghouse

Other business

Adjournment