Monday, November 12, 2012

11:00 am - noon  
Programs and Services Committee Meeting  
Douglas Ballroom

Patricia Sullivan (NM), chair  
Clayton Christian (MT), vice chair

Diane Barrans (AK)  
Tom Anderes (AZ)  
Dianne Harrison (CA)  
Dene Thomas (CO)  
Carol Mon Lee (HI)  
Mack Shirley (ID)  
Committee vice chair (MT)  
Joe Hardy (NV)  
Carl Shaff (NV)  
Committee chair (NM)  
Duaine Espegard (ND)  
Tim Nesbitt (OR)  
Jack Warner (SD)  
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)  
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)  
Karla Leach (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Patricia Sullivan, committee chair

Staff: Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services  
Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program  
Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE, Western Academic Leadership Forum, and Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

Approval of the Programs and Services Committee teleconference minutes of September 17, 2012 4-3

Information Items:

Updates on WICHE’s Student Exchange Program – Margo Colalancia 4-7

Programs and Services regional initiatives 4-10

Creating friction-free transfers through WICHE’s Interstate Passport Project – Pat Shea 4-13
Western state interest in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact/WICHE MHECare student health insurance initiative – Jere Mock

Discussion of suggested issues for future committee meetings

Other business

Adjournment
ACTION ITEM
Programs & Services Committee Teleconference Minutes
Monday, September 17, 2012

Committee Members Present
Patricia Sullivan (NM), chair
Clayton Christian (MT), vice chair
Diane Barrans (AK)
Tom Anderes (AZ)
Randy Reynaldo for Dianne Harrison (CA)
Dene Thomas (CO)
Carol Mon Lee (HI)
Joe Hardy (NV)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)

Committee Members Absent
Mack Shirley (ID)
Duaine Espegard (ND)
Tim Nesbitt (OR)
Jack Warner (SD)
Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (WA)
Karla Leach (WY)

Chair Sullivan called the teleconference of the Programs and Services Committee to order.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of the Programs and Services Committee Minutes of May 21, 2012

Commissioner Diane Barrans moved TO HAVE A SUBSEQUENT VOTE BY E-MAIL TO APPROVE THE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MAY 21, 2012, MEETING IF A QUORUM WAS NOT REACHED DURING THE TELECONFERENCE. Commissioner Clayton Christian seconded the motion. Shortly thereafter, a quorum was reached, and Commissioner Dene Thomas motioned TO APPROVE THE MAY 21, 2012, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES. Commissioner Barrans seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Western Undergraduate Exchange Capacity Survey
Margo Colalancia reported on the highlights of the survey of Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) institutions, to which 112 out of 150 institutions responded. The majority of institutions (72 percent) planned to offer approximately the same number of WUE seats in AY 2012; 27 institutions planned to increase their participation and three planned to decrease their participation. California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington are the most popular states for WUE recruitment. The majority of institutions (72 percent) make all their majors available at the WUE rate, and 24 percent make most of their majors available. Some of the most commonly excluded programs include nursing, kinesiology, psychology, dental hygiene, radiology, business, digital filmmaking, biology, national park ranger, and American Sign Language. Twenty-one percent of institutions use WUE as a merit scholarship. Most WUE institutions offer the WUE rate to transfer students (89 percent). Fifty-six percent of WUE institutions automatically give the discounted rate to applicants from a WICHE state.

Institutions like WUE because they can attract high-caliber students, maximize their student housing capacity, increase student diversity, and give students an affordable education in their major, which is especially important when the program is not offered in the student’s home state.

A new logo has been created for WUE, along with table tents for participating institutions to display at college fairs. The WUE website has added some features, including tuition savings information, links to institutions’ net price calculators, and institutions’ links to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Chair Sullivan asked if WUE could help the

Staff Present
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program
Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE, Western Academic Leadership Forum, and Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders
WICHE Internet Course Exchange (ICE) to promote its programs. Colalancia said that she will check with some WUE institutions that have online offerings to see if their entire major is offered online or if they are just offering individual courses that may not constitute a full degree.

WICHE staff and representatives of the other regional student exchange programs – offered by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, New England Board of Higher Education, and Southern Regional Educational Board – will share an exhibit booth and give a presentation at the upcoming National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) conference in Denver on October 4–6, expected to attract 5,000 participants. Colalancia added that Brian Prescott, WICHE’s director of policy research, will present some preliminary findings at NACAC from the Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates publication (scheduled for release in January 2013); Prescott was recently appointed as a new NACAC board member.

Student Exchange Program Update
Colalancia gave a few updates on the Student Exchange Program. WUE and the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) enrollment tracking will start soon; staff should have some preliminary AY 2012 enrollment numbers for WICHE commissioners in November. WICHE is now accepting nominations for new WRGP programs at the master’s, doctorate, and graduate certificate levels. Program distinctiveness is not required for healthcare related fields. Cutting-edge programs, including professional science master’s, are encouraged to apply. Programs in green building, nanotechnology, emerging media, biotechnology, and biomedicine are all sought-after fields. The submission deadline for new program nominations is November 2, 2012.

There are approximately 665 students enrolled in professional healthcare programs through WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) for AY 2012; this represents a state investment of more than $141.1 million. Enrollment through PSEP has dropped, and much of this can be attributed to the scarcity of state resources to support new students. Idaho and Washington have not been able to support any new students since 2009. Hawai’i has opened its own public pharmacy school in Hilo, and Utah is opening a “2+2” veterinary program at Utah State University in partnership with Washington State University. As a result both states have ceased funding for new PSEP students in those fields. PSEP’s largest program is still veterinary medicine (198 students), followed by optometry (129 students) and dentistry (114 students).

Chair Sullivan said that New Mexico requires its PSEP graduates to return to the state and practice in exchange for the reduced tuition. There is a shortage of large animal veterinarians, but there are very few positions open because of the poor economy and the drought. She recently received a call from a veterinary medicine graduate who is having trouble finding employment in New Mexico and wondered if other WICHE states were experiencing this problem. Colalancia said this was not uncommon. Furthermore, veterinary medicine students carry high debt loads (an average of $140,000 or more) and often end up in small animal practice in urban areas to finance their debt and pay it off faster. Colalancia said she would poll the other states that support in veterinary medicine to see if this is a problem for them and what they’re doing to help their PSEP graduates until they can find work in their home state. She will report at the next meeting. Mock suggested extending the payback period could be one option. Chair Sullivan said that New Mexico is considering the options and will let the committee know the outcome.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement
Last November the WICHE Commission authorized staff to begin developing a reciprocity agreement for the WICHE states to make it easier for accredited institutions delivering distance education in states beyond their home state to gain state authorization in other states where they are providing education services. A WICHE State Authorization Steering Committee was formed and has met four times since last February. During the committee’s final meeting on September 5, they suggested a few more recommendations that will be incorporated into the final draft of the reciprocity agreement, which will be presented to the commission in November for approval in concept. The Council of State Governments (CSG) and the Presidents’ Forum have also developed a model reciprocity agreement with funding from Lumina Foundation. CSG and President’s Forum representatives participated in several of the steering committee meetings and have indicated support for WICHE’s draft agreement, going forward, as have the presidents of the three other regional higher education compacts. The other compacts will use WICHE’s draft agreement as a model as they seek their commissions’ endorsement of the agreement. This approach will foster interregional reciprocity and enable states and institutions to participate on a voluntary basis to gain reciprocity nationwide.

Another group involved in this issue is the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education. This commission was created by the Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) last May. WICHE Commissioner and Colorado Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia serves on
the commission, along with other state policymakers and institutional and higher education organization leaders. The commission is developing a report and recommendations on state authorization issues and has indicated initial support of WICHE’s draft reciprocity agreement. WICHE will submit a proposal for a three-year grant to Lumina Foundation, requesting support to cover the staffing and administrative costs of all four regional higher education organizations and a nationwide coordinating board. WICHE would be fiscal agent. Mock said she and David Longanecker recently gave a presentation on the draft WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement to the WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee. The participating legislators are pleased with the progress to date and endorsed the approach. The list of Legislative Advisory Committee members will be sent to the Programs and Services committee members.

Next Generation Learning Challenge Competition

The North American Network for Science Labs Online (NANSLO) was one of 29 projects funded in the Next Generation Learning Challenge (NGLC) Wave I competition. Pat Shea said staff and other NANSLO partners participated in a panel presentation on this collaborative project, for which WICHE is the managing partner and fiscal agent, at the May commission meeting. Many more students at the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) have utilized the online labs since that time. During the summer term, remote labs were required, instead of being a voluntary option for students, as they were in the spring. The partner organizations have learned a lot from that experience and will be incorporating changes into the procedures based on faculty feedback and lab reports from students. On September 10 another proposal was submitted to NGLC, requesting a grant of $1.4 million. Only winners of Wave I funding could apply for follow-on funding. Approximately $5 million is available, and two to three big awards are expected to be announced in late September. If funding is received, NANSLO will: 1) develop labs for second semester courses in biology, chemistry, and physics; 2) establish a technical development and training lab; 3) create a software application to help students more easily access remote lab equipment over the Internet; 4) create a faculty demo lab where faculty can explore the use of remote labs; 5) conduct a research project to determine best practices in teaching science labs online and produce a set of guidelines for faculty and instructional designers; and 6) further develop and implement business practices to establish the network where member institutions can share access to the labs.

During the May presentation, some commissioners expressed interest in letting their institutions know more about how remote labs work. Shea said videos are now available on the NANSLO website (www.wiche.edu/NANSLO) that explain how three experiments are done using remote equipment accessed over the Internet.

Other Business

Commissioner Joe Hardy asked about the availability of postgraduate medical education opportunities in the West. Montana and Nevada have expressed concern about a shortage of rural slots for practicums and internships. He said Tamara DeHay, of WICHE’s Mental Health Program, gave a presentation at the recent Legislative Advisory Committee meeting regarding postdoctorate psychology internships in Alaska. Staff is trying to replicate the internship model in Hawai‘i. Mock and Colalancia will meet with Dennis Mohatt and DeHay regarding the internship approach and see how it could apply to WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program.

Chair Sullivan asked about how the Western Undergraduate Exchange might help states address workforce shortages. Some geographical areas can’t attract employees in certain disciplines, while others have too many trained workers who cannot find jobs. Policymakers and institutional leaders also need to know what industries will have jobs for graduates in the future. Mock said this relates to the need to work with staff in the state higher education system offices to identify needs for new academic programs and to foster closer coordination with staff of state and federal labor and workforce departments. She said staff will explore how they can keep system and institutional representatives better informed about the availability of existing academic programs in other states and share information on emerging workforce needs across the region. She said staff will give more thought to how to proceed on workforce issues. She also said that the WUE enrollment reports can be used to see what states and programs a state’s students are migrating to.

Shea talked about the Consortium for Healthcare Education Online (CHEO), which will be established if funding is approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. (CHEO was an action item at the May commission meeting.) Eight partner institutions in five WICHE states (Alaska, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming) will develop and openly license new online and hybrid courses in allied health leading to stackable certificates. Shea also mentioned that UCLA’s Career Empowerment Program, which provides career assessments and personalized guidance to help students achieve their individual career goals, might be an interesting model to explore. Sullivan commented that four-year institutions are being asked to work more closely with industry and government agencies to address the
issue of global competitiveness, healthcare needs, and critical infrastructure. She said community colleges are already recognized for being adept at meeting regional workforce needs.

Commissioner Thomas said Fort Lewis College has secured science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) grants to address this, but it’s difficult to get data on what students are doing once they graduate from these fields. Commissioner Anderes said Arizona is trying to build a very clear set of directions of where it wants to go with its array of bachelor’s degrees. They are putting emphasis on STEM fields and examining how those programs are funded. They are looking closely at what the state is expecting regarding jobs up to 2020.

Shea requested information regarding any online programs or courses for social work or Native American studies being offered by institutions with which the committee members are associated. New Mexico State University has a distance-offered master’s in social work. Chair Sullivan will send information to Shea.

The meeting was adjourned.
INFORMATION ITEM
Student Exchange Program 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 24 years and is the largest program of its kind in the nation. The program continues to thrive: in 2011-12, more than 29,000 WUE students and their families saved some $223.8 million in tuition costs. Students can choose from some 150 participating WUE institutions. Each academic year institutions report their WUE enrollments through October. WICHE staff will have estimates of the current enrollments at the November 2012 commission meeting.

In October WICHE staff gave a presentation on WUE at the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) conference in Denver. WICHE also participated in a WUE college fair in Southern California in mid October. Staff members are seeking additional media exposure for the program. WUE was written up in the *L.A. Times* in April 2012 (http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/22/local/la-me-tuition-discount-20120422).

WICHE staff members continue to work with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office staff to find a way for underenrolled California community colleges to participate in WUE. Feather River College and Lassen Community College were among those interested. Brice Harris recently was appointed the new system chancellor.

During the September 2012 precommission meeting conference call with members of the Programs and Services Committee, WICHE staff presented the results of the spring 2012 Survey of WUE Institutions (see conference call minutes at the beginning of this section for details). If commissioners would like more details about the survey results, Margo Colalancia can provide a copy of the write-up. Programs and Services Committee members asked if WUE might be used as a mechanism to help WICHE states prepare students in specific disciplines targeted to the states' workforce needs. WICHE staff will begin by surveying chief academic officers in the region to get their priority list of high-demand disciplines and match them with programs currently offered by WUE institutions at the discounted rate. From there, WICHE staff will try to identify existing programs with capacity and the gaps.

Commissioners also asked about the program’s most popular majors. Fall 2011’s WUE headcount showed that the top WUE majors are well-aligned with some of the West’s most crucial workforce needs. They are in healthcare, the biological and biomedical sciences, engineering, and business.

Healthcare majors that WUE students are studying include: nursing, the allied health professions (such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, radiology, respiratory therapy, nuclear medical technology, audiology, and clinical laboratory science), dental hygiene, healthcare administration, and healthcare information technology. Students are also using WUE to complete their undergraduate degrees to advance to the professional level; many are majoring in premed, predentistry, prepharmacy, and preveterinary studies. Biological and biomedical science majors targeted by WUE students include biochemistry, biotechnology, genetics, microbiology, botany, zoology, and marine biology.

Engineering majors of interest to WUE students include specialties in biomedical, chemical, civil, computer, electrical, mechanical, mining and mineral, nuclear, petroleum, industrial, geological and geophysical, and electrical engineering.

Business majors that are drawing WUE students include: accounting, business administration and management, finance, hospitality and hotel administration, human resource management, construction management, and international business.

Other majors at the top of WUE students’ lists are in the areas of: education; the social sciences; visual and performing arts; psychology; parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies; and communication and journalism.

Detailed WUE enrollment reports are available on WICHE’s website, and custom CIP-code-based reports are also available by request to WICHE commissioners, state higher education officers, and enrollment planners of participating institutions. These reports show where WUE students are enrolling (by state) and which programs of study they are seeking. The reports can help stakeholders make WUE work for their institutions and their state. If you
would like more detail on which out-of-state programs your state’s residents seek through WUE and which programs in your state attract the most WUE students from out of state, please contact Margo Colalancia for custom reports.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** WICHE is accepting nominations for new Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) programs. WRGP allows master’s, graduate certificate, and doctoral students who are residents of the 15 participating states to enroll in 275 high-quality programs at 51 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2011 more than 850 students enrolled through WRGP and saved an estimated $11.5 million in tuition. Enrollments continue to increase, and a growing number of programs are now offered fully or partially online.

Graduate deans and provosts at all public institutions in the WICHE region have been notified of the deadline and submission process. WICHE is particularly interested adding programs in healthcare (for fields not available through WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program); health information technology; professional science master’s; graduate certificate programs in emerging fields; microtechnology and nanotechnology; green building and building energy conservation; emerging media and communications; biotechnology and bioinformatics; computer and cyber security; alternative energy technology; and homeland security.

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). Given the tremendous needs in the healthcare workforce, healthcare-related programs are not subject to the distinctiveness criteria but must be of high quality.

WRGP is 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. WRGP now includes 80 some healthcare-related programs, including those in graduate nursing, public health, mental health and psychology, audiology and speech pathology, biomedical informatics, and doctoral studies in occupational therapy.

Participating programs have found WRGP to be an invaluable recruitment tool and an effective resource in diversifying their student pool. Participating programs can choose to limit the number of WRGP awards each academic year to ensure that their participation in WRGP is feasible over the long term. Application forms and nomination information are available on the WRGP website (www.wiche.edu/wrgp). WICHE staff encourages WICHE commissioners to spread the word to any graduate programs that might be interested.

**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 2012-13 academic year, approximately 665 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling $14,143,841. The economic recession continues to adversely affect the number of students supported through PSEP, despite the continued high need for healthcare professionals. Compared to 2011-12, numbers have dropped; staff will have exact participation numbers at the commission meeting, once all contract changes have been processed. States are supporting fewer students because their resources are scarce, but other factors have contributed to the drop in the number of PSEP students as well. Idaho and Washington have not supported any new students since 2009. Hawai’i now has its own public pharmacy school in Hilo and has ceased support in that field through PSEP. Utah will be opening a “2+2” veterinary program with Washington State University this fall and has stopped funding new D.V.M. students through WICHE’s PSEP. Northern Arizona University enrolled its inaugural class for physician assistant; as soon as the program is fully accredited, Arizona will discontinue supporting new students in physician assistant as well.

**Veterinary Medicine and PSEP.** Montana State University is exploring a “1+3” veterinary program with Washington State University. In September 2012 the Montana University System (MSU) Board of Regents voted to move forward with their request to fund the new program when the Montana State Legislature meets in January.
Currently, Montana supports nine new students in veterinary medicine each year through WICHE, and the state plans to continue supporting students through PSEP along with the new MSU program.

WICHE’s PSEP has sufficient capacity to serve all its member states that don’t have their own public programs in veterinary medicine. In fall 2012 cooperating colleges of veterinary medicine (WICHE’s partner colleges of veterinary medicine are Colorado State University, Oregon State University, and Washington State University) could have offered up to 113 seats to WICHE students. However, due to the economic crisis, our states only had sufficient funds to support 43 new students. An additional 70 seats could have been offered to the qualified WICHE applicants had state funds been available. It’s also important to note that additional capacity in the WICHE region is on the horizon. Two fully accredited programs have expressed interest in becoming WICHE partners: the University of California Davis’s School of Veterinary Medicine and the Western University of Health Sciences’ College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition, Midwestern University’s Glendale Campus is opening a college of veterinary medicine and will enroll its first class of 100 students in fall 2014.

Some Western states are looking to open their own colleges of veterinary medicine in the hopes of attracting more doctors of veterinary medicine graduates to practice in their rural areas. But attracting D.V.M.s to practice food-animal medicine in rural areas is a challenging problem everywhere, even in states with their own public veterinary programs. The average D.V.M. graduate’s debt load is $140,000. When students first enroll in veterinary school, some plan to specialize in food animal practice with the intention of “going rural” when they graduate. However, once they’ve amassed high levels of debt, they often turn to companion animal practice in urban areas because it is more lucrative. Rural D.V.M. salaries can be dismally low – as low as $35,000 to $45,000 in some WICHE states. To encourage more D.V.M. graduates to practice in underserved rural areas, North Dakota and Wyoming have developed rural D.V.M. loan repayment programs to encourage graduates to settle and serve in rural areas.

Despite the fact that Midwestern University is opening its College of Veterinary Medicine in fall 2014, this September the Arizona Board of Regents voted to allocate $3 million to study the feasibility of establishing a full D.V.M. program at the University of Arizona. The request will be presented to Governor Brewer during the 2013 legislative session.

The proliferation of new D.V.M. programs across the nation at a time when economic uncertainty continues is puzzling. The D.V.M. applicant pool is shrinking, and some speculate it’s because prospective veterinarians are comparing future high debt load to low earning power and deciding that it’s just not worth the financial burden. Furthermore, some D.V.M. graduates are not finding jobs in their home state. This is particularly a problem if the student is from a service payback state, such as Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Washington. Hawai’i and Wyoming are among our two newest payback states, although Wyoming has exempted D.V.M. graduates from the payback requirement. Staff is surveying with certifying officers to see if their states might be interested in a “regional payback bank,” but so far the opportunities for such collaboration do not look promising. Most states want their own graduates back and are concerned about both short- and long-term balance.

At the request of commissioners, staff is also exploring a potential role for WICHE to expand postgraduate medical education opportunities in the West. The idea would be to create internship (or similar) sites and make them available on a regional rather than a state basis.
INFORMATION ITEM
Programs and Services Regional Initiatives

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 eight members: six are institutions and two are consortia. Both two-year and four-year institutions may participate. In addition, the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus), a consortium of 12 universities sharing excess capacity in doctoral nursing courses, uses the ICE engine to power its exchange.

ICE members include:

- Boise State University (ID).
- Montana State University, Bozeman.
- Montana University System.
- Northern Arizona University.
- Regis University (CO).
- South Dakota System of Higher Education.
- University of Alaska Anchorage.
- University of Wyoming.

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 per student enrollment 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 2013 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 using a variety of models. In general, the members agree both to a negotiated wholesale price (the price one institution charges another institution for a seat) and to a common retail price (the price institutions charge a student for a seat) for enrolling in courses in the program.

Affiliated members such as NEXus operate on their own business models and purchase services from WICHE ICE, according to their needs. The cost for these services varies with volume and frequency of use and is negotiated with each consortium.

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 while providing students with more offerings. This is especially true for niche subject areas, where a single institution’s enrollment in a certain course or program is low. Aggregating enrollment across two or more institutions can make these courses or programs sustainable. During the annual ICE meeting, held in March 2012, the members of the steering board selected the following areas for special focus during the coming year: Native American studies, gerontology and rural health, renewable energy, sustainability, and courses or programs responding to needs of park service volunteers and staff.
ICE and the Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities (OCICU) are in the midst of a one-year pilot test to share courses among the members of the two organizations. More than 80 independent nonprofit institutions participate in OCICU. Most are very small and cannot offer the wide selection of online courses available through larger state schools. At the same time, the OCICU schools offer some unique courses in specialty areas not available at state schools. If the pilot is successful, ICE and OCICU will discuss expanding the relationship.

The WICHE ICE website (www.wiche.edu/ice) provides more information about how the program works, as well as resources for members. A listserv supports communication among members, while a secure encrypted database accessible via the web supports the exchange.

**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 primarily via membership dues, with additional funding provided by sponsors of the annual meeting. The Forum will hold its next annual meeting April 24-26, 2013, in San Diego. The theme is “Academic Leaders on the Race Track: Taking Advantage of the Turns.” In advance of the meeting, the members will read two books to help inform their discussions: *That Used to Be Us* by Thomas Friedman and *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership* by Steve Sample. Program topics will include higher education trends for the future, thinking beyond the credit hour, the role of assessment in assuring academic quality, leadership approaches in challenging times, a federal update, and a perspective on the changing nature of the pipeline. A new feature of the meeting will be the presentation of the Tool Kit Award, to recognize the best tool submitted to the Academic Leaders Toolkit repository so far. More information about the Forum can be found at www.wiche.edu/forum.

Current Forum members include:

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

**Arizona**
- Arizona Board of Regents

**California**
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
- California State University System

**Colorado**
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Colorado State University, Fort Collins
- Colorado State University, Pueblo

**Idaho**
- Boise State University
- University of Idaho

**Montana**
- Montana State University, Bozeman
- The University of Montana
- Montana University System
- Montana State University – Northern

**Nevada**
- Nevada State College
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- University of Nevada, Reno
- Nevada System of Higher Education

**New Mexico**
- New Mexico State University
- New Mexico Highlands University
- Western New Mexico 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

**Utah**
- Utah State Board of Regents
- Dixie State College

**Washington**
- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- Washington State University
- University of Washington Educational Outreach
- Evergreen State College

**Wyoming**
- University of Wyoming
Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

The Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance), established in 2010, is modeled after the Western Academic Leadership Forum. The Alliance provides academic leaders of two-year institutions and their related systems and state coordinating and governing boards with 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, the Alliance is funded from membership dues and grants.

The Alliance will hold its second annual membership meeting in San Francisco on April 2-3, 2013, partially in conjunction with the California Community Colleges Chief Instructional Officers’ semiannual meeting. This year’s theme is “Readiness, Success, and Completion: On Whose Terms?” Topics include examining the success agenda to determine what is working; discussing the impact of external change agents, such as accrediting agencies and funders; exploring some of the ways students are skipping college on their way to a credential; learning more about the assessments of the Common Core State Standards; and debating the economic and policy drivers for the future. More information about the upcoming meeting and other projects of the organization can be found at www.wiche.edu/alliance.

Current members include:

Alaska
- University of Alaska Fairbanks
- University of Alaska Anchorage Community and Technical College
- University of Alaska Fairbanks, Bristol Bay

Arizona
- Maricopa Community Colleges
- Arizona Western College
- Eastern Arizona College
- Chandler-Gilbert Community College
- Estrella Mountain Community College
- Glendale Community College
- GateWay Community College
- Mesa Community College
- Phoenix College
- Paradise Valley Community College
- Rio Salado College
- Scottsdale Community College
- South Mountain Community College
- Yavapi College

California
- California Community Colleges System

Colorado
- Colorado Community College System
- Arapahoe Community College
- Colorado Northwestern Community College
- Community College of Aurora
- Community College of Denver
- Front Range Community College
- Lamar Community College
- Morgan Community College

Idaho
- College of Southern Idaho
- Northeastern Junior College
- Otero Junior College
- Pikes Peak Community College
- Pueblo Community College
- Red Rocks Community College
- Trinidad State Junior College

Hawai‘i
- University of Hawai‘i System
- Honolulu Community College
- Leeward Community College
- Hawai‘i Community College
- Windward Community College
- University of Hawai‘i Maui College
- Kauai Community College
- Kapiolani Community College

Montana
- Montana University System
- The University of Montana College of Technology
- University of Montana Helena College of Technology
- MSU Billings College of Technology
- Montana Tech College of Technology
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Miles Community College
- Dawson Community College
- MSU Great Falls College of Technology

Nevada
- Great Basin College

New Mexico
- San Juan College
- New Mexico State University Alamogordo

North Dakota
- Williston State College

Oregon
- Oregon Board of Education

South Dakota
- Lake Area Technical Institute

Utah
- Salt Lake Community College
- Snow College

Washington
- Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Wyoming
- Laramie County Community College

Current members include:
**Academic Leaders Toolkit.** The toolkit, which debuted in spring 2011, is a joint project of the Forum and the Alliance. This web-based repository (http://alt.wiche.edu) contains profiles of successful decision-making tools and processes used by academic leaders. Tools in a broad range of categories – such as program evaluation, creation, and elimination; faculty recruitment and retention; and student outcomes assessment – help academic leaders better address their increasing range of responsibilities. The toolkit is searchable by category, state, and type of institution, or organization.

**Gaining Online Accessible Learning through Self-study**

WICHE is a partner in a three-year grant effort (January 2011-December 2013) sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The project, Gaining Online Accessible Learning through Self-Study (GOALS), capitalizes on the products of an existing GOALS project and focuses on motivations of top administrators to choose to engage in self-study and continuous improvement on web accessibility. GOALS partners are creating a set of blueprints that will help promote adoption of institutional web accessibility in higher education.

One set of blueprints will focus on aligning institutional web accessibility with regional accreditation. The GOALS Consortium is identifying ways in which web accessibility is, or could be, expressed in regional accreditation materials; creating new materials with consortium partner Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges; and developing materials and processes to assist accreditation review committees in assessing institutional web accessibility.

A second set of blueprints will help support institutional adoption of web accessibility and those who wish to engage in the GOALS self-study process. These materials will focus on developing workshops, training materials, and templates that institutions can use to evaluate and improve web accessibility across their web presence. A cost and economic resource analysis of web accessibility is also underway to assist institutions in understanding the costs and benefits associated with the inclusion of web accessibility in initial project development, versus retrofitting existing websites.

The GOALS six-member consortium is led by the National Center on Disability and Access to Education at Utah State University and includes: Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges; Southern Regional Education Board; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education; and WebAIM – Keeping Web Accessibility in Mind. In this project WICHE is working with its consortium partners in the development and dissemination of materials and information, as well as in the recruitment of 45 field test and case study sites. More information is available at www.wiche.edu/goals.

**Interstate Passport Initiative**

The Interstate Passport Initiative (www.wiche.edu/passport) is a grassroots effort by academic leaders in the WICHE states to advance policies and practices supporting friction-free transfer for students in the region. Under the umbrella of this initiative, we envision a set of related regional projects, which would take place during approximately a five-year time span. Participation at the institution, system, or state levels is purely voluntary. Some may choose to participate in some projects, not in others, or none at all. WICHE, at the request of the academic leaders involved in the Forum and the Alliance, serves as the facilitator for this initiative.

In October 2011 staff was notified that WICHE and participating institutions in its five partner states (California, Hawai’i, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah) had been awarded a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in the amount of $550,000 for work to be conducted over a two-year period. The work of this first project focuses on three primary goals:

- **Goal 1.** Provide data and information to understand the status of the general education core and its relationship to state transfer policies and patterns in the 15 WICHE states; the numbers of students who transfer among the WICHE states; the role of outcomes in defining the core; the process by which change in policy occurs in each pilot state; and other matters important to understanding the baseline circumstances relevant to this project.

- **Goal 2.** Conduct a pilot project in five WICHE states to establish block transfer agreements within and among those states for the lower-division general education core, based on successful integration of LEAP’s (Liberal Education and America’s Promise’s) essential learning outcomes, developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. For the purposes of this first project, the general education core learning outcomes have been limited to oral communication, written communication, and quantitative literacy.

- **Goal 3.** Identify the implications for institutional and state policy for a transfer framework based on learning outcomes for further research and projects.
A regional advisory board representing the participating entities and subject matter experts in transfer and articulation oversees this project. Ultimately, it will approve “ Interstate Passport status” for those pilot institutions successfully aligning with the agreed-upon outcomes. Students who complete the general education requirements at one participating institution with this status would then be free to take their “Passport” to any other participating institution for friction-free acceptance. This new student-centric model will facilitate transfer and articulation among institutions across the region, giving students more freedom to choose where to finish their degrees.

The current list of participating institutions from the pilot states includes:

- **California**: California State University, Sacramento, and Sacramento City College.
- **Hawai‘i**: Leeward Community College and University of Hawai‘i West Oahu.
- **North Dakota**: Bismarck State College, Dakota College at Bottineau, Dickinson State University, Lake Region State College, Mayville State University, Minot State University, North Dakota State University, North Dakota State College of Science, University of North Dakota, Valley City State University, and Williston State College.
- **Oregon**: Eastern Oregon University, Columbia Gorge Community College, University of Oregon, and Lane Community College.
- **Utah**: Dixie State College of Utah, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Southern Utah University, University of Utah, Utah State University, Utah Valley University, and Weber State University.

Pat Shea serves as the principal investigator for the project. Two consultants supported by the grant play key roles in the project’s organization. One serves as the project coordinator and researcher, while the other is the pilot state coordinator. The grant also supports six other part-time positions: five are filled by individuals in the pilot states who act as facilitators, plus a project evaluator.

Recent accomplishments include publishing three research reports responding to questions identified in goal one on the Interstate Passport website: “Overview of State Policies on Lower-division General Education Core in the WICHE States,” “General Education Policies in the WICHE States,” and “Student Transfer Patterns in the WICHE States: A Look at the Fall 2006 Cohort.” Other work was in preparation for a meeting on October 11-12, 2012, when the pilot state facilitators brought faculty representatives to the WICHE Learning Center, where they compared the learning outcomes from each state’s participating institutions and began negotiations, designed to lead to the signing of an Interstate Passport agreement next summer. Additionally, the Passport Task Force on Student Tracking, whose members are registrars and institutional researchers from pilot institutions and others in the West, have met for several months to develop a set of recommendations for the following: noting a student’s achievement of the Passport on his or her record; defining a tracking process for assessing Passport student success at receiving institutions; and providing that information to sending institutions as part of the continuous improvement process. That task force work will continue through spring 2013.

**North American Network of Science Labs Online**

The North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO) consortium is an international collaborative partnership between postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada in the development of robust online science course material and online labs in the critical gatekeeper first-year courses in physics, biology, and chemistry. NANSLO brings authentic and accurate scientific data directly to students via the Internet through remotely accessible scientific equipment. NANSLO is funded by a $749,994 grant from Educause through the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) initiative. NGLC is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates and William and Flora Hewlett foundations. This 15-month Wave I project began on April 15, 2011, and was granted a no-cost extension through December 2012. WICHE is the managing partner and fiscal agent for the NANSLO project.

The initiative incorporates online learning and remote web-based science labs (RWSLs) that use open source software and a robotic interface to allow students to use their Internet browser to access and control actual lab equipment and perform lab exercises in real time, while obtaining real-world data that is as valid as data collected in a traditional laboratory. The labs are not virtual or simulated; students log onto the website of a remotely located science lab and request control of remote instruments through an interface, including instrument and camera controls. Through the use of structured instructor-student and student-student interaction, RWSL technology, and real data, lab kits, and other delivery strategies, NANSLO enables learners to practice scientific observation, experimentation, data analysis, and logical thinking.

To date, NANSLO has accomplished the following:
Formed a partnership led by an advisory board representing eight partner institutions, including BCcampus (a consortium of 25 two- and four-year postsecondary institutions throughout British Columbia), Colorado Community College System (a system of 13 colleges serving over 150,000 students, including the CCCOnline system of online instruction), Colorado School of Mines, University of Wyoming/Casper Center, Laramie County Community College – Wyoming, Montana State University – Bozeman, MSU Great Falls College of Technology, and WICHE.

Replicated the remote web-based science labs at North Island College (a key partner in the BCcampus consortium) and created a well-equipped and fully functional U.S.-based node of the NANSLO RWSL, supported by the Colorado Community College System IT facilities. The biology, chemistry, and physics remote labs are accessed via remotely controlled equipment and communications media. In the 2012 spring and summer terms, 336 CCCOnline and 75 BC students were provided access to high-power microscopes, spectrometers, and air tracks at off-hours that are conducive to the busy schedules of the CCCOnline target population (working-age parents and students working full- or part-time).

Formed three discipline panels, consisting of faculty representatives from each partner institution. Panel members possess scientific and online teaching experience. Panels generated three first-semester NANSLO open core courses and six remote lab experiments (two in each discipline – biology, physics, and chemistry). Courses are available for use throughout the NANSLO consortium, as well as by other institutions through Creative Commons licensing.

Created a rubric and lab report review process designed to assess student performance along the following dimensions: concept mastery, engagement, quality of writing, quality of conclusions, and whether the data had been gathered and analyzed. The process included review of student reports from online courses (remote labs and lab kits) and, where available, in-class courses.

Created “train the trainer” resources and held faculty training sessions in BC and Colorado. One short video was created for each experiment, in order to orient students and staff to the use of the remote labs.

Created several scaling resources: an environmental scan listing remote science education labs in the U.S. and Canada; a how-to adoption manual of case studies, policies, and procedures that others can use in adopting RWSL technology; and a scale network template to facilitate the sustainable use of remote labs across all NANSLO partner institutions.

On September 10, 2012, NANSLO applied to NGLC for follow-on funding in the amount of $1,362,633. On September 25 WICHE received word from the NGLC program officer that “despite its strengths and its highly worthwhile goals, (NANSLO) was not selected for funding. The Committee had a large number of strong proposals and chose to focus the available funds on the very limited number of proposals which appeared to them as most likely to advance NGLC’s core goal as an initiative: direct and dramatic improvement in the college completion rates of low-income young adults.” Even without this funding, the development of NANSLO will continue, as described below.

**Consortium for Healthcare Education Online**

On September 19, 2012, the Consortium for Healthcare Education Online (CHEO) was awarded a four-year grant of $14,171,229 through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Community College and Career Training initiative (www.doleta.gov/taaccct). Work on the project will began on October 1, 2012. TAA funding assists colleges to meet the needs of displaced workers, veterans, and the underemployed by emphasizing the provision of educational and career-training programs that can be completed in two years or less.

Funding for CHEO consortium members supports the development of allied health certificates delivered in a hybrid or online format and the development of comprehensive academic support and employment services, to include the hiring of a career coach for each college partner. The consortium is led by Pueblo Community College and includes seven other colleges: Kodiak College, AK; Otero Junior College, CO; Red Rocks Community College, CO; Montana State University – Great Falls College of Technology; Flathead Valley Community College, MT; Lake Area Technical Institute, SD; and Laramie County Community College, WY.

The following certificate and degree credentials will be made available by members of the consortium: polysomnography, emergency medical services (basic, intermediate, and advanced), health information technology, occupation endorsement certification, medical office support, medical lab technology, occupational endorsement certificate, home healthcare, hospice care, medication aide, healthcare core, prenursing, paramedicine, radiation technology, medical lab technician, practical nursing, nurse aide certificate, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and A.A.S. degrees.
Also involved in the project is the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), funded to support NANSLO course development, CCCS-based RWSL lab functions, and “sandbox” and node development. WICHE is a contractor to the project, providing coordination of NANSLO resources, along with development and deployment of a career-coaching and online-teaching faculty professional development program. North Island College (BC) receives funding for continued development of remote lab experiments and technical guidance in the development of a third NANSLO node and a NANSLO sandbox for lab curriculum development. BCcampus brings its expertise regarding shared services to the project. College in Colorado is contracted to develop comprehensive employment services through a career hub that will integrate material and interactive abilities linking students to campus, industry, and local workforce partners.

Consortium members will collaborate in the development of newly designed NANSLO remote lab experiments that can be shared across multiple allied health programs. To support the number of students expected to enroll across the programs, a new NANSLO node will be built at Montana State University – Great Falls College of Technology.

Each institution will hire a career coach dedicated to supporting the academic and career needs of students enrolled in the online allied health certificate programs. These coaches will engage in professional development at both the consortium and local level and will make use of a career portal designed and supported by College in Colorado. The CHEO portal will be a platform for interaction between allied-healthcare employers, community colleges, and local workforce centers as they train and employee dislocated workers, veterans, underemployed workers, and other adults.

Pueblo Community College will contract with WICHE for the following services.

- Provide professional development activities, including annual workshops and webinars on best practices in career coaching, designing and teaching courses in online and hybrid environments, and the most effective use of RWSLs in lab exercises.
- Expand NANSLO discipline panels to include representatives from CHEO institutions, to work collaboratively in the development of new lab exercise for allied health courses.
- Provide a communications infrastructure to members of the discipline panels and coaches network to support ongoing sharing of promising practices in the use of online labs and in career counseling.
- Program and implement a software solution to support the multicampus use of NANSLO nodes and the financial transaction system associated with partner campuses providing lab services to other CHEO institutions.

This $850,147 contract will support a portion of the salaries and benefits for seven current employees, totaling 1.6 FTE in years one to three, and one employee in year four at .50 FTE. Additionally, it will provide funds to hire consultants to assist with the professional development workshops and webinars; to support faculty experts leading discipline panel activities; and to contract with a consultant to develop the new scheduling software. Other funding will cover workshop meals and staff travel to conferences for presentations. WICHE will earn $62,837 in administrative overhead during the four-year period.

**Master Property Program**

WICHE offers participation in the Midwestern Higher Education Compact’s Master Property Program (MPP) to colleges and universities in the West. Institutional members benefit from comprehensive property insurance coverage tailored to their specific needs, while improving their risk management and asset protection strategies. The program is available to two- and four-year public, and private institutions of higher education, subject to approval by the MPP leadership committee. The base program rates are typically below industry averages and help 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, 145 campuses (54 members) have total insured values of $83 billion.

MPP members collectively have achieved savings of approximately $65 million in premiums and dividends. 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 joined the MPP in 2009. The program is currently underwritten by Lexington and is jointly administered by Marsh and Captive Resources under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the participating insured institutions. Craig Kispert, associate vice president for business and planning at Seattle Pacific University, and Laura Peterson, risk manager at the University of Wyoming, represent WICHE member institutions on the MPP leadership committee. Jere Mock represents WICHE at the leadership committee meetings.

Nine institutions and two systems (with 14 campuses) in the WICHE region are members of the Master Property Program.
• Colorado College
• 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)
• The College of Idaho
• Seattle Pacific University (WA)
• Westminster College (UT)
• Willamette University (OR)
• University of Northern Colorado
• University of Wyoming

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

**MHECare:**

**A New Regional Student Health Collaborative to Benefit Students and Institutions in the West**

At its semiannual meeting in May, the WICHE Commission voted to partner with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to expand the benefits of the MHECare student health program to public and private institutions in the 15-state WICHE region. The New England Board of Higher Education subsequently voted to join MHEC and WICHE in the program, so that institutions in 31 states are now eligible to participate. Institutions in the 15-state WICHE region may now offer students MHECare coverage; the plan includes competitively priced medical benefits; vision or dental insurance is not included at this time.

Since May four campuses in Colorado have joined the MHEC-WICHE consortium: Colorado State University Pueblo and the University of Colorado’s Denver downtown campus (for both domestic and international students), Colorado Springs campus, and Denver Anschutz medical campus. In the MHEC region, six institutions in the Kansas Board of Regents system and five universities in the Missouri Consortium, along with Columbia College (MO), Des Moines University, and Oakland University (MI), have joined MHECare.

MHEC staff, working with its regional Student Benefits Advisory Committee and with financial support provided by Lumina Foundation, has worked for nearly four years to create this new mechanism to provide colleges and universities with health insurance for their students with cost savings that could only be achieved by working collaboratively across institutions. They conducted competitive bid processes prior to entering into a contract with Mercer Health & Benefits (Mercer), an independent consulting firm, to serve as the program administrator for MHECare. Working with its MHEC Student Benefits Advisory Committee and Mercer staff, MHEC staff developed the plan design and then conducted another competitive bid process to select UnitedHealthcare StudentResources (UHCSR), a national healthcare carrier, to underwrite the program. UHCSR specializes in student health insurance plans, has a large national network of providers, offers web-based enrollment and support tools, and quotes competitive rates. It is a division of the national healthcare carrier UnitedHealthcare.

The standard MHECare high or low PPO plans can be selected by institutions with less than 300 students enrolled in the plan and by institutions that do not currently offer a program. Rates for these plans will depend on whether the plan is voluntary or mandatory with waiver, but the rates will not be based on an institution’s claims experience. Institutions with more than 300 students enrolled have more options, including one of the standard MHECare high or low PPO plans, a quote for the institution’s current plan design with any changes that are required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), or a plan with design features tailored to the institution’s student
The cost for the plan will be underwritten based on the institution’s claim experience and utilization. The standard plans have been reviewed and approved by the MHEC Student Health Benefits Advisory Committee.

Participating institutions must agree that MHECare will be the only plan offered to all of their eligible populations. As more campuses decide to offer MHECare, rates will be more stable over time due to the spread of risk, thus reducing the impact of large claims which are unpredictable and can cause big fluctuations in rates for an individual member institution. Since MHEC has already completed its due diligence in selecting UHCSR as the carrier for MHECare, it may not be necessary for institutions to conduct a formal request for proposal, saving both time and resources. For more details on the plans’ key provisions and students’ out-of-pocket costs, see www.mhec.org/mhecare.

The first step for institutions interested in MHECare is to obtain a request for quote form via Jennifer Dahlquist, MHEC’s assistant vice president for cost savings and chief financial officer (jenniferd@mhec.org). Additional information will be required if quotes are requested for more than the standard high and low plans. The additional information may include a copy of the current plan design, requested benefits, and claims experience. Once all of the information is received, UnitedHealthcare StudentResources will provide a quotation in approximately 10 working days. MHECare questions may be addressed to Dahlquist at 612.626.1602 or to Jere Mock, WICHE’s vice president of programs and services, at jmock@wiche.edu or 303.541.0222.

MHECTech
WICHE also partners with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact on its MHECTech program, which enables colleges and universities in the Midwest and West to purchase off competitively bid purchasing agreements to contain or reduce their purchasing costs. WICHE region institutions are eligible to purchase computers at discounted rates under the MHECTech contracts with Dell, Fujitsu, Oracle (Sun), Systemax Computers (also known as Global, GovED and CompUSA); Dell and Xerox printers and peripherals; and data networking offered by 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. The MHECTech website (www.mhectech.org) and WICHE’s website (www.wiche.edu/costSavingPurchasing) provide details on the vendors, contracts and eligible entities.