Monday, November 11, 2013

11:00 am - noon
SHEPC Learning Center

Programs and Services Committee Meeting
Patricia Sullivan (NM), chair
Clayton Christian (MT), vice chair
Diane Barrans (AK)
Eileen Klein (AZ)
Dianne Harrison (CA)
Dene Thomas (CO)
Josh Sasamoto (CNMI)
Carol Mon Lee (HI)
TBD (ID)
Committee vice chair (MT)
Vance Farrow (NV)
Committee chair (NM)
Duaine Espegard (ND)
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
Jack Warner (SD)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
Larry Seaquist (WA)
Karla Leach (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Patricia Sullivan, committee chair

Staff: Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program
Rhonda Epper, director, WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (W-SARA)
Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE, Western Academic Leadership Forum, and Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

Action Item
Approval of the Programs and Services Committee meeting minutes of May 20, 2013 4-3

Information Items:
Implementing the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement – Jere Mock and Rhonda Epper 4-6
Updates on WICHE’s Student Exchange Program – Margo Colalancia 4-18
Facilitating commissioner input in the Programs and Services/WICHE workplan and communications with commissioners – Jere Mock
Other business

Adjournment
Committee Members Present
Patricia Sullivan (NM), chair
Clayton Christian (MT), vice chair
Diane Barrans (AK)
Eileen Klein (AZ)
Dene Thomas (CO)
Joshua Sasamoto (CNMI)
Duaine Espegard (ND)
Mark Moores (NM)
Hilda Rosselli (OR)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
Larry Seaquist (WA)
Karla Leach (WY)

Committee Members Absent
Dianne Harrison (CA)
Carol Mon Lee (HI)
Mack Shirley (ID)
Joe Hardy (NV)
Jack Warner (SD)

WICHE Certifying Officers Present
Louise Lynch, Arizona Board of Regents
Jennah Kitchell, Colorado Department of Higher Education
Jeannine Sherrick, Nevada WICHE
Darren Marshall, Utah State Board of Regents
Loreen Olney, Utah State Board of Regents
Lisa Shipley, University of Wyoming
Joseph Steiner, University of Wyoming

Staff Present
Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program
Pat Shea, director, WICHE ICE, Western Academic Leadership Forum, and Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

Committee Chair Patricia Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed the committee members and the WICHE certifying officers.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of the Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2012

Chair Sullivan asked for a motion TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2012, COMMITTEE MEETING. Commissioner Barrans motioned to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Seaquist seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

ACTION ITEM
Approval of the Programs and Services Committee Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2012

Margo Colalancia and Pat Shea presented highlights of each of the items listed in the Program and Services FY 2014 workplan, on behalf of Jere Mock, Programs and Services vice president, who was unable to travel because of illness. At the conclusion of the presentation, Commissioner Rosselli asked for clarification of the commissioners’ role in the process of approving the workplan. Commissioner Beasley responded that the workplan is reviewed by the Executive Committee during its retreat, prior to it being presented to the full commission. Commissioner Sullivan asked how certain states and institutions were selected to be involved in new projects. The staff explained that this varied with the project. For example, projects undertaken by one of the membership organizations, such as the Alliance, are announced to its members at the annual meeting or on the Alliance listserv, and institutions are invited to participate. In the case of the Passport project, all states were invited to a meeting at WICHE to discuss potential interest in this initiative. Four of the states already involved in the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative volunteered to participate in the pilot. Hawai‘i also volunteered for the pilot, as it was the state where the idea for a new transfer framework based on LEAP’s Essential Learning Outcomes developed. All states will have the opportunity to participate in the Passport’s Phase I Block agreements this summer.
Commissioner Beasley asked how they could add items to the workplan, such as a request for advice about how to handle massive open online courses (MOOCs) or other issues. In the future the commissioners would like to have more input into the development of the workplan and in setting priorities for WICHE services based on common needs across the states. They asked that staff consider developing a systematic process for collecting their input on service needs in their states; that the staff make a presentation at the next committee meeting explaining the process for including their input in the workplan; and that they receive the workplan in advance of its being presented. Commissioner Sullivan asked for information about who receives WICHE communications, such as NewsCap and the Policy and Stat Alerts, so she does not forward them to those already receiving them. Commissioner Seaquist asked how they could let the staff and other commissioners know about activities in their states as they arise. For example, Washington has recently developed 81 high-enrollment courses as openly licensed courses for others to use. The commissioners would like to have a communications system in place, so staff could share information about opportunities for their states or institutions to be involved in new WICHE projects and so commissioners could share information about resources, models, issues, and solutions from their states with the staff and other members of the commission.

Commissioner Sullivan congratulated the staff on their work and asked for a motion to approve the workplan. Commissioner Beasley made the motion TO APPROVE THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES WORKPLAN. Commissioner Espegard seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

**Interstate Passport Initiative**

Pat Shea provided an update on the Interstate Passport Initiative. This two-year project, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, aspires to create a friction-free framework for transfer based on learning outcomes, not courses and credits. This new framework should allow students to transfer without repeating learning that they have already achieved. The project is focused on lower-division general education, the common denominator among institutions – both two- and four-year. Since we last met, faculty from 23 institutions in the five pilot states involved in the project (California, Hawai‘i, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah), have worked together to create a common set of Passport Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and proficiency criteria at the transfer level for the Passport’s Phase I Block. The areas include: oral communication, written communication, and quantitative literacy.

To become a Passport institution with the authority to award the Passport Phase I to students, institutions must ensure that their learning outcomes map to and are congruent with the PLOs. (They are not required to use the same language.) The institutions must also identify the courses they provide to address these outcomes and the assessment tools they use to measure a student’s proficiency. Further they must agree to track the academic progress of the Passport students, comparing their success to non-Passport and native students. Receiving institutions will provide data to the sending institutions, which can be used in continuous improvement efforts.

Institutions will begin signing the MOA on June 1, and other WICHE states may apply to participate in Phase I later this summer. The current grant concludes on September 30, so the staff will soon be seeking funding for the Phase II Block, consisting of additional lower-division learning outcomes.

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

**Update on the Student Exchange Program**

Margo Colalancia provided a brief update on the WICHE Student Exchange Program. She explained that according to fall 2012 survey data, the percentage of Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) graduates returning to their home state to practice has increased by more than 10 percent since 2006, for both states that require service payback (85 percent return rate) as well as those that do not (52 percent return rate). Six out of 10 PSEP sending states now require a service payback of their graduates.

WICHE recently added 45 new programs to the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), for a total of 320; 1,000 students enrolled through WRGP and saved more than $15 million this academic year. About one third of the programs are healthcare-related.
The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is celebrating its 25th year; more than 31,000 students enrolled through WUE saved more than $235.8 million for the 2012-13 academic year. The network of WUE institutions grew by 10 institutions this past year, including University of California Merced – our first UC institution. Staff is delighted to announce that two community colleges from Washington state (the first ever) will also join WUE this fall: Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College.

WICHE is exploring a possible role as a convener to promote reform for GME (graduate medical education) residencies for physicians in the West, with the goal of increasing the number of family practice and rural-track GME residencies and improving funding for them. Joseph Steiner, dean of the Department of Health Sciences at the University of Wyoming, commented that this is a critical issue for the State of Wyoming and many Western states. The federal funding system is complex and is currently a disincentive for medical students to pursue primary care, which is most needed in the rural West. Colalancia added that Steiner and WICHE staff would be meeting with several University of Colorado School of Medicine faculty and administrators advocating for GME reform after the WICHE Commission meeting to determine how WICHE might help. (Update: The group met on May 23, and it was decided that WICHE’s Legislative Advisory Committee would hold a session on GME reform at its next meeting in Las Vegas, on September 4-5, to inform state legislators of the issues. The National Academies is currently conducting a study to make recommendations for GME reform; for more information, see www8.nationalacademies.org/cp/projectview.aspx?key=49470. The academies’ report will likely be published some time in 2014.)

Colalancia also reported on the dramatic increase of colleges of veterinary medicine in the West over the past few years – both opening and planned. This phenomenon is perplexing in light of declining veterinarian salaries, paired with high student debt levels ($140,000 on average), and the recent opinion issued by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) that there is not a shortage of rural food animal veterinarians, as once believed. (In brief, the AABP maintains that in many areas, rural veterinary practices are unsustainable, for several reasons. First, there has been a consolidation of livestock systems, and producers would rather train technicians to administer services that were once provided by DVMs (doctors of veterinary medicine) to save on costs. Secondly, DVMs could reorient their rural practices to emphasize preventive and consulting services, but most are not. Finally, recent DVM graduates are saddled with high student debt and can’t increase their fee rates for services to meet their debt obligations; rural clients have a low tolerance for fee increases and will find other low-cost ways to get their animals treated. To read the AABP’s opinion, visit www.aabp.org/resources/pdfs/Summary_Opinion_of_the_AABP-Rural_Vet_Practice-5.19.11.pdf.)

Several new programs have developed in the WICHE states. The University of Southern Utah will accept its second class of veterinary students in fall 2013 for its joint “2+2” program with Washington State University. Montana State University is also launching a joint “1+1” program with Washington State University and will admit its first class in fall 2014. Midwestern University in Glendale will open its College of Veterinary Medicine in fall 2014. The University of Arizona is also seeking support for a public veterinary program, but funding for the program was not obtained during the 2013 legislative session.

Chair Sullivan acknowledged the participation of several of the WICHE certifying officers from Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming, who attended a meeting on Sunday with Colalancia. They help WICHE to expand access to the healthcare professions in the West – through PSEP, as well as through WUE and WRGP. She also thanked the state offices and staff for their ongoing efforts and dedication and then adjourned the meeting.
Implementing the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

Lumina Foundation provided a $2.3 million grant for the implementation of a nationwide State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) in August. WICHE is serving as fiscal agent for the grant that supports the operation of the National Council – State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), as well as the implementation of SARA within the regions of the four interstate higher education compacts: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and WICHE. MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB are subcontractors to WICHE under the terms of the grant agreement.

SARA establishes a state-level reciprocity process that will support the nation in its efforts to increase educational attainment by making state authorization more efficient, effective, and uniform in regard to necessary and reasonable standards of practice that span states. It also enables states to effectively deal with quality and fiscal integrity issues that have arisen in some online/distance education offerings. Over time, SARA will make the authorization process less costly for states and institutions and the students they serve.

The agreement resulted from the ongoing efforts of several groups:

- Lumina Foundation provided funding to the Presidents’ Forum, working with the Council of State Governments (CSG), to develop a model reciprocity agreement that would enable states to acknowledge other states’ decisions in regard to institutional authorization of distance education.
- Building upon the work of the Presidents’ Forum and CSG, WICHE advanced “W-SARA” in collaboration with the three other compacts, MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB.
- Combining all prior efforts and input from a range of stakeholders, the Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education convened by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and the American Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU), issued a report last April: “Advancing Access through Regulatory Reform: Findings, Principles, and Recommendations for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).”

These efforts have involved institutional leaders representing all sectors of higher education, state regulators, state higher education policymakers, accrediting organization leaders, and representatives of the U.S. Department of Education.

Some of the key provisions of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement are as follows.

- It is based on the voluntary participation of states and institutions.
- It shifts principal oversight responsibilities from the state in which the distance education is being received to the “home state” of the institution offering the instruction. The home state will also be the default forum for consumer complaints. Once an institution is authorized by its home state, it will be allowed to offer its distance education programs in other states participating in the reciprocity agreement.
- Its scope covers regionally or nationally accredited degree-granting institutions from all sectors: public colleges and universities, and independent institutions, both nonprofit and for-profit. Professional licensure programs are not covered at this time.
- It sets forth a reasonable, uniform set of triggers of “physical presence.”
- It preserves full state oversight and control of on-the-ground campuses.

Milestones on the Path toward Reciprocity

A significant event on the path toward reciprocity was held on April 16-17 in Indianapolis: a national symposium on the implementation of SARA, funded by Lumina Foundation and coordinated by the CSG and the Presidents’ Forum. Delegates from 47 states attended to learn more about the agreement, examine the implications for states and for institutions, and meet with colleagues from other states in their respective regional compact to raise questions and discuss the proposed implementation steps, including approaches for getting executive and legislative branch approval of the agreement in their states.
Once WICHE and the other regional compacts received notice that Lumina Foundation staff had approved the SARA grant proposal developed by WICHE, staff recruitment efforts began. Staff supporting NC-SARA and W-SARA are based in Boulder and include:

- Marshall Hill, NC-SARA executive director (1.0 FTE), as of Aug. 19.
- Rhonda Epper, W-SARA director (1.0 FTE), as of Oct. 14.
- Lisa Greco, NC-SARA communications coordinator (.75 FTE), as of Sept. 25.

Two staff members jointly support NC-SARA and W-SARA:

- Alan Contreras, NC-SARA/W-SARA coordinator (1.0 FTE), as of Sept. 19.
- Michelle Perez-Robles, NC-SARA/W-SARA office support manager (1.0 FTE), as of Sept. 16.

The NC-SARA staff is supervised by Marshall Hill and the W-SARA staff by Jere Mock, vice president, WICHE Programs and Services.

The grant covers salaries, benefits, rent (the only allowed indirect cost), and IT support costs for these staff. Also covered by the grant are portions of the FTE of some other WICHE staff, including Candy Allen, senior graphic designer (.15 FTE), Annie Finnigan, communications manager (.15 FTE), John Fellers, web design manager (.30 FTE), and a database programmer and administrator (1.0 FTE). The other regional compacts’ SARA staffs include full and part-time directors, coordinators, administrative assistants; they will likely contract with WICHE for database support.

The recently formed NC-SARA Board convened for the first time on Nov. 1 in Washington, D.C. Nearly 100 individuals from throughout the U.S. were nominated during July for the board, and 21 members were selected in mid-August by an interim committee, including the four regional compact presidents and representatives of APLU, CSG, Presidents’ Forum, and SHEEO. The board, and its staff based at WICHE, will provide coordination, address appeals, finalize the institutional fee structure, and collect and analyze data on state and institutional participation. The board members include the following, from WICHE:

- David Longanecker, WICHE president.
- Chris Bustamante, president, Rio Salado College.
- Dianne Harrison, president, California State University.

Other board members include:
- Barbara Ballard, member of the Kansas House of Representatives; associate director for outreach, Robert J Dole Institute of Politics, University of Kansas; and MHEC commissioner.
- Helena Stangle Bertram, senior director of government relations, DeVry.
- Crady deGolian, director of the National Center for Interstate Compacts, Council of State Governments.
- Kathryn G. Dodge, founder and principal, Dodge Advisory Group, and former New Hampshire SHEEO.
- Terry Hartle, senior vice president, American Council on Education, and member, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- Larry Isaak, president, MHEC.
- Arthur Kirk, Jr., president, Saint Leo University, and member, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- Paul Lingenfelter, chair, NC-SARA Board, former president, SHEEO, and co-convener, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- M. Peter McPherson, president, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and co-convener, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- Patricia O’Brien, deputy director, New England Association of Schools and Colleges.
- Pam Quinn, chief executive officer, Dallas County Community College District’s LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunications, and member, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- George Eugene Ross, president, Central Michigan University, and member, Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.
- Paul Shiffman, executive director, Presidents’ Forum, and assistant vice president for strategic and governmental Relations, Excelsior College.
- David S. Spence, president, SREB.
- Michael Thomas, president, NEBHE.
• Leroy Wade, deputy commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education.
• Belle S. Wheelan, president, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, and member, Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education.

Each of the compacts has worked with regional steering committees, whose members provided input as SARA was taking shape. WICHE’s original committee was formed in February 2012, and the majority of its members will continue to serve, along with a few new members representing additional important constituencies. As states in the WICHE region join SARA, each will appoint one representative to serve on the WICHE Regional Steering Committee. The WICHE Commission’s Executive Committee approved the steering committee’s members on September 30. The committee met on October 28 to review and approve the final proposed changes to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement and going forward will meet twice a year in Boulder to review and approve states that meet SARA criteria, once the state application process has been finalized.

What’s Next?
WICHE and the other regional compacts will each hold regional forums before the end of the year with their member states as the SARA implementation process gets underway. Each state in the WICHE region will receive a $2,500 stipend to assist in covering travel costs for a delegation to attend. The WICHE forum will be held on Dec. 10 in Denver. The purpose of the forum is to help state policymakers, regulators, and institutional leaders fully understand the benefits of participation for both states and institutions, as well as to explain the state application process and requirements for institutional participation.

WICHE will formally invite state participation in W-SARA in late 2013 or early 2014, and the SARA staff and regional steering committees will review and approve states that meet SARA criteria throughout 2014 and in subsequent years. States that wish to participate in SARA will need to demonstrate to their regional SARA entity that they have an effective process for authorizing institutions. States will also need to have the authority to enter into the reciprocity agreement, which in many if not most states will require changes in current state legislation; generally, these will be modest changes.

Once a state joins SARA, institutions in that state may seek approval from a state agency (or agencies) to participate. Participating institutions will be charged an annual fee, which will be collected by NC-SARA and will cover operating costs for the both the NC-SARA and regional compacts’ SARA operations. The NC-SARA board will establish the fee levels, which will vary by FTE enrollments and will likely range from $2,000 to $6,000 annually.

More Details on the Grant from Lumina Foundation
The initial grant period runs from August 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014. The Lumina strategy officers overseeing the grant have agreed to receive a subsequent proposal requesting funding for the period of July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015. WICHE has subcontracts with MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB that outline their scope of work, deliverables, and reporting requirements during the grant term.
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 multi-institution collaboration among faculty offering online courses. Through ICE participating institutions expand their students’ access to high-quality online courses and programs taught by faculty at other member institutions. Seamlessly, students enroll, obtain advising, and use financial aid from their home campus, which transcribes the course.

Currently, institutions and systems in five WICHE states are members of ICE. Both two-year and four-year institutions may participate. In addition, WICHE ICE has two affiliate members. The Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus), powered by WICHE ICE, is a consortium of 15 universities sharing excess capacity in doctoral nursing courses; and the Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities is a nonprofit consortium of 78 independent colleges and universities sharing enrollments in online courses.

Primary ICE members include

- Montana State University, Bozeman.
- Montana University System.
- Oregon University System (Eastern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Oregon State University, Portland State University, Southern Oregon University, University of Oregon, Western Oregon University).
- South Dakota System of Higher Education.
- University of Alaska Anchorage.
- University of Wyoming.

Affiliate ICE members include:

- Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus).
- Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Acting as the broker for the exchange of course and student information and funding among the primary 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 extra seats to other members at an agreed-upon common wholesale price. For FY 2014 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. The EI saves the funding it would otherwise use to create new courses or sections to serve its students.

- **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 to a common retail price (the price institutions charge a student for a seat) for enrolling in courses in the program. Enrolling institutions retain 15 percent, WICHE receives 15 percent, and 70 percent goes to the TI.

Affiliated members 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 collaboration among faculty in small departments offering courses that often have low enrollment. These departments are struggling because of declining budgets, and ICE can help ensure the financial viability of some of these courses by aggregating the supply of online courses and students across the region. At the other end of the spectrum, the members of the steering board attending the ICE annual meeting in March 2013 agreed to develop “ICE Blocks,” or clusters of high-enrollment introductory courses, where some institutions could help to meet the overflow student demand of other member institutions. During FY 2014 the focus on creating ICE Blocks will be for lower-division general education, upper-division electives, social work, engineering, Native American studies, rural health, and park service training.

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 provides the ICE catalog of courses and exchange functionality.

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 organization’s members are 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. The Forum is funded primarily via membership dues, with additional funding provided by sponsors of the annual meeting.

The Forum will hold its 2014 annual meeting in Albuquerque, April 23-25. More information about the Forum and recordings of presentations at past meetings 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
- University of Arizona

California
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
- California State University, Fullerton
- California State University, Long Beach
- California State University, Northridge
- California State University System
- Humboldt State University
- San Francisco State University
- San Jose State University
- Sonoma State University
- University of California, San Diego

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

Montana
- Montana State University, Bozeman
- University of Montana, Missoula
- 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
- Mayville State University
- 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
- 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 of Utah

Washington
- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- Washington State University
- University of Washington
- 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 sponsorship of the annual meeting.

The Alliance will hold its 2014 annual membership meeting in Tempe, AZ, on March 12-14, with the theme “Inside the Nested Boxes: Academic Leaders’ Innovative Thinking Challenge.” Topics include examining new models for repackaging higher education; learning how to use high school data more effectively for student placement and success; exploring ways to flip support services to better meet today’s students demands; looking at best practices and policy to enhance student academic achievement and success; finding out about some of the successes and failures of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training initiative (TAAACCCT) grant program; listening to accreditors and non-traditional educators discuss the pros and cons of new approaches to competency-based education; and hearing from new leaders in the U.S. Department of Education about new regulations or approaches that may be coming “inside its box.” More information about the Alliance, the program for its upcoming meeting, and recordings of past presentations 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
- Los Angeles Trade-Technical College
- Modesto Junior College

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
- 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
- Kapi‘olani Community College

Idaho
- College of Southern Idaho
- North Idaho College

Montana
- Montana University System (MSU)
- Missoula College, University of Montana
- City College at MSU Billings
- Highlands College of Montana Tech
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Miles Community College
- Dawson Community College
- Great Falls College, Montana State University

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
- Spokane Falls Community College

Wyoming
- Laramie County Community College
**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. The Academic Leaders Tool of the Year 2014 will be awarded next spring in conjunction with the annual meetings of its host organizations.

**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. Gaining Online Accessible Learning through Self-Study (GOALS, www.wiche.edu/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 have created and are pilot-testing a set of blueprints that will help promote adoption of institutional web accessibility in higher education institutions.

One set of blueprints focuses on aligning institutional web accessibility with regional accreditation. The GOALS Consortium has identified ways in which web accessibility is, or could be, expressed in regional accreditation materials; created new materials with consortium partner Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges; and developed materials and processes to assist accreditation review committees in assessing institutional web accessibility.

A second set of blueprints supports institutional adoption of web accessibility and those who wish to engage in the GOALS self-study process. GOALS offers 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: WICHE; Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges; Southern Regional Education Board; and WebAIM. In this project WICHE has worked 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.

**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, a set of related regional projects, which would take place during approximately a five-year time span, is envisioned. 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, provides direction and oversight for the initial project.

In October 2013 WICHE project staff along with representatives of participating institutions in its five partner states (California, Hawai‘i, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah) concluded work on the first two-year project, funded by a $550,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The work of this first project focused on three primary goals:

- **Goal 1.** Provide data and information to understand the status of lower-division general education and its relationship to state transfer policies and patterns in the 15 WICHE states; the number 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 and related projects in the future.

- **Goal 2.** Conduct a pilot project in five WICHE states to establish block transfer agreements within and among those states for lower-division general education, based on successful integration of LEAP’s Essential Learning Outcomes, developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. For purposes of this first project, the scope was limited to lower-division general education learning outcomes in 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 provided oversight for this project. In April it approved the implementation of the Interstate Passport Agreement, establishing “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 are now free to take their “Passport” to any other participating institution to which they have been admitted for friction-free acceptance. This new student-centric model is expected to facilitate transfer and articulation among institutions across the region, giving students more freedom to choose where to finish their degrees.

The current list of pilot institutions which have signed the Passport Agreement include:

- Dickinson State University
- Dixie State College of Utah
- Eastern Oregon University
- Lake Region State College
- Leeward Community College
- North Dakota State College of Science
- North Dakota State University
- Salt Lake Community College
- Snow College
- Southern Utah University
- The University of Utah
- University of North Dakota
- Utah State University
- Utah Valley University
- Valley City State University
- Weber State University
- Williston State College

Accomplishments in the project include 1) publishing on the Passport website several research reports about general education and transfer patterns in the WICHE states, including an interactive site states can use to see those patterns in their states; 2) developing the Passport Learning Outcomes and Transfer-Level Proficiency Criteria for lower-division general education in oral communications, written communications, and quantitative literacy; 3) authoring the guidelines for registrars for noting and verifying the achievement of the Passport on the student’s academic record; 4) designing the tracking system that will allow sending institutions to know how well their former students are performing at their receiving schools, compared to the academic progress of its native students and those transferring without a Passport; and 5) developing a how-to manual and set of applications for use by new institutions and WICHE states interested in participating in the Passport.

Funding permitting, Phase II of the project will focus on developing Passport Learning Outcomes and Transfer-Level Proficiency Criteria in the remaining academic areas of lower-division general education: intercultural knowledge (social science), teamwork and problem solving, information literacy, critical thinking, natural and physical sciences, and creative arts. In addition, it will develop a more robust verification and tracking system, along with finalizing its plans for expansion and sustainability.

**North American Network of Science Labs Online**

The North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO) is an international consortium whose members are postsecondary institutions and related organizations in the U.S. and Canada. It was established in 2011 with a $749,994 grant from Educause through the Next Generation Learning Challenges initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates and William and Flora Hewlett foundations.

WICHE serves as NANSLO’s managing partner. Other partners are the Colorado Community College System, Colorado School of Mines, University of Wyoming, Laramie County Community College (WY), Montana State University Bozeman, Great Falls College–MSU, North Island College in British Columbia, and BCcampus, a consortium of 25 institutions in British Columbia.
NANSLO incorporates online learning and remote web-based science labs (RWSL) that use open source software and a robotic interface to allow students to operate 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 lab experiments 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 instruments 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.

During the next three years, NANSLO will support institutions offering online lab courses developed in the Consortium for Healthcare Education Online project, described below. In addition, it will seek funding to conduct a robust research project identifying best practices in lab exercises using lab kits, remote labs, and simulations in online science courses. It will also explore opportunities for additional partnerships and expanding its collection of remote lab experiments.

**Consortium for Healthcare Education Online**

In September 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 TAACCCT initiative (www.doleta.gov/taaccct). TAACCCT 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; Great Falls College–MSU; 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, nurse aide, 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.

Others involved in the project include the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), funded to support the use of the NANSLO production lab at CCCS and the development of a faculty “sandbox” lab for testing new experiments and training; BCcampus, which is developing two open textbooks supporting allied health courses; and North Island College (BC) which is developing, with the assistance of CCCS staff, 12 new allied health experiments for use by CHEO members and establishing a new production lab to serve students involved in CHEO courses in Alaska.

Each institution has hired a career coach to support the academic and career needs of students enrolled in the online allied health certificate programs. These coaches engage in professional development at both the consortium and local level and will make use of a career portal, to be designed and supported by College in Colorado, an online resource designed to help students plan, apply, and pay for college. The CHEO portal will be a platform for interaction between allied-healthcare employers, community colleges, and local workforce centers as they train and employ dislocated workers, veterans, underemployed workers, and other adults. A new NANSLO production lab is also being established at Great Falls College to support CHEO students in Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Pueblo Community College contracted with WICHE to:

- 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 exercises 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 production labs and the financial transaction system associated with partner campuses providing lab services to other CHEO institutions.

This $872,259 contract supports a portion of the salaries and benefits for six current and one new employee, totaling 1.6 FTE in years one to three and one employee in year four at .50 FTE. Additionally, it provides 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 NANSLO lab-scheduling software. Other funding will cover workshop costs and staff travel to conferences for presentations. WICHE will earn $62,837 in administrative overhead during the four-year period.

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

At its semiannual meeting in May 2012, 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 U.S. WICHE states. The New England Board of Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board subsequently joined MHEC and WICHE in the program, so that institutions in 47 states are now eligible to participate. Institutions in the 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.

Several campuses in Colorado signed on to the program shortly after last May’s commission meeting: Colorado State University–Pueblo; the University of Colorado Denver, Downtown Campus (for both domestic and international students); the University of Colorado Colorado Springs; and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Since then, Metropolitan State University of Denver has also joined MHECare; its students will be enrolled beginning in fall 2013. The University of Alaska Anchorage and University of Alaska Fairbanks also recently joined. We expect several other institutions in the WICHE region will explore the program as we continue to spread the word about MHECare within our region.

MHECare offers both standard and customized Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act-compliant student health insurance plans. 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; or a plan with design features tailored to the institution’s student population. 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 student populations. As more campuses decide to offer MHECare, rates will be more stable over time due to the spread of risk. Institutions participating in MHECare can continue to maintain their existing relationship with an insurance broker or align directly with the program.

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, created this new initiative 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, 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 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 at jmock@wiche.edu or 303.541.0222. For more details on the plans’ key provisions and students’ out-of-pocket costs, see www.wiche.edu/ mhecare and www.mhec.org/mhecare.

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 higher education institutions, 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 (58 members) have total insured values of $86.4 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 began participating in the MPP in 2009. The program is currently underwritten by Lexington (AIG) and is jointly administered by Marsh and Captive Resources under the direction of a leadership committee representative of the participating insured institutions. 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)
- College of Idaho
- Seattle Pacific University (WA)
- Westminster College (UT)
- Willamette University (OR)
- University of Northern Colorado
- University of Wyoming

Representatives from member campuses will participate in the March 4-6, 2014, MPP Loss Control Workshop in St. Louis, with a focus on topics relevant to risk management and current events in higher education. The workshop includes risk managers, campus security, facilities, and environmental health and safety staff who exchange best practices and lessons learned during the workshop.
WICHE staff continues to work with the program administrators to provide information on the Master Property Program to institutions in the West.

**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.
INFORMATION ITEM
Student Exchange Program Update

As WICHE celebrates its 60th year, so does WICHE’s Student Exchange Program. In its first year – 1953 – WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) enrolled 48 students in three fields: allopathic medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. The students hailed from five WICHE states: Arizona (10 students), Montana (4), New Mexico (20), Oregon (3), and Wyoming (11). PSEP, and the two exchanges created in subsequent years, the Western Regional Graduate Program and the Western Undergraduate Exchange, have experienced phenomenal growth over the years. In 2013 staff estimates that almost 133,000 students have benefited from WICHE’s undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs over 60 years. To get a “visual” of the number of students served, imagine Coors Field – Colorado’s baseball stadium – which seats some 50,500 guests. To date, WICHE’s student exchange alumni could fill that stadium 2.63 times! The program has significantly helped Western states build workforces and strengthen their economies.

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. The multilateral exchange has been operating for 25 years and is the largest program of its kind in the nation. In 2012-13 some 31,000 WUE students and their families saved more than $235.8 million in tuition costs. Residents of WICHE member states can choose from more than 150 participating WUE institutions. For the coming 2014-15 academic year, Washington State University’s Tri-Cities campus joined WUE, and Adams State University (located in Colorado) has reactivated its participation.

Staff expects that WUE enrollments will continue to grow in 2013-14 and will have estimates of this year’s enrollments at the November 2013 commission meeting. There is still a strong interest in WUE by California residents, and residents of WICHE’s newest member, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Word about WUE is spreading to other island groups (outside of CNMI) in the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states, as well. Staff is seeing a significant increase in WUE inquiries from Guam, American Samoa, and the Federate States of Micronesia. However, the respective island groups must join CNMI to contribute to WICHE dues in order for their residents to become eligible to enroll at the discounted WUE rate. Northern Marianas College, CNMI’s community college located in Saipan, has expressed interest in enrolling WUE students. CNMI will sign the WUE Agreement this fall, and then WICHE can make Northern Marianas College’s participation in WUE official.

WICHE staff also continues to work with the California Community Colleges’ chancellor’s office to sign on California two-year colleges. Several under-enrolled colleges are interested in enrolling students through WUE, especially those in rural areas and in close proximity to the border states of Arizona and Nevada.

Western Regional Graduate Program. WRGP allows master’s, graduate certificate, and doctoral students who are residents of the 15 participating states and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to enroll in some 320 high-quality programs at some 56 participating institutions on a resident tuition basis. In fall 2012, 1,008 students enrolled through WRGP and saved an estimated $15.2 million in tuition. Staff anticipates that program enrollments will continue to increase; we will present estimated numbers at the November meeting.

WICHE is accepting nominations for new WRGP programs this fall. 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 graduate programs in healthcare (for fields not available through WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program) and on-the-rise sectors including microtechnology and nanotechnology; green building and building energy conservation; emerging media and communications; biotechnology and bioinformatics; computer and cyber security; alternative energy technology and sustainability; geospatial technology; market research and data mining; and homeland security and emergency and disaster management.

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). Healthcare-related programs are not subject to the distinctiveness criteria because of their high workforce demand. However, nominated programs must be of high quality to be approved for participation.

WRGP is a tremendous opportunity for WICHE states to share distinctive programs (and the faculty who teach them) and build their workforces in a variety of disciplines, particularly in healthcare and sciences. WRGP now includes some
110 healthcare-related programs, including those in graduate nursing with a wide array of specializations and the doctorate of nursing practice. Programs are also available in public health, mental health and psychology, audiology and speech pathology, biomedical informatics, pharmaceutical sciences and pharmacogenomics, and much more.

Participating programs have found WRGP to be a valuable 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 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 11 Western states (all WICHE members except California, Idaho, Oregon, South Dakota, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) with access to a wide range of professional programs that otherwise might not be affordable for them because the fields of study are not offered at public institutions in their home states. The home state pays a support fee to the admitting schools to help cover the cost of the student’s education and the student pays reduced tuition. 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 2013-14 academic year, approximately 665 students are enrolled through PSEP, with support fees totaling $14,544,986. Student enrollment numbers appear comparable to last year’s; staff will have exact participation numbers at the commission meeting, once all contract changes have been processed. WICHE staff has begun researching current tuition costs and other indices to propose an appropriate increase in support fees for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years. The proposed rates will be reviewed and voted by WICHE commissioners at our May 2014 meeting in Santa Fe.

Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency reform. In May 2013 WICHE Student Exchange Program staff convened a small meeting of individuals from WICHE’s Policy unit, the University of Colorado Denver’s School of Medicine, the Colorado Association of Family Medicine Residencies, and the dean of the University of Wyoming’s Department of Health Sciences. The group discussed possible regional efforts to build support for GME reform and ways to increase residency slots in the Western U.S., particularly for physicians of family medicine in rural areas. As a result Dan Burke, from the University of Colorado Denver’s Department of Family Medicine, presented at WICHE’s September 2013 Legislative Advisory Committee meeting in Las Vegas, outlining strategies to grow the primary care workforce through GME benchmarking and enforcement by creating a workforce that is at least 40 percent primary care physicians (PCPs). Nevada WICHE Commissioner Senator Joseph Hardy provided a response to Burke’s presentation and described some approaches Nevada is taking, including using private funding to support PCP residencies. The session was well received by participating legislators.

Updates on Veterinary Medical Education in the WICHE region. At the May 2013 commission meeting in Spokane, staff reported on several new doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) programs that were under consideration. Following are updates on the status of these programs.

- Montana State University (MSU) received one-time funding of $1 million for a “1+3” joint program with Washington State University (WSU). The MSU/WSU will enroll its first class of 10 Montana resident students in Fall 2014. The students will do their first year of studies on the MSU campus, and then transfer to the WSU campus in Pullman, Washington, for the remaining three years. The Montana University System Office wishes to continue supporting students through WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) and has budgeted to support nine new students through PSEP for 2014-15.

- The University of Arizona’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences had requested $250,000 from the state legislature to conduct a feasibility study to explore opening a DVM program. The request for support was not approved. Nonetheless, the College proceeded with a smaller study and is still actively working on the program. The College will present a request to the Board of Regents for support this fall. Shane Burgess, the college’s dean attended WICHE’s Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council’s meeting in Sedona in June 2013 to describe the proposed accelerated DVM program, which, if funded and accredited, would be designed to enroll highly qualified third-year undergraduates and graduate them with their professional DVM degree within five years (two years of upper division undergraduate studies followed by three years of professional graduate education).
Midwestern University in Glendale, Arizona – a private institution – will open its new program in Fall 2014. It will not be qualified to enroll WICHE PSEP students until it has graduated its first class and is fully accredited. We anticipate that earliest PSEP students will be able to enroll there is Fall 2019. Dean of the new College of Veterinary Medicine, Brian Sidaway, also spoke at WICHE’s Veterinary Medicine Advisory Council’s meeting in Sedona.

As discussed in the Programs and Services Committee meeting in May 2013, the need to open new veterinary medicine programs in the Western states (and anywhere in the U.S., for that matter) is questionable, in light of recent studies. WICHE staff shared the recent opinion issued by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) with the Programs and Services Committee in Spokane (see minutes, pp. 4-5, for details).

More recently, a study entitled “2013 U.S. Veterinary Workforce Study: Modeling Capacity Utilization” was released by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA, www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reports/Pages/2013-US-Veterinary-Workforce-Study.aspx). There is a significant shortage of veterinary workforce data at the state and national levels, so conducting the study required complex modeling and many educated assumptions. AVMA has vowed to develop better veterinary workforce economic databases to support monitoring veterinary workforce needs with data-driven conclusions in the future. An in-depth article, “Service Surplus,” featured in the June 2013 issue of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, discusses the findings (www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/130601a.aspx). The upshot of the study is that researchers identified an 11 to 14 percent underutilization of today’s veterinary workforce, and it’s projected to continue through 2025. It’s estimated that 90,200 DVMs are practicing, but only 78,950 DVMs are really needed to fill current demand for veterinary services. Researchers speculate that the excess capacity of an estimated 12,300 veterinarians has manifested as underemployment of DVMs rather than unemployed DVMs. Excess capacity in equine medicine is estimated at 23 percent, followed by the small animal sector (18 percent); the food animal sector’s excess capacity is rated at 15 percent. In the article, Michael Cavanaugh, executive director of the American Animal Hospital Association commented, “The study results are concerning and should end any arguments relating to a shortage of veterinarians.” Furthermore, AVMA’s president, Douglas Aspros urges policymakers and leaders of existing and planned veterinary colleges to “closely study the report and carefully consider its implications.”

Sufficient capacity is already available in WICHE’s current partner schools of veterinary medicine. They are Colorado State University, Oregon State University, and Washington State University. The University of California Davis will also begin receiving PSEP students in fall 2014, and Western University of Health Sciences is planning to begin enrolling our students in fall 2015.