Since 1952 New Mexico has been a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success.

In the six-plus decades since New Mexico joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- Thousands of students from New Mexico have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE’s Student Exchange Program, saving millions of dollars, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, New Mexico students and their families have saved $70 million since 1988, when the program was founded. (See “Doing the Math,” below, for New Mexico’s return on investment.)

- New Mexico has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.

- New Mexico has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

WICHE and New Mexico have shared a remarkably fruitful history. But their prospects for the future are even more exciting.

**WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).** A new initiative, SARA addresses the critical topic of postsecondary distance education regulation. Funded by a $2.3 million Lumina Foundation grant, SARA is a national initiative spearheaded by the National Council for SARA, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, the New England Board of Higher Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and WICHE. In an era when students can take online courses from institutions based all over the country, states have been faced with the challenging task of authorizing all out-of-state institutions offering online courses to their students, while institutions have often had to pay substantial fees to the many states in which they operate. SARA offers a cost-effective, efficient, straightforward framework for authorization that institutions, states, and students can trust. The National SARA Council, housed at WICHE, coordinates SARA’s work across the four regional compacts.

New Mexico is active in all three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2013-14 New Mexico’s students and families saved some $7.1 million. New Mexico saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

**Western Undergraduate Exchange.** New Mexico students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond New Mexico’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2013-14, 621 students from New Mexico are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving more than $4.1 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amount to $6,624. In the last 10 years, students have saved $70 million.

**Doing the Math: New Mexico’s Return on Investment**

In 2013-14 New Mexico, its institutions, and its students saved $7.2 million through WICHE and spent $131,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 55-fold return on investment.

In the last 5 years, New Mexico students’ savings from WUE alone have added up to $22.5 million, yielding a 35-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.
New Mexico benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. New Mexico’s institutions can choose how many out-of-state slots to offer and in which areas, allowing them to make the best use of their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There’s a workforce benefit for the state, too, as students often stay in New Mexico after graduating. In 2013-14 New Mexico received 1,116 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** New Mexico has sent some 1,500 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in two critical fields: dentistry and veterinary medicine. Historically, some 88 percent of PSEP students return to New Mexico to pursue their professional careers.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** New Mexico’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to over 314 high-quality, distinctive programs (“distinctive” meaning that they’re offered at only four or fewer institutions in the WICHE region) at 56 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, and resource-management fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2013-14 New Mexico sent 70 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 26.

**Internet Course Exchange (ICE).** WICHE ICE is an alliance of member institutions and systems with a set of policies, procedures, and support systems for sharing distance-delivered courses among two- and four-year institutions in the WICHE region.

**WICHE’s Added Value**

New Mexico gains added value from WICHE’s programs in policy, workforce development, technology, mental health, and other areas.

**Policy & Workforce Development.** New Mexico has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. In addition, WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues, including the state’s workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio between grants, loans, and scholarships, as well as between merit- and need-based aid. WICHE President David Longanecker has worked with New Mexico Higher Education Department and Legislature to develop a performance-based funding structure, including facilitating a retreat in Boulder on funding and accountability processes with business, education, and government stakeholders.

Most recently, WICHE staff has been integrally involved in the New Mexico Department of Higher Education’s efforts to design and adopt a **new funding model** for the state. WICHE has considerable expertise and experience working with states on such models, which seek to fund higher education institutions for the outcomes they produce (including degree and certificate completions and student academic progress). WICHE’s facilitation of a retreat for senior leaders within the department and among New Mexico’s public institutions and its ongoing involvement in the **policy development process** has helped the state sharpen its focus on how the policy might best meet its needs while taking into account the perspectives of key stakeholders.

WICHE’s Lumina-funded project **Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid** promoted informed decision making and the alignment of higher education **appropriations, tuition, and financial aid** policy by state legislators, to improve student access and success. WICHE sent copies of the project’s eight policy briefs to all members of the New Mexico Legislature.

New Mexico also participated in another Lumina project, **Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and**
“As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a veterinarian. I also knew from a young age that I wanted to attend Colorado State University for my DVM, and when I discovered in high school that CSU was a WICHE school, the possibility that those two dreams could become a reality intensified. WICHE’s PSEP is such an amazing opportunity! Vet school is expensive and stressful any way you look at it, but receiving PSEP support relieves part of the financial burden and reduces the stress. I look forward to returning to New Mexico after graduation, to serve my state and show my gratitude for helping me accomplish this life-long goal.”

– Becca, New Mexico resident, Class of 2016, Colorado State University, Veterinary Medicine

**Transfer Systems**, to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their **articulation and transfer** programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions, focusing on strategies that increase access to and success in higher education. New Mexico participated in a meeting organized by WICHE and the Sullivan Alliance aimed at improving the production of graduates in **high-demand health-related fields**, with a particular focus on students from underrepresented backgrounds. The state also participated in a Gates-funded meeting that brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 of the WICHE states for discussions around linking data internally and with other states. Another meeting was the **Western Summit on Workforce Certification and Higher Education** for policymakers in the West. Participants explored how states might use a workforce certification system – which would allow business and higher education to communicate with a common language about workforce demand and supply.

Additionally, New Mexico State University, New Mexico Highlands University, the University of New Mexico, and Western New Mexico University are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum**, whose members address regional higher education issues and engage in resource sharing. Another WICHE initiative, the **Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders**, brings academic leaders of community colleges and technical schools and systems together with state governing and coordinating boards associated with two-year institutions to exchange ideas, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. New Mexico State University Alamogordo and New Mexico Military Institute are members.

**Technology.** Several New Mexico colleges and universities are active participants in the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)**, a membership cooperative that accelerates the adoption of effective practices and policies to advance excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education. WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. WCET provides access to peers, colleagues, common interest groups, experts, and decision makers; communications tools that enable members to stay informed about developments affecting technology-enabled teaching and learning; and information about key developments affecting e-learning providers, such as new federal rules pertaining to distance education. WCET also manages multi-institutional projects, one aimed at adult online learners and another on large-scale student data aggregation and predictive analytics to improve student outcomes.

**Mental Health.** A nucleus for researching mental health policy and a provider of technical assistance in such areas as service innovation, system reform, workforce development, program evaluation, and other areas, WICHE’s **Mental Health Program** is another well-used resource available to New Mexico. Just one project: A collaboration with Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico to improve crisis intervention, including mental health first aid training, trauma-informed care training, and support for a behavioral health “promotoras” initiative, as well as technical assistance.

**Other Initiatives.** New Mexico participated in the WICHE-managed **State Scholars Initiative**, a national business/education partnership working to increase the number of students taking a rigorous curriculum in high school; its program was funded by a grant of $300,000 from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Another initiative, the **Master Property Program (MPP)**, helps institutions in the West reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the

“My home state did not offer a master’s program in health physics. Through WICHE’s WRGP, I was able to look at other schools in the West and decided on Colorado State University. I am now enrolled in one of the leading health physics programs in the country!”

– Britt, New Mexico resident, Class of 2014, Colorado State University, Radiological Health Sciences - Health Physics
“WICHE’s PSEP has made a huge difference in my life. I have known that I wanted to be a dentist since I was 10 years old, but getting to dental school is quite a task, and financing it is even harder. PSEP has helped me realize my goals not only by supporting me financially but also by being a continual reminder that I will one day serve the great state of New Mexico. Going into dental school, I knew I wanted to be involved in public health dentistry but didn’t know how. WICHE supported me while I attended school at the Oregon Health & Sciences University and then when I transferred to the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health to increase my knowledge of public health dentistry. PSEP supported me through the transition, and the remainder of my scholarship transferred with me. Thank you!”

– JP, New Mexico resident, Class of 2014, A. T. Still University/Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health & Oregon Health & Sciences University, Dentistry

WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes 58 member institutions with total insured values of $86.4 billion. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer MHECare, a new health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans.

New Mexico & WICHE’s Leadership
The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization’s mission and sets its priorities. New Mexico’s commissioners are: José Garcia, cabinet secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department, Santa Fe; Mark Moores, state senator, Albuquerque; and Patricia Anaya Sullivan, assistant dean, College of Engineering, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.

WICHE also seeks assistance and advice from policymakers, educators, administrators and legislators. WICHE’s Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC), composed of legislator-members from each state – including Senator Moores, Senator John Sapien, and Representative Larry Larrañaga – has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep the commission’s Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and advises staff on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serves the LAC, by informing its members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff
The WICHE Commission’s 16 members include representatives from 15 Western states – Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate). Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

WICHE and its staff are headquartered in Boulder, CO, and operate out of the State Higher Education Policy Center, which WICHE owns with the State Higher Education Executive Officers association and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Staff leadership includes:

David Longanecker, president
Erin Barber, executive assistant to the president and to the commission
Mollie McGill, interim co-director, WCET
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health
Russell Poulin, interim co-director, WCET

How can I find out more about WICHE?
Visit our website at www.wiche.edu or contact President David Longanecker at 303.541.0201.

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