NORTH DAKOTA & WICHE
Working Together for Three Decades

Since 1984 North Dakota 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 three decades since North Dakota joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- Thousands of students from North Dakota 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, North Dakota students and their families have saved over $31 million since 1988, when the state joined the program. (See “Doing the Math,” below, for North Dakota’s return on investment.)
- North Dakota has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- North Dakota has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: North Dakota’s Return on Investment

In 2013-14 North Dakota, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some $2.5 million through WICHE and spent $131,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 19-fold return on investment.

In the last 5 years, North Dakota students’ savings from WUE alone have totaled more than $6.2 million, yielding a 10-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

WICHE and North Dakota 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.

North Dakota 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 North Dakota’s students and families saved over $2.1 million. North Dakota saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. North Dakota students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond North Dakota’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2013-14, 362 students from North Dakota are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $1.1 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $3,024. In the last 10 years, students have saved over $15 million.
North Dakota benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. North Dakota’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 North Dakota after graduating. In 2013-14 North Dakota received 2,077 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** North Dakota has sent almost 400 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including dentistry, optometry, and veterinary medicine.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** North Dakota’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to some 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 North Dakota sent 16 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 16.

**Internet Course Exchange (ICE).** Institutions in North Dakota are eligible to become members of WICHE ICE, 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.

North Dakota is one of four partner states participating in the **Interstate Passport Initiative** which has developed a new learning-outcomes-based framework for transfer. The goal of the effort is to improve graduation rates, shorten time to degree, and save money for the West’s increasingly mobile students by ensuring that they are not required to repeat learning they have already achieved. The interstate transfer framework is being rolled out in phases. Sixteen institutions in four states – including Lake Region State College, North Dakota State University, North Dakota State College of Science, and Valley City State University – have agreed to award the Passport to students who achieve its Phase I learning outcomes during the next five years.

**WICHE’s Added Value**

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

**Policy & Workforce Development.** North Dakota has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. 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.

North Dakota is one of four Western states participating in the **Adult College Completion Network.** The ACC Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, is a nationwide collaborative learning network that shares promising strategies among institutions, organizations, state agencies, and others working to increase completion rates for adults with prior college credit. The network offers a listerv and webinars on issues related to adult completion, and an annual meeting of large-scale projects working in this area. North Dakota was also chosen for an earlier, related Lumina-funded project: **Non-traditional No More.** WICHE worked with state leaders to identify the “ready adult” population – those who have almost enough credits to graduate but

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**Figure 1. North Dakota Savings and Revenues through WICHE in 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student Savings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Revenue to ND Institutions (PSEP)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WUE</strong></td>
<td>$1,094,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSEP</strong></td>
<td>$812,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WRGP</strong></td>
<td>$224,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,131,318</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,452,852</strong></td>
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—I’m in my first year of veterinary school at Colorado State University. My home state of North Dakota does not have a veterinary school but I was fortunate to be sponsored through WICHE PSEP program, so I pay in-state tuition. Without this support, tuition costs would have been double, and the decision to pursue veterinary medicine would have been more difficult. North Dakota’s participation in PSEP allows me to attend one of the top schools without the extra financial burden of paying out-of-state tuition. Thank you, North Dakota, for supporting this invaluable program and helping keep my tuition cost at a more manageable amount! I encourage North Dakota legislators to continue their support of future veterinarians through WICHE’s PSEP.

— Jessie, North Dakota resident, Class of 2016, Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
who have not yet returned to college – and help them earn their degrees. Over two years the state received $65,000 and technical assistance.

North Dakota participates in the College Access Regional (CAR) Network, a collaborative effort that brings together state projects focused on increasing postsecondary access and success for low-income students. The CAR Network began as the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Network, an effort to spur collaboration between states who were receiving the federal CACG, which aims to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. In 2013, WICHE expanded eligibility for the Network to include other large scale programs focused on similar goals.

WICHE staffers have worked with North Dakota in a variety of areas. WICHE President David Longanecker testified before the Legislature on performance-funding activities around the country and opportunities in this area for the state, while Director of Policy Analysis Demi Michelau spoke at a North Dakota Adult Learners Council meeting on the importance of serving adult learners and how to do it more effectively. In 2008 WICHE hosted several state legislators to facilitate a discussion around how a legislative interim committee might structure its work to more intentionally engage its state’s Higher Education Roundtable to align institutions’ activities with current and future state workforce needs.

North Dakota 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, held in response to the national demand for more highly skilled workers in a host of fields, from healthcare to high tech.

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 North Dakota Legislature.

North Dakota also participated in another Lumina project, Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems, which seeks 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.

Additionally, the North Dakota University System and its members are part 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 and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. Williston State College is a member.

Technology. Several North Dakota colleges and universities are active participants in the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), a national membership cooperative that accelerates the adoption of effective practices and policies to advance excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education. The North Dakota Distance Learning Consortium tapped WCET’s expertise on federal rules impacting e-learning to keep its institutions informed; several North Dakota institutions have substantial out-of-state enrollments in their online programs and could be required to meet these new rules. WCET also consulted with officials of the North Dakota University System regarding how the services of NDUS Online compared to e-learning consortia in other states.

WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. Key WCET
activities include an annual meeting, leadership summits, national webcasts, and listserv-based discussions among members. Major focus areas include state authorization, academic integrity and student authentication, competency-based education and alternative credentials, analytics in higher education, and emerging technologies.

**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. The program has been working with the chancellor of higher education to look for ways to improve campus mental health services. North Dakota schools were also included in a research study, funded by the National Institute for Mental Health, that focused on campus mental health and the effects of mental health first aid training for campus residence life staff. The program also assisted the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division in planning related to behavioral health workforce development.

**North Dakota & WICHE’s Leadership**

The **WICHE Commission**, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. North Dakota’s commissioners are: Duaine Espegard, president, State Board of Higher Education, Grand Forks; Ray Holmberg, senator, North Dakota State Senate, Grand Forks; and Larry Skogen, interim chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck.

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 Holmberg and Representative Bob Martinson – 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 on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serves the LAC, informing members about emerging Western policy issues.

**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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**Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education**

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