OREGON & WICHE
Working Together for Over a Half Century

Since 1953 Oregon 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 decades since Oregon joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

▶ Tens of thousands of students from Oregon have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE’s Student Exchange Program, saving millions of dollars in all, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Oregon students have saved $157 million since 1989, when the state joined the program. (See “Doing the Math,” below, for Oregon’s return on investment.)

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

▶ Oregon has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

WICHE and Oregon 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.

Oregon is active in two of the three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2013-14 Oregon’s students and families saved $13 million in tuition. Oregon saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Oregon students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Oregon’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1989. In 2013-14, 1,447 students from Oregon are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $11.9 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $8,200. In the last 10 years, students have saved $62 million.

Doing the Math: Oregon’s Return on Investment
In 2013-14 Oregon, its institutions, and its students saved $14.7 million through WICHE and spent $131,000 for membership in the commission, yielding an 91-fold return on investment.

In the last 5 years, Oregon students’ savings from WUE alone have added up to $62 million, yielding a 98-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.
their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There’s a workforce benefit for the state, too, as students often stay in Oregon after graduating. In 2013-14 Oregon received 2,409 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** Oregon sent 1,258 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) in past years. Currently, Oregon is a PSEP receiving state, with 99 students enrolled in professional programs, bringing in almost $1.8 million in revenue.

**Western Regional Graduate Program.** Oregon’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 Oregon sent 80 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 112.

**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.

Oregon 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. 16 institutions in four states – including Eastern Oregon University and Blue Mountain Community College – have agreed to award the Passport to students who achieve its Phase I learning outcomes during the next five years.

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<th>Figure 1. Oregon Savings and Revenues through WICHE, 2013</th>
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<td><strong>Student Savings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Revenue to OR Institutions (PSEP)</strong></td>
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**WICHE’s Added Value**

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

**Policy & Workforce Development.** Oregon has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, 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.

Oregon is one of four states participating in the Gates-funded *Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange* pilot project, which attempts to enable a more comprehensive regional view of the creation of human capital and its flow among multiple states by exchanging data across K-12 education, postsecondary education, and the workforce. 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. 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 – to improve their ability to prepare individuals for productive careers and enhance the health of their economies.

WICHE staff provided intensive technical assistance to the gubernatorially appointed Access and Affordability Working Group, offering expertise and modeling for a
"I was eager to join the Oregon Health and Science University to earn my Doctorate in Nursing Practice working as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. However earning a doctoral degree in the nursing profession is a costly endeavor, especially if you’re paying out-of-state tuition. Although I was fully prepared to cut out any and all superfluous expenses, the correlation between how financially indebted one is to how successful they can be in school is undeniable. The stress of accruing enormous school loans was overwhelming, which is why I sincerely appreciate WRGP! WRGP affords me peace of mind and the ability to responsibly pursue my dream of working with the underserved population desperately in need of mental health services.”

– Iris, Oregon resident, Class of 2015, Oregon Health & Science University

redesign of the state’s principal student financial aid program. The program was enacted into law; WICHE continues to consult on program management.

WICHE’s Lumina-funded project Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid (GWYPF) 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 Oregon Legislature. In addition, WICHE President David Longanecker, along with National Center for Higher Education Management Systems President Dennis Jones, met with state leaders and addressed a joint hearing of the education and workforce development committees of both the House and Senate about the role, scope, and mission of higher education, with a particular focus on mission creep, a topic of one of the GWYPF policy briefs. Longanecker worked with the Legislature on developing a new higher education governance structure and with the Governor’s Office on creating a new state education investment board.

Oregon 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 Oregon University System, Portland State University, Pacific University, Oregon State University, and University of Oregon 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 and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. The Oregon Department of Community Colleges, Central Oregon Community College, and Southwestern Oregon Community College are members.

Technology. Several Oregon 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 has consulted with and written grants for the Western Institute of Nursing at Oregon Health & Science University with the Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus).

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. The program recently performed a cost-benefit analysis for the State of Oregon of an...
early-intervention program designed for persons with serious, early-onset psychiatric disorders.

Other Initiatives. Lewis & Clark College, Reed College, and Willamette University are members of the Master Property Program (MPP), which helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes 50 member institutions with total insured values of $83.1 billion. It has generated over $65.4 million in savings for the participating institutions while expanding their insurance coverage. 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.

Oregon & WICHE’s Leadership
In 2007 Camille Preus, president of Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, chaired the WICHE Commission, whose members mold the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Oregon’s other two commissioners are: Ryan Deckert, president, Oregon Business Association, Portland; and Hilda Rosselli, deputy director of college and career readiness, Oregon Education Investment Board, Salem.

The LAC keeps 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 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-executive director, WCET
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services
Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health
Russell Poulin, interim co-executive 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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