

# The Evolving Landscape of Western Higher Education

## What's Changed, What's Changing, and What's Staying the Same?

WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee Annual Meeting

September 11-12, 2024 | Denver, CO

### Agenda

#### Wednesday, September 11

8:00-9:00 am  
Copper Foyer

Breakfast

9:00-9:30 am  
Copper Ballroom

#### Welcome & Introductions

After a welcome and overview of the Legislative Advisory Committee from WICHE staff, legislators will share their higher education priorities with the group.

#### Facilitator

Demarée Michelau, President, WICHE

9:30-10:45 am  
Copper Ballroom

#### Today's Students

This session will offer insights on postsecondary enrollment trends in the West, what WICHE's latest demographic projections suggest about future years, and how Western institutions are responding. A facilitated discussion around what these trends mean for higher education across participants' contexts will follow.

#### Moderator

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

#### Speakers

Peace Bransberger, Director, Programs and Evidence, WICHE

Lisa Matye Edwards, Vice President for Student Affairs, Arapaho  
Community College

Olivia Tufo, Manager of Community Engagement and Development, WICHE

10:45-11:00 am

Break

11:00 am-12:00 pm  
Copper Ballroom

#### EVOLVING POSTSECONDARY DELIVERY MODELS

One thing is certain; today's students are demanding a more flexible postsecondary education system. In response, providers are exploring new ways to offer postsecondary education. These sessions will examine promising approaches to building a more adaptable and responsive system.

#### Part 1: Nondegree Credentials

As activity around federal financial aid for shorter-term postsecondary programs intensifies, states are paying increasing attention to nondegree credentials. This session will examine how states across the West are both



investing in and exercising oversight over short-term programs and highlight innovative examples of short-term offerings designed to meet critical workforce needs.

**Moderator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

**Speakers**

Paul Gladen, Director, Accelerate MT and Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development, University of Montana  
Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health, WICHE

12:00-1:00 pm  
Copper Foyer

Lunch

1:00-2:15 pm  
Copper Ballroom

**EVOLVING POSTSECONDARY DELIVERY MODELS**

**Part 2: Stackable Credentials**

The concept of breaking down lengthy degree pathways into shorter-term, “stackable” components has been around for years, but has been gaining momentum as students exhibit an ever-growing preference for postsecondary options that allow them to move in and out of postsecondary education over time. Several states have begun to explicitly invest in this concept. This session will explore the evidence around stackable credentials’ impact and how one state’s legislature opted to invest in the approach.

**Moderator**

Colleen Falkenstern, Senior Research Analyst, WICHE

**Speakers**

Lindsay Daugherty, Senior Policy Researcher; Professor of Policy Analysis, Pardee RAND Graduate School  
Angie Paccione, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education  
Chris Rasmussen, Senior Director of Academic Pathways and Innovation Colorado Department of Higher Education

2:15-3:15 pm  
Copper Ballroom

**Accreditation – What are the Core Principles and What’s Changing?**

Accreditation has unexpectedly moved into the national spotlight in the last few years, as an emerging area of interest for federal and state policymakers. This session will provide an overview of the core functions of accreditation and how accreditors themselves are evolving in the face of a changing higher education ecosystem.

**Moderator**

Ray Burgman Gallegos, Vice President, Programs and Services, WICHE

**Speakers**

Selena Grace, Executive Vice President, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Karen Solomon, Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer, Higher Learning Commission

3:15-3:30 pm

**Break**

3:30-4:30 pm

Copper Ballroom

**Approaches & Considerations for Supporting Student Well-being**

This session will explore diverse strategies for supporting well-being, from considering evidence-based investments in digital mental health interventions to developing cross-sector statewide collaborations to comprehensively meet students' needs.

**Moderator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

**Speaker**

Daniel Eisenberg, Professor of Health Policy of Management, Fielding School of Public Health, UCLA

6:15 pm

Lobby

**Group Dinner**

Please meet in the hotel lobby outside the elevators to join LAC attendees for a group dinner at Tom's Watch Bar at 6:30 pm.

## Thursday, September 12

7:30-8:30 am

Copper Foyer

**Breakfast**

8:30-9:30 am

Copper Ballroom

**A Statewide Approach to Assessing and Meeting Postsecondary Students' Basic Needs**

Research—and students themselves—are increasingly revealing that basic needs and well-being are a critical component of student success in postsecondary education. As higher education's understanding of what students need evolves, so too must the supports that are offered. Ensuring student basic needs such as housing and food security are met is a complex process involving the intersection of many funding streams, agencies, and levels of policymaking. How are legislators working to support their state's students in these areas?

**Moderator**

Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, WICHE

**Speaker**

Ami Magisos, Associate Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Washington Student Achievement Council

9:30-10:30 am

Copper Ballroom

**Artificial Intelligence & Higher Education**

Higher education is interacting with artificial intelligence (AI) in a variety of ways, from workforce development to changing approaches to teaching and learning to operational innovations. What has AI already changed about the higher education sector and what might it change in the future?



**Moderator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE

**Speaker**

Van Davis, Chief Strategy Officer, WCET

10:30-11:00 am

Extended break (check out of hotel)

11:00 am-12:00 pm  
Copper Ballroom

**The Role of Legislators in an Evolving Higher Education Landscape –  
Looking Ahead to 2025 and Beyond**

Participants will reflect on what they believe are the critical adaptations that higher education will need to make in response to current trends and how they expect to impact these changes as legislators in the coming year.

**Facilitator**

Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, WICHE