

FY 2024 **ANNUAL REPORT**

**WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

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# WELCOME



Demarée Michelau  
President, WICHE



Antwan Jefferson  
Chair, WICHE Commission

**S**uccessful graduates are living proof of the undeniable value of postsecondary education. Research continues to back this up: 85% of good jobs will go to workers with some form of postsecondary education or training by 2031, according to a recent Georgetown University report, and the *Lumina Gallup State of Higher Education Report 2024* states that most Americans understand the importance of education beyond high school.

Yet, work remains in restoring the public's confidence in the promise of higher education. WICHE continually looks for innovative ways to support valuable pathways between postsecondary education and workforce in the region — and there is no shortage of opportunities. We invite you to read about our most recent efforts in the pages of this *WICHE Annual Report Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)*:

- ▶ WICHE's Student Access Programs continue to reduce the cost of tuition for undergraduate, master's, and professional students in the West. In academic year (AY) 2023-24, more than 50,000 students in total saved an estimated \$613 million through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).
- ▶ The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities, funded by a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation, is now in its final year of providing two-year fellowships. Of the eight fellows from the first cohort, six have been promoted into leadership roles, and the second cohort is underway.
- ▶ After overseeing a policy brief series and roundtable discussions about nursing shortages, WICHE continues to explore evidence-based approaches through practice and policy to address the region's healthcare workforce needs.
- ▶ WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies has published several resources to support institutions navigating the role of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education.
- ▶ Since its inception in 2015, Together With Veterans, WICHE's rural Veteran suicide prevention program funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, has launched sites across 26 states, territories, and sovereign nations.
- ▶ And, in late 2023, American Samoa passed the necessary legislation to join WICHE. This reflects that all eligible states, territories, and freely associated states in the West have access to our tuition savings programs, workforce development support, behavioral health programs, and other resources.
- ▶ By the time this annual report goes to print, WICHE will have released the 11th edition of *Knocking at the College Door: High School Projections* which you can read more about on page 16.

Responding to shifting population demographics and emerging educational trends requires a shared vision and creative approaches to expand, align, and perhaps even redefine what successful pathways look like between higher education and workforce development. Thank you for being our partners in this worthwhile pursuit.

# ABOUT WICHE

## Our Vision

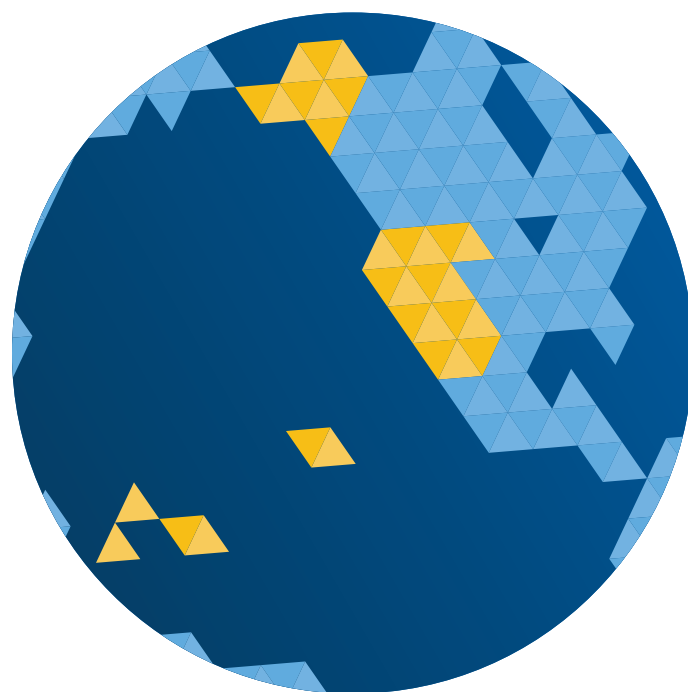
WICHE will strive to provide access to postsecondary education opportunities that are both valuable and equitable for residents of the West, so that all may realize their potential as individuals and contribute to the region's economic, social, and cultural vitality.

## Our Mission

WICHE works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.

## Our Region

- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Hawai'i
- Idaho
- Montana
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- North Dakota
- Oregon
- South Dakota
- Utah
- Washington
- Wyoming
- U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States
  - ▶ American Samoa
  - ▶ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
  - ▶ Federated States of Micronesia
  - ▶ Guam
  - ▶ Republic of the Marshall Islands
  - ▶ Republic of Palau



# ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, OPPORTUNITY

From its signature tuition savings programs to strategies for closing postsecondary attainment gaps, WICHE works to increase access and success for students in higher education through sharing resources and ideas.

## Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)

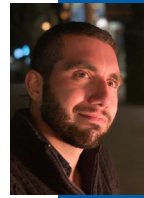
**WUE**, the nation's largest tuition savings program, broadened access to postsecondary education and saved 47,248 students an estimated \$559.1 million in tuition in AY 2023-24. The 169 public two- and four-year participating institutions in the WICHE region charge WUE students no more than 150% of resident tuition instead of the full nonresident rate.

While WUE institutions may tailor participation criteria, including admission requirements, eligible majors, and number of students accepted, most offer a reduced tuition rate to incoming transfer students and first-time-in-college students from the West. Through this program, many students can access majors that public institutions in their home state or Pacific territory may not offer.

WICHE member states and territories also benefit from participation in WUE. The exchange helps public colleges and universities meet their recruitment and enrollment goals. Some graduates stay in the state in which they studied after graduation, a bonus for those areas seeking to bolster and diversify their college-educated workforce. For locations with more demand for public higher education than supply, WUE is an ideal solution, allowing their residents access to postsecondary education without adding capacity at home.

In AY 2023-24, compared to the previous academic year, overall WUE enrollments increased 2.5%, WUE enrollment at four-year universities increased 3%, and WUE enrollment at two-year colleges decreased by less than 1%.

[wue.wiche.edu](http://wue.wiche.edu)



*As a first-generation college student from a family of migrant agricultural workers, finding an affordable, high-quality education was crucial. The WUE program allowed me to explore universities beyond my home state at reduced tuition rates, making higher education attainable without overwhelming debt. This financial support alleviated economic pressures, allowing me to focus on my studies and participate in extracurricular activities like nursing associations and volunteer work. These experiences enriched my education and expanded my professional network, preparing me for a career dedicated to serving others.*

**ADRIAN**, California resident, Nursing, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

## Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)

**WRGP** allows nonresident students in the WICHE region to pay no more than 150% of resident tuition for approximately 2,000 master's, graduate certificate, and doctoral programs at 67 participating public universities. In AY 2023-24, 2,877 students saved \$39.2 million in tuition through WRGP. The number of graduate programs available through WRGP continues to grow as participating public universities may make any graduate program eligible at the WRGP tuition rate.

WRGP remains a valuable option for students pursuing advanced degrees in high-need fields, particularly for healthcare-related degrees not offered through WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). Nursing, speech language pathology, social work, and public health were among the most popular graduate level majors for WRGP students during AY 2023-24. Additionally, many WRGP programs are offered online, enabling place-bound students, who may face barriers to leaving their home state or Pacific territory, to earn their educational credentials.

Participating public universities in the WICHE region also benefit from WRGP. The program helps universities recruit students to pursue educational goals at their public institutions. During a time of increasing concern over enrollment, WRGP is more important than ever.

[wrgp.wiche.edu](http://wrgp.wiche.edu)



*WRGP has helped me to grow both academically and personally. I am learning from amazing professors and gaining relevant research experience at a top Master of Public Health in Nutrition program. Additionally, WRGP has provided me with new experiences living in a different part of the country. I am so thankful for WRGP.*

**SABRINA**, South Dakota resident, Master of Public Health, Northern Arizona University

## Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

**PSEP** provides affordable access for students in the Western region to approximately 140 accredited professional healthcare programs at 65 institutions in 10 fields:

- ▶ Dentistry
- ▶ Medicine
- ▶ Occupational therapy
- ▶ Optometry
- ▶ Osteopathic medicine
- ▶ Pharmacy
- ▶ Physical therapy
- ▶ Physician assistant
- ▶ Podiatry
- ▶ Veterinary medicine

In AY 2023-24, 557 students received \$14.5 million (reflecting investment by their home legislatures) in tuition benefits through PSEP. Since 1953, WICHE has supported the education of 16,111 Western residents with affordable access to professional degrees through PSEP. Many of the graduates return home to fill key healthcare positions.

Thanks to PSEP, a student can save between \$35,700 and \$139,800 on tuition throughout a professional health degree program depending on the field of study. This savings not only reduces financial pressures — enabling students to work in rural areas that typically have lower salaries compared to urban areas — but also empowers students to pursue professional options that may be sorely needed, but less lucrative.



Western states, territories, and freely associated states benefit by inspiring and, in most participating states, requiring professionals to return home to practice and strengthen their communities' professional healthcare workforce. Guam passed the Biråda Act in April 2022 and has established a scholarship office to administer Guam's participation in PSEP for its residents; Guam admitted its first students through PSEP in Fall 2024.

[psep.wiche.edu](https://psep.wiche.edu)

## Cost-saving Opportunities

WICHE collaborates with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to offer cost-savings programs to postsecondary institutions; K-12 districts and schools; city, state, county, and local governments; and education-related nonprofits in the West.

The largest of these programs, in terms of purchasing volume, is **MHEC's technology contracts** offering cooperative contracts for an array of hardware, software, and technology services. During FY 2024, eligible entities throughout the West took advantage of these competitively bid contracts purchasing \$90 million in technology from Dell Technologies, HP Enterprise, HP Inc., Lenovo, Oracle, Presidio, SAS Institute, and XEROX.

MHEC also offers **student health solutions** for colleges and universities in the West with options for fully insured school-sponsored health plans and virtual mental health services for students. UnitedHealthcare Student Resources, META Teletherapy, and TAO Connect offer these student services. Each provider focuses on empowering students and offering resources tailored to the institution.

There is also insurance through HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, which partners with approximately 200 insurance carriers. While this service is available to students, their dependents, and graduates, it is also available for faculty and staff who want to buy insurance but are ineligible for employee benefits.

Visit [wiche.edu/key-initiatives/cost-savings-mhec-collaborations/](https://wiche.edu/key-initiatives/cost-savings-mhec-collaborations/) to learn more.

## Academic Partnerships

WICHE brings together senior academic leaders and provides opportunities for dialogue on current issues facing individual institutions through its leadership and professional development groups.

Visit [wiche.edu/academic-partnerships](https://wiche.edu/academic-partnerships) to learn more about becoming a member of the following Academic Partnerships programs.

The **Western Academic Leadership Forum (Forum)** is a membership organization that acts as a collaborative network. Its purpose is to facilitate the exchange of ideas, share resources, and foster expertise among key academic leaders within the WICHE region which includes both public and private institutions at the doctoral, master's, and bachelor's levels. In FY 2024, the Forum had a total of 64 members (54 institutions and 10 systems).

Notably, the Forum Annual Meeting was held in Honolulu, Hawai'i, during April 2024 with the theme of "Bridging Place and Purpose." Almost 70 academic leaders attended to discuss matters critical in higher education today, including building pipelines to meet workforce needs, using collaboration to address rural recruitment and retention of students, and lessons learned when responding to campuswide emergencies.



*The Forum has been instrumental in my own professional development by introducing me to colleagues across the West, providing excellent resources and webinars, and, most importantly, organizing the annual conference where each year we spend time discussing the critical issues challenging us and learn how others are addressing these same situations.*

**DEBORA J. HALBERT**, Vice President for Academic Strategy, University of Hawai'i System



*Being a part of the Alliance has significant value for academic leaders at our region's two-year colleges. Through Alliance resources, webinars, and especially its annual meeting, our members learn a great deal from one another's strategies for institutional and student success. At my college, these opportunities have given rise to new programs, better policies, and clearer processes, which benefits teaching, learning, and services, too. Plus, the professional connections that members enjoy are outstanding. Serving on the Alliance executive committee and participating on panels at our annual meeting have enriched my career and opened new horizons. I am grateful for these opportunities, and for the supportive WICHE staff and leadership. We encourage you to get involved and to enjoy the mutual benefits that our Alliance has to offer.*

**JEFFREY ALEXANDER**, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Truckee Meadows Community College (Nevada)

The **Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders (Alliance)** is a membership organization that fosters collaboration and problem-solving among chief academic officers (or their equivalents) at community colleges and technical schools within the WICHE region. This includes related systems and state coordinating and governing boards. In FY 2024, the Alliance consisted of 77 members (69 institutions and eight systems).

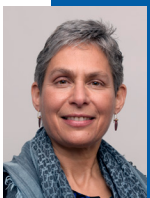
During the Alliance Annual Meeting in Tacoma, Washington, in October 2023, 61 attendees came together to discuss topics important to two-year institutions and the ways they educate students. The theme of the meeting was "Trailblazing a New Pathway: Challenging Assumptions about Community College," which included sessions addressing shared commitment to student success and community empowerment, faculty recruitment and retention, and maximizing institutional and community success with strategic partnerships.

The **Western Academic Leadership Academy (Academy)** is specifically designed to strengthen the pool of qualified chief academic leaders within institutions in the Western region. These leaders play a crucial role in shaping academic priorities and fostering excellence. Participants in the Academy are nominated by members of the Forum and the Alliance, two crucial networks within the WICHE region that serve as valuable platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange among academic leaders.

The Academy's activities revolve around several key areas:

- ▶ Understanding the context of academic leadership: This involves grasping the unique challenges and opportunities faced by academic officers
- ▶ Setting academic goals and priorities: Leaders learn how to align institutional objectives with broader educational goals
- ▶ Developing specific skill sets: Potential chief academic officers learn about the necessary competencies to excel in their possible future roles

The faculty of the Academy comprises experienced provosts and chief academic officers from the WICHE region. These faculty members actively participate in the Forum and the Alliance, ensuring their insights are grounded in practical experience. The eighth cohort of the Academy, consisting of 18 participants, convened in July 2023. During this gathering, they engaged with the Academy faculty and benefited from guest speakers who shared their expertise. Almost 34% of those who completed the Academy advanced in their careers within two years.



*The Western Academic Leadership Academy provides emerging academic leadership with a rich toolkit filled with peer knowledge, expert advice, and inspiration. This no-holds-barred training brings together like institutions grappling with similar challenges to knowledge share, led by a dedicated team of seasoned C-suite administrators from across higher education. Every question, addressed. Every issue, tackled.*

**LAURIE BAEFSKY**, Dean and Professor,  
University of Montana, Missoula

The **WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities**, funded by a two-year grant from the Mellon Foundation, allows institutions in the West to grow and diversify their academic administration by preparing humanities faculty to take on leadership roles effectively and confidently. The program launched in Fall 2023 with its first cohort of eight faculty fellows, all representing two- and four-year institutions in the West. The two-year program supports their leadership development through experiential learning, as they each have identified a project to focus on during their time in the program. The key competencies for the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities revolve around three key areas: career planning and development; project management; and organizational design and agility.

Throughout the AY 2023-24, the program manager for the WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities visited the three campuses of the eight participating institutions, allowing the faculty fellow and administrative staff to discuss the impact of the grant initiative and the plan for the sustainability of the project and leadership development of the faculty fellow. Of the first cohort, six of the eight fellows were promoted into leadership roles; Year Two of the grant is focusing on their leadership transition. Cohort Two fellows and institutions were selected in April 2023, and they convened in the late summer and early fall of 2024. The regional representation of participants for the first cohort includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Colorado, and Alaska. The regional representation of participants for the second cohort includes Washington, California, New Mexico, Colorado, and Alaska.



*The WICHE Academy for Leaders in the Humanities Fellowship was a transformative experience that equipped me with the skills to navigate the complexities of higher education leadership. The fellowship gave me the opportunity to connect with leaders across the region and exchange best practices in curriculum innovation, student retention, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These insights directly contributed to my successful transition from faculty to dean. I am deeply grateful to WICHE for empowering me to lead in a way that aligns the arts and sciences with the evolving needs of the 21st-century workforce.*

**STACEY BERRY**, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Dakota State University (South Dakota)



## Recognizing Excellence

The 2024 **Colleagues Choice Innovation Award** was given to the Montana University System (MUS) at the Forum Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawai'i, for its Montana 10 Student Success Initiative, a comprehensive student success intervention running at eight campuses. Recognizing the unique challenges low-income, rural, and Native students have accessing higher education, Montana 10 provides a set of integrated supports to dramatically increase retention and completion. Central to these supports are professionalized advisors with a low caseload that provide Montana 10 scholars with personalized interventions that address key barriers to persistence. Students are given a monthly stipend to meet with advisors and a scholarship and textbook grant; they are expected to attend as full-time students, complete required math and writing courses, and receive tutoring or other services if assigned by their Montana 10 advisor.

The award was accepted by Crystine Miller, director of student affairs and student engagement.

Laramie County Community College received the 2024 **Bernice Joseph Leadership Award** at the Alliance Annual Meeting in Tacoma, Washington, for its Open Educational Resources Task Force. Meghan Kelly accepted the award on behalf of librarian Maggie Swanger, who created the OER Task Force to increase OER use, reducing achievement gaps in under-resourced populations and increasing access to affordable education. Impact measures identified by the task force include student savings, OER adoption levels, and enrollment levels in z-courses. Zero-cost/low-cost indicators were implemented in the scheduling software, and this information now displays when students register to provide more cost transparency.



## No Holding Back Community of Practice

In FY 2024, WICHE finished its activities for the **No Holding Back project**, co-led by WICHE and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and funded by Ascendium Education Group and Lumina Foundation. *No Holding Back* examined the use of administrative holds on student registration or transcripts, which are mechanisms commonly used by colleges and universities to elicit necessary action from the student for various reasons, including academic advising, financial obligations, administrative requirements, or disciplinary matters. Colleges and universities have been showing greater interest in reexamining and improving these widely used practices on their campuses as state and federal legislation regulate their usage. The project by WICHE resulted in online planning and implementation tools, technical guides, video perspectives from administrators and students, and virtual learning events.

Through the project, California State University Fullerton, Central Washington University, Eastern Oregon University, Flathead Valley Community College (Montana), Great Basin College (Nevada), Idaho State University, Laramie County Community College (Wyoming), Portland State University (Oregon), University of Alaska Southeast, University of Arizona, University of Guam, and University of Nevada, Las Vegas analyzed the use of holds across their student populations. In January 2024, eight of the original 12 institutions participated in a workshop exploring alternatives to administrative holds.

[wiche.edu/administrative-holds](https://wiche.edu/administrative-holds)

## Credit Mobility

In 2023, the **Interstate Passport**<sup>®</sup> program's review board voted to sunset the program and shift its focus from recruiting schools and students to producing evergreen resources. The program now focuses on developing resources about credit mobility for college students and postsecondary institutions. WICHE greatly appreciates the significant contributions that the Interstate Passport Network has made to the transfer landscape, including the faculty, staff, and institutional leaders who developed and implemented the program, without whom the 10 years of Interstate Passport<sup>®</sup> would not have been possible.

Upon sunseting, the Interstate Passport<sup>®</sup> program transitioned the remaining grant funding to support transfer pathways through technological interventions. The **Technology and Partnerships for Transfer Success** initiative supports 12 dyads between postsecondary institutions in South Dakota, Montana, Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming, which will work together over the next two years to develop and implement technology solutions and track the impact on students transferring between postsecondary institutions. WICHE plans to share its findings from this community of practice in Fall 2026.

The background of the page is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background are several horizontal bands of dark teal grass silhouettes, creating a layered, textured effect. The grass blades are pointed and vary in length, giving a sense of depth and movement.

# POLICY AND RESEARCH

From data analysis to policy guidance to leadership training, WICHE assists higher education decision-makers in planning wisely, benchmarking their progress, advancing their agendas, and investing their resources strategically.

## Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)

Created by the WICHE Commission in 1995, the **LAC** works to strengthen state-level policymaking in higher education by engaging state legislators in the discussion of higher education issues and seeking input from policymakers on strategies for interstate collaboration. The LAC met in Phoenix, Arizona, in September 2023. The meeting focused on the ways states can shape postsecondary education to meet differing state needs. Topics included the exploring the different dimensions of value produced through postsecondary education, funding models for higher education, affordability, and artificial intelligence. Twenty-seven legislators from 11 WICHE states and territories attended, representing Alaska, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. Each representative on WICHE's executive committee, in consultation with their fellow commissioners, appoints legislators to the committee (*see page 31*).

## Open Educational Resources (OER)

With funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, WICHE continued its partnership with the other three regional higher education compacts to advance the adoption and usage of **open educational resources (OER)**. WICHE has focused on convening experts across the region to scale the adoption of these important tools, advance a national strategy to promote OER, partner with other leading organizations in the field, and improve the research base in support of policy and practice. WICHE's **OERwest Network** brought together leaders from across the region in Las Vegas, Nevada, to continue to build sustainable

and effective statewide strategies to scale the adoption and use of OER. WICHE is also embarking on a broader research project examining the impact of OER on important student outcomes, including the likelihood of graduation. Together, the compacts' collective work operates as the National Consortium for Open Educational Resources.

[wiche.edu/oer](https://wiche.edu/oer)



*Participating in the OERwest Network is incredibly valuable. WICHE has created a network of leading practitioners from states across the Western U.S. to who are willing to share their successes and challenges, with an eye on making concrete and sustainable change to support their students.*

**JAMES GLAPA-GROSSKLAG**, Dean, Educational Technology, Learning Resources and Distance Learning, College of the Canyons, and Technical Assistance Provider, ZTC Grant Program, in the California Community College Chancellor's Office

## WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)

WICHE is an integral partner in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). Created in 2013, SARA helps expand access to quality higher education through the establishment of common standards for the regulation of distance education across state lines. SARA ensures meaningful consumer protections for students and increases student access and options. The agreement is coordinated by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) in collaboration with the four regional higher education compacts. As the compact serving the West, WICHE is responsible for the implementation of the agreement in the region through the **WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)**.

The W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) is composed of representatives from each W-SARA member state. The RSC reviews state applications and renewals and recommends action to the WICHE Commission. Steering Committee members serve as valuable thought partners to one another, as well as to colleagues across the country, with their shared commitment to improving SARA policies and practices across varied state contexts. The RSC also plays a pivotal role in the SARA policy modification process. This year, the RSC regularly met virtually and hosted an in-person meeting in May 2024 in Colorado. The in-person meeting provided members with the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions about issues facing the region and the SARA policy landscape.

WICHE's SARA director served as the co-chair for this year's policy modification process, which began in FY 2024 and concludes in FY25. Through this process, Western SARA participants will join the other regions in considering changes to SARA policy. Priorities for the WICHE region include increasing student protections and ensuring that participating states have the necessary policy tools to address non-compliant institutions.

The first year of the policy modification process concluded December 2023, resulting in several new and amended SARA policies. The process itself showcased transparency and a true state-led decision-making process, representing a substantial improvement in SARA governance.



*The W-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and WICHE staff provide critical support and resources to member states in the region. The W-SARA RSC has fostered a collaborative environment that allows our states and SARA to thrive and serve students across the country by raising the bar on consumer protections and ensuring program quality.*

**KATIE HUBBART**, Curriculum and Student Affairs Policy Analyst and South Dakota SARA Coordinator, South Dakota Board of Regents



## Supporting Health Workforce Needs of the West

WICHE has continued to sustain regular virtual convenings to support regional members' efforts to meet their health workforce needs. The West, like most of the country, is facing critical healthcare shortages, particularly in nursing. This work builds on a series of policy roundtables held last year focused on identifying potential policy and practice solutions to the challenges states are facing in this area. The interest and engagement across the region underscores the importance of this effort in the West. With the WICHE Commission regularly expressing the importance of work in this area, WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit continues to focus on this effort and has identified opportunities for engagement in FY 2025.

[wiche.edu/nursingworkforce](https://wiche.edu/nursingworkforce)

## Behavioral Health in Postsecondary Education

WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit also convened key experts and state leaders from several states in the region to explore promising state- and system-level approaches to behavioral health in postsecondary education. In partnership with WICHE's Behavioral Health unit and with funding from Lumina Foundation, the meeting was held in October 2023 and highlighted emerging state strategies to systematically improve student wellness in postsecondary education. In addition to national policy experts, federal agency staff, and researchers, the meeting featured a student panel that helped reveal the many challenges students face in navigating the complex systems that try to support them. WICHE is developing publications summarizing the key takeaways from this convening and is looking to grow its work on this topic.

## Wyoming Innovation Partnership

WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit continues to provide project management support to the Wyoming Innovation Partnership, an innovative statewide initiative that seeks to modernize and focus the state's efforts to develop a resilient workforce and economy. The effort aims to better align Wyoming's economic development agenda by increasing collaborations among state entities and, ultimately, local partners. Working under contract with the Wyoming Community College Commission, WICHE provides a variety of services to help the overall effort succeed. Additionally, WICHE works closely with the Wyoming governor's office on this initiative.

## Credit for Prior Learning Equity Awards

Building on a long-time partnership, WICHE supported efforts by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to issue awards to institutions that developed and implemented strategies to close gaps in representation among students who receive credit for prior learning (CPL). The awards, issued in May 2024, are built on joint research by CAEL and WICHE showing that students who receive CPL are more likely to graduate (and do so in less time), but that many student populations are not equitably represented in CPL recipients. While Miami Dade College received the top prize, West Los Angeles College was named a CPL Equity Rising Star and Salt Lake Community College received an Honorable Mention.

## Regional Support and Resources

WICHE provides a range of **regional support** to help the region provide high-quality postsecondary opportunities to their residents. WICHE convenes chief academic officers in the region for conference calls focusing on policy and practice issues, new and emerging research, and discussions of important national and federal issues. These serve as a resource for staff from state agencies, systems, and institutions in the region to learn from one another. WICHE also collects, analyzes, and curates data on a range of topics focused on higher education in the West. This includes:

- ▶ *Tuition and Fees in the West*: This resource includes tuition and fees information for more than 350 public colleges and universities in the West.
- ▶ *Benchmarks: WICHE Region*: This collection of information covers the West's progress in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education.
- ▶ *Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West*: A resource of data on more than 35 indicators.
- ▶ *WICHE Insights*: This policy brief, released in May 2024, details recent trends in tuition and fees as well as state appropriations and state grant aid and includes a summary of recent federal funding packages.
- ▶ An internal database of important postsecondary education data used to respond to inquiries from WICHE partners and supply needed information to strategically guide WICHE's work.

## 11th Edition of *Knocking at the College Door: High School Graduate Projections*

Work on the 11th edition of *Knocking at the College Door* began in earnest in early 2024 and was released in December 2024. Sponsored by College Board and Lumina Foundation, this analysis (which includes a comprehensive report and online data dashboards) is a valuable resource for researchers, planners, media, and postsecondary education and workforce development leaders.

WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research experts, who authored the report, found that after years of growth, higher education in the United States is facing a decline in the size of the traditional college-going population as well as shifting demographic patterns. These enrollment factors and ever-present fiscal challenges, along with the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and waning confidence in the value of a college degree, are contributing to an increasingly challenging environment where higher education will have to adopt new and innovative approaches to serving students.

First published in 1979 and released every four years, *Knocking at the College Door* has provided trusted and reliable data

about student demographics and educational trends at the state, regional, and national levels for more than four decades. While the data suggest that a sizable number of K-12 students may have left education altogether and those students who remain in our educational systems face learning deficits, there are proven and evidence-based approaches to increasing student success, especially for those whom higher education has not historically served well. Additionally, this edition of *Knocking* highlights the different, yet valuable pathways that students of all ages may take to contribute to the workforce in meaningful ways.

**Learn more at [wiche.edu/knocking](https://wiche.edu/knocking).**

# KNOCKING AT THE COLLEGE DOOR

Projections of High School Graduates | December 2024



with support from

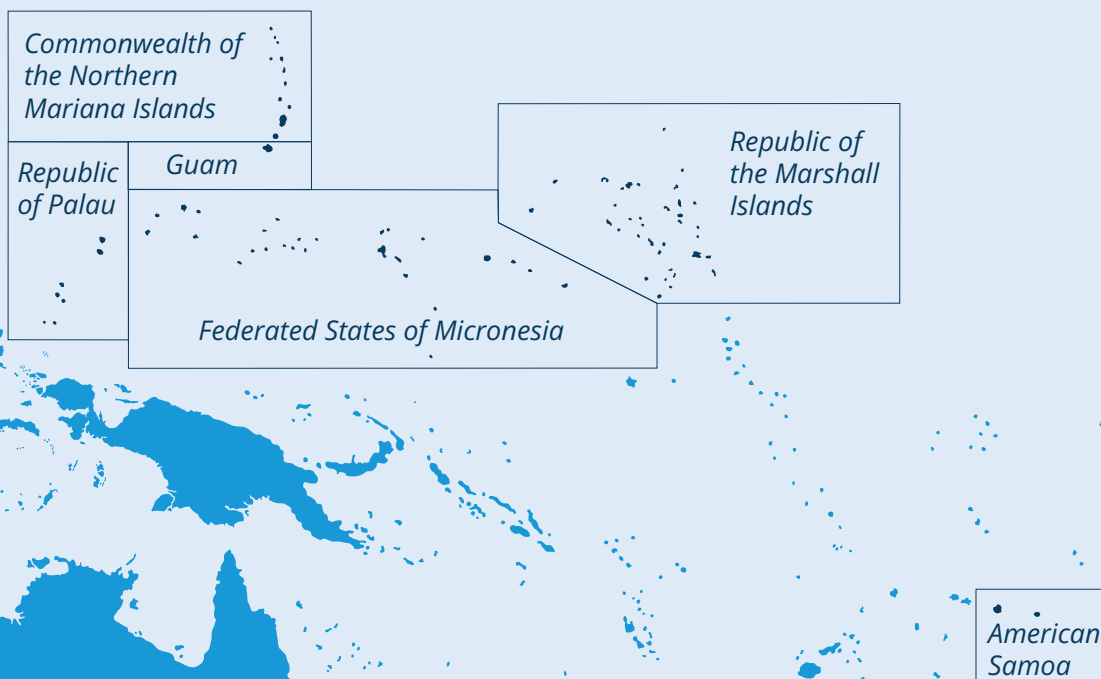


# THE PACIFIC REGION PARTNERSHIP

The Pacific Island members of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) represent clusters of islands in the geographic region informally referred to as “The Blue Continent,” which is west of Hawai‘i and east of the Philippines. Three U.S. territories and three freely associated states share the Pacific Islands membership of WICHE.

The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs has awarded WICHE a grant to cover the annual dues for all eligible U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states; this grant has been renewed since 2022.

The WICHE Commission oversees the development of our programs and ensures that the work of the Commission upholds and advances the obligations set forth in the Western Regional Education Compact. The Commission’s 48 members are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and, in the case of the freely associated states, the presidents of the three sovereign nations. Three commissioners represent the six Pacific Islands and serve on a rotating basis.



# Collaboration, Support, and Access Across the Blue Continent

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## What is a U.S. Territory?

U.S. territories are subnational administrative entities overseen by the U.S. government.

### American Samoa

Population (2020 census): 49,710

### Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

Population (2020 census): 47,329

### Guam

Population (2020 census): 153,836

## What is a Freely Associated State?

Freely associated states are sovereign nations that have agreed to Compacts of Free Association (COFAs) with the United States. These compacts allow the U.S. to operate military installations and enact security policies within its borders while guaranteeing U.S. economic support.

### Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

Population (2019 estimate): 104,650

### Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

Population (2021 census): 54,897

### Republic of Palau (Palau)

Population (2021 estimate): 17,614

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## History of WICHE's Partnership in the Pacific

### 1959

Hawai'i adopted the Western Regional Education Compact the same year that this U.S. territory gained statehood. (Alaska was also still a U.S. territory when it adopted the compact and later gained statehood this same year.)

### 2012

CNMI is the first U.S. territory to join WICHE.

### 2016

Guam joins WICHE.

### 2021

RMI and FSM join WICHE.

### 2022

Palau joins WICHE.

### 2023

American Samoa joins WICHE, reflecting that all eligible Pacific jurisdictions are members of the WICHE region.



# LEADERSHIP IN DIGITAL LEARNING

WICHE helps higher education leaders effectively deploy technology to enhance learning and increase student access and success.

## WCET – A Cooperative Exchange of Resources, Solutions, and Services

**WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies** focuses on expanding access to and improving the quality of digital learning instruction and student support services. WCET has 447 members, 33.5% of which are in the WICHE region. During FY 2024, WCET has provided members with information on federal distance education regulations, generative artificial intelligence (AI), educational innovations, digital learning definitions, and new accessibility rules for public entities. In the past year:

- ▶ WCET's *Frontiers* blog featured posts on topics like federal regulations related to professional licensure, state authorization reciprocity, and distance education; generative artificial intelligence use in instruction; higher education demographic challenges; digital learning definitions; online student support services; and distance education and digital learning advances by members.
- ▶ WCET emphasized creating members-only content and resources through ongoing webcasts for experts and peers, "Closer Look" subject matter expertise resources, and small, members-only "Closer Conversations" on specific subjects.
- ▶ To increase member engagement, WCET selected and implemented a new online community platform (MIX), which promotes community and discussion among participants.
- ▶ In October 2023, WCET's held its 35th Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. Discussions focused on issues and advances for members in employing digital learning in instruction and student support.
- ▶ In addition to the Annual Meeting, WCET was proud to host its first Annual Summit for Women in eLearning.

[wcet.wiche.edu](http://wcet.wiche.edu)



*WCET stands as an invaluable resource for its members, exemplified by their impactful Virtual Summit on AI in Education and thorough updates on the U.S. Department of Education Negotiated Rulemaking. These initiatives provide critical insights and foster rich discussions, enhancing our understanding and application of emerging technologies and regulatory changes. WCET's commitment empowers institutions to adapt and thrive in the evolving educational landscape. We deeply appreciate their dedication to advancing effective practices and policies, significantly enriching our community's capacity to face future challenges with expertise and confidence.*

**MORDECAI IAN BROWNLEE,**  
President, Community College of Aurora  
(Colorado)

## Every Learner Everywhere

Every Learner Everywhere is a grant-funded solution network hosted within WCET. Every Learner consists of partner organizations committed to helping higher education institutions use digital learning and evidence-based teaching practices. The goal of this commitment is to enhance teaching and learning and improve academic outcomes, particularly for poverty-affected, first-generation, and racially minoritized students. The network provides two- and four-year institutions with consulting, training, and resources to support the adoption and implementation of digital learning and evidence-based teaching practices.



In the past year:

- ▶ Every Learner and its partners provided professional development and technical assistance to 504 institutions.
- ▶ The network offered multiple free services open to all institutions, including the Strategies for Success webinar series, a webinar series on putting equity into practice, and two asynchronous courses for adjunct faculty.
- ▶ Every Learner has also provided deeper technical assistance to multiple institutions identified by the funder. The assistance focused on building an academic data culture to better support student outcomes.
- ▶ Every Learner onboarded four new partners with a deep equity focus that can also diversify the network offerings for professional learning.
- ▶ Every Learner successfully launched an Every Learner Advisory Board to provide advice and guidance; particularly in regards to the strategic priorities related to advancing racial justice and socioeconomic equity through digital learning.
- ▶ To enhance partner participation, Every Learner also created a Network Engagement Working Group that meets monthly and discusses opportunities across the network.

Every Learner Everywhere also helps institutions improve student success through a series of publications. The following publications deliver subject matter and insights:

- ▶ *Academic Continuity Planning*
- ▶ *Listening to Learners 2023*
- ▶ *Strategy Guide: Putting Equity into Practice: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning*
- ▶ *Strategy Guide: Putting Equity into Practice: Social Justice Education*
- ▶ *Strategy Guide: Putting Equity into Practice: Open Pedagogy*
- ▶ *Equitizing Syllabi Case Study: How Lehman College and Every Learner Everywhere Collaborated to Transform Gateway Courses*

- ▶ *Infusing Culturally Relevant Content in Gateway Courses in Postsecondary Education: Findings and Insights from College Faculty*

[everylearnereverywhere.org](http://everylearnereverywhere.org)



“  
Every Learner Everywhere has consistently provided valuable feedback on Tyton Partner’s Time for Class research, offering specialized perspectives that keep the work grounded in current teaching and learning challenges as well as best practices in digital learning. I rely on the Every Learner network as a trusted sounding board for assessing initial insights and ensuring our recommendations are actionable.

**CATHERINE SHAW**, Managing Director,  
Tyton Partners

## State Authorization Network (SAN)

Developed by WCET in 2011, SAN is a national membership organization that empowers more than 950 participating institutions and agencies nationwide to successfully implement statutory and regulatory requirements to improve student protections in digital learning and other activities that occur across state lines. SAN provides policy analysis, training, tools, and networking to implement compliance strategies for institutions to operate and deliver instruction across state lines lawfully and effectively.



In the past year:

- ▶ SAN replaced the popular pre-COVID, in-person SAN Basics Workshop with an eight-week online course. Three cohorts of the online course served more than 130 members with training on foundational principles of state authorization.
- ▶ SAN returned to in-person Advanced Topics Workshops by hosting a training in Anaheim, California, on professional licensure compliance management.
- ▶ The library of resources on the Getting Started with Compliance Management Gateway webpage on the SAN website continues to grow with one- and two-page briefs, charts, and short papers on various areas of compliance.
- ▶ SAN developed two member-only comprehensive reports to address institutional international compliance when serving students in Canada and Mexico.
- ▶ SAN developed two public-facing comprehensive reports: *The Evolution of Compliance for State Authorization of Distance Education* and *Professional Licensure Requirements Handbook Second Edition*.

The SANSational Award annually recognizes outstanding efforts of SAN members in developing a high-quality, comprehensive solution to a challenging state authorization issue. The 2024 SANSational Award winners are:

- ▶ University of Nevada Las Vegas
- ▶ Post University (Connecticut)
- ▶ Southern New Hampshire University
- ▶ Rio Salado Community College (Arizona)
- ▶ Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Florida)
- ▶ University of Kentucky

SAN actively tracks and responds to the various guidance, proposed regulations, and negotiated rulemaking committee meetings provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

SAN continues to be regularly invited to many virtual and in-person institution, system, state, and SARA community meetings to discuss state and Federal updates affecting state authorization and distance education.

[wcetsan.wiche.edu](http://wcetsan.wiche.edu)



*When starting my compliance role in 2023, I quickly realized that the resources on the SAN and WCET websites would be essential to my success. The SAN team distills complex regulations into manageable pieces and keeps our community informed about changes and opportunities for institutional input. Their resources for state authorization and professional licensure were crucial for our university's compliance with the 2024 federal regulations. An important benefit to joining SAN was the opportunity to connect with a supportive network of compliance professionals who speak my language and freely share advice during SAN's webinars, in-person meetings, and discussion boards.*

**JESSICA ARMSTRONG**, Data and Distance Education Compliance Manager, University of Alaska Fairbanks

## Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Ever since the November 2022 release of ChatGPT by OpenAI, higher education institutions have wrestled with finding ways to ethically and responsibly deploy AI on their campuses. Although the initial conversations revolved around academic integrity and the use of AI for student cheating, institutions are increasingly focused on how to operationalize AI across the campus and how to develop appropriate policies and guardrails for its deployment. To help institutions better understand both the promises and challenges associated with generative AI, WCET staff have in the past year:

- ▶ Published several resources discussing the role of AI in higher education. A key publication is the resource, AI Education Policy and Practice Ecosystem Framework. This framework, and the corresponding members-only toolkit, assists institutions in implementing AI through the development of institutional-level AI governance policies. The framework is divided into three categories — governance, operations, and pedagogy — with several discrete policy areas associated with each category.
- ▶ Participated in numerous AI presentations, panels, and keynote addresses to such groups as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, GRAILE, Anthology, Strong Start to Finish, and the Online Learning Consortium.
- ▶ Held a popular AI preconference workshop before the October 2023 WCET Annual Meeting. Participants examined the AI Education Policy and Practice Ecosystem Framework and discussed its application to their institutions.
- ▶ Created an AI institutional policy database to assist institutions in developing institutional-level AI policies.

WCET continues to take the lead in discussions around generative AI within the higher education sector. During FY 2025, WCET has continued to update the AI policy database. WCET staff are also planning to complete numerous institutional case studies on AI policy development and implementation across campuses plus an update to its 2023 institutional policy and practices survey. Finally, WCET will continue to publish blogs on various aspects of artificial intelligence and higher education.

[wcet.wiche.edu/practice/artificial-intelligence](https://wcet.wiche.edu/practice/artificial-intelligence)

## Digital Learning Policy Analysis and Research

WCET and SAN are the unquestioned leaders in postsecondary digital learning policy work. Staff partner to track emerging laws and regulations at both the state and federal levels regarding digital learning in postsecondary education. Once enacted, staff interpret the requirements in understandable language and share compliance strategies with our members and, often, the higher education community at large. WCET and SAN are committed to protecting students by supporting institutional personnel in understanding how to meet regulatory expectations and exploring good practices to better serve student needs. By helping members more effectively understand the proposed regulations, staff advocate for effective student protections that institutions can implement and advise institutions on regulatory compliance strategies.

WCET and SAN were especially active in providing institutions and other stakeholders with information on emerging regulatory issues. Staff have provided thorough analysis of these regulations and policies, in the form of blog post series on the *Frontiers* blog, webinars, conference presentations, member

communications, and comments to the U.S. Department of Education. In the past year:

- ▶ WCET advised members on ongoing issues regarding “regular and substantive interaction” and other compliance expectations unique to distance or digital learning.
- ▶ SAN advised members on issues regarding institutions serving students or otherwise operating across state lines. SAN added publications with deeper insights into compliance in Canada and Mexico.
- ▶ Staff provided updates on the proposed third-party servicer regulations and pending guidance.
- ▶ WCET and SAN provided members with analysis of new federal regulations on professional licensure and adhering to state requirements protecting students from institutional closure.
- ▶ For Veterans using the GI Bill, staff repeatedly raised the unfair penalty placed on those former service members who study entirely at a distance. They receive about half of the housing allowance that they would receive if they took all their courses online with a single on-campus course.
- ▶ As in 2023, SAN and WCET collaborated to participate in the 2024 SARA Policy Modification Process. With the goal of strengthening consumer protections within the state authorization reciprocity framework, SAN and WCET submitted six proposals. These collaborations were focused on meeting the goal of strong student consumer protections that could be effectively implemented by institutions to support student’s educational goals. The proposals came after multiple discussions with state regulators and SARA State Portal Entity members. For two of the proposals, they partnered with The Century Foundation, a think tank based in California.

Finally, a huge undertaking in FY 2024 was working together to closely follow the Winter 2024 rulemaking committee meetings and provide support to several of the negotiators. That rulemaking focused on distance education, state authorization reciprocity, and other issues that will heavily impact our members and (both positively and negatively) their students. SAN and WCET followed every negotiation session, provided written public comments, webinars, and member resources to advocate for strong but attainable consumer protections. WCET and SAN worked together in FY 2024 to plan a special in-person event focused on emerging federal policies; this event was co-hosted by WCET and SAN in St. Louis, Missouri, in July 2024. The event was attended by 160 members to learn and collaborate on a response to proposed U.S. Department of Education regulations. As those regulations move from proposed to the final stages in FY 2025, WCET and SAN will continue to advocate on behalf of members and the students they serve.



# OPTIMAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

WICHE helps prepare a qualified behavioral health workforce and optimize its delivery of behavioral healthcare services. These efforts range from suicide prevention, general student mental health and wellness, and programs aimed at addressing the acute shortage of behavioral health specialists in rural areas.

## Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)

FY 2024 marked the sixth year that WICHE BHP continued its partnership with the University of North Dakota as part of the Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC), a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)-sponsored grant. The MHTTC provides technical assistance, training, and products specifically developed and designed for rural behavioral healthcare providers in the federal Health and Human Services (HHS) Region 8 states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

As co-director of the Mountain Plains MHTTC, WICHE Vice President Dennis Mohatt oversaw the delivery of more than 100 trainings that reached 8,371 participants across both the main grant and the school supplement in Year Six. Training for the main grant focused on a wide variety of topics and evidence-based practices that support the rural mental health workforce. Training formats included Mindful Monday, a biweekly micro-training series about developing mindfulness and resilience for people in high stress situations which averaged 75 participants per session. Other virtual trainings included:

- ▶ *Understanding College Mental Health Needs and Solutions in 2024*
- ▶ *Changing the Conversation about Mental Health: Insights on College Mental Health in 2024*
- ▶ *Rural Resilience*
- ▶ *Bridging Mental Health Support for Men in the Heartland*
- ▶ *Preparing for Young Adulthood*
- ▶ *The COMET™ Conversation*

A mainstay of the main grant was the Mountain Plains MHTTC Leadership Academy. WICHE BHP not only hosted the fifth annual Leadership Academy in April 2024 for new and emerging leaders in rural communities; 18 participants

attended the two-and-a-half day in-person training to learn about their individual leadership styles, participate in individual coaching sessions, and expand their regional networks. Following the Leadership Academy, individual and group mentoring sessions were held monthly. WICHE BHP staff also wrote a white paper titled *Lessons in Rural Leadership – The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Leadership Academy* that summarized results from the previous four Leadership Academies.

The School Supplement Grant focused on virtual training designed to support staff and administrators working with K-12 youth. Trainings covered:

- ▶ Implicit bias
- ▶ Autism and AHD
- ▶ Suicide prevention for youth
- ▶ Overcoming stigma: Actions to improve adolescent mental health
- ▶ Recognizing, preventing, and treating youth depression in schools

## Research and Evaluation

WICHE BHP, in collaboration with the Northwest Indian College, the Center for Alaska Native Health Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium continued work on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) research grant to describe and evaluate the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's (ANTHC) innovative approach to training behavioral health aides (BHA). The program provides culturally relevant training and education to village-based counselors which aims to increase the workforce in remote areas. This three-phase research project supports the long-term goal of gathering evidence on the effectiveness of the ANTHC's BHA program in building local capacity for place-based behavioral health services in rural and remote American Indian and Alaska Native community settings.

In the past year, the research team completed Phase One data collection and analysis. Data were collected through an electronic self-report survey of BHA providers to examine the scope of BHA practice, training, and core competencies. The research team is drafting a paper that describes the BHA program and results from Phase One, to be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In Fall 2024, the team began work on Phase Two, which includes a survey and follow-up interviews with BHA supervisors to examine core competencies of the BHA training program for preparing BHAs to provide culturally responsive services that respond to client needs.

In support of quality, evidence-based treatment, WICHE BHP conducts fidelity reviews in Arizona, South Dakota, and Montana, assessing the degree to which providers meet national standards. In all three states, WICHE helps facilitate training and technical assistance to address areas for improvement identified during the review process, including developing adjusted assessment tools to accommodate the rural settings of some providers. The trainings and technical assistance reached more than 200 people and have given providers a deeper understanding of evidence-based practices for persons with serious mental illness. Additionally, WICHE fidelity review staff participate in bimonthly virtual meetings with national providers and subject matter experts to maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding trends in the delivery of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT).

The WICHE BHP continues to administer the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), a federal evaluation tool for the Mountain Plains MHTTC main and school-supplement projects. Information related to this evaluation is regularly submitted to SAMHSA and serves as the data collection and evaluation model for all MHTTC webinars and in-person trainings.

## Rural Psychology Internship Consortia

WICHE BHP helped establish and continues to support 10 rural psychology internship consortia in Alaska, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Utah. These consortia represent collaborative initiatives that attract well-qualified advanced behavioral health trainees to underserved areas. The goal of the consortia is to provide high-quality and culturally competent services to residents, and to retain trainees in their respective states and Pacific jurisdiction once their internships are completed. The consortia collectively achieve an annual graduation rate of well over 90%, with, on average, nearly 60% staying and working in the location where they completed their internships.

## Suicide Prevention

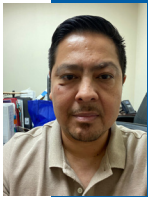
Through the Together With Veterans (TWV) Rural Veteran Suicide Prevention Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, WICHE BHP engages Veteran-led public health planning efforts in rural communities using promising suicide prevention practices. TWV sites conduct community needs assessments and develop and implement local suicide prevention action plans incorporating these guiding principles:

- ▶ Veteran-driven: Utilizing a local Veteran majority leadership structure (steering committee)
- ▶ Collaborative: Engaging community partners to strengthen relationships across Veteran-serving programs, healthcare providers, government agencies, and other community leaders
- ▶ Evidence-informed: Leveraging evidence-informed suicide prevention practices
- ▶ Community-centered: Addressing the unique strengths, needs, and resources of each community participating in the TWV program



Since the program's inception in 2015, 38 sites have been launched across 26 states, territories, and two sovereign nations, including 11 WICHE-region states and territories. TWV communities reported serving a total of 108,484 Veterans in FY 2024.

[mirecc.va.gov/visn19/togetherwithveterans](https://mirecc.va.gov/visn19/togetherwithveterans)



*Connecting with WICHE has helped me see the importance of teamwork — how different programs and organizations can coordinate and amplify their resources to help the public. I've also witnessed that firsthand here in this program because we all come together to help further the program by collaborating with Tribal and other local agencies.*

**RAFAEL DIAZ**, Community and Cocopah Together With Veterans Program Facilitator for the Cocopah Indian Tribe in Yuma, Arizona

## Technical Assistance

WICHE BHP was engaged by numerous federal, state, and Tribal partners to provide training and technical assistance in a variety of areas, including:

- ▶ University of Wisconsin (UoW): WICHE BHP serves as a lead agency, providing training to a predetermined learning collaborative. Trainings at the UoW consisted of six remote sessions over 12 weeks, educating students, educators, and paraprofessionals on the integration of behavioral health in rural communities.

- ▶ National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) project: NASMHPD contracted with WICHE BHP to provide technical support and assistance to more than 50 national grantees of the SAMHSA Crisis Services development funding. WICHE BHP provided online training and as well as individual program technical assistance as requested for any programs implementing crisis services in rural or frontier communities. Additionally, WICHE BHP crafted a *Rural Crisis Services* report and toolkit to be used as a guide to both established and new rural services involved in the continuum of crisis services care. Also, as part of the TTI project, WICHE BHP is providing technical assistance to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) in establishing a Behavioral Health Aide (BHA) Program. WICHE BHP received support from Alaska's BHA program to provide an overview of the program and develop steps for implementation. WICHE BHP worked with the Pacific Behavioral Health Collaborative Council to provide oversight and certification for the program. The first cohort of BHA trainees was scheduled to begin training as in late 2024/early 2025.
- ▶ Colorado's Behavioral Health Administration contracted with WICHE BHP to provide structure and support for developing a crisis professional training and certification program under a SAMHSA Crisis Services grant. WICHE BHP provided subject matter expertise to review all training materials and assisted in facilitating an advisory group of key stakeholders who provided input into the crisis professional curriculum and certification program.
- ▶ WICHE BHP worked with the South Dakota State Hospital and the Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health Services (Community

Mental Health Center) to create and obtain Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) approval for their Psychology Internship Consortium.

- ▶ WICHE BHP worked with Sanford Health in North Dakota to create and obtain approval from the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers for its Psychology Internship Consortium. This newly formed consortium accepted two doctoral students in clinical psychology as its first cohort into the program for FY 2024.
- ▶ Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP): Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funds RCORP's mission to provide technical assistance to strengthen rural organizations' capacities to develop multi-section consortia that can plan, implement, and sustain programs that improve access to and quality of behavioral healthcare services, including substance use and opioid use disorder services. As a sub-awardee to JBS International, WICHE BHP delivers innovative technical assistance to rural grantees to improve prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services and systems for persons with opioid, psychostimulant, and substance use disorders. This project supports 86 designated grant award recipients.
- ▶ Mountain Plains Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center (MP ROTAC): WICHE BHP was awarded a two-year grant from SAMHSA in 2022 to develop and disseminate training and technical assistance addressing opioid and stimulant use affecting rural communities in SAMHSA's Region 8. Through a comprehensive and multipronged approach, the MP ROTAC aims to reach populations impacted by health disparities in rural, Tribal, and frontier communities to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with opioid and/or stimulant misuse, by promoting prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery best practices and evidence-based interventions.

Since the inception of MP ROTAC, a total of 43 trainings have been provided to more than 1,200 participants throughout Region 8. SAMHSA has extended funding through September 2025.

- ▶ Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) Regulatory Compliance Project: WICHE BHP supports API in survey readiness with The Joint Commission (TJC) on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Specifically, WICHE BHP helps API to maintain compliance with regulating agencies (TJC and CMS) through regular verbal and written correspondence, review of policies and their execution, virtual meetings, triannual onsite visits and written reports with recommendations for performance improvement.



*WICHE's vast experience and technical support continues to be instrumental in strengthening the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and regional behavioral health workforce. A key milestone is a behavioral health aide certification pilot program for our Commonwealth and region to address a gap and promote professional development for natural helpers and those in the workforce and community already serving and seeking to enhance knowledge and skills in this capacity. Attributed in large part to our longstanding, valued WICHE partnership, this outcome essentially will positively impact the wellness of our local workforce, clients, families, and community and the quality of care and services for our Commonwealth and Pacific.*

**REYNA M. SAURES**, Director, Behavioral Health Services/Community Guidance Center



# LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE *as of June 30, 2024*

WICHE's Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) works to strengthen state policymaking in higher education in the West by engaging legislators who are appointed by the WICHE Commission in the discussion of higher education issues and by seeking their input on strategies for interstate collaboration.

## ALASKA

Representative Justin Ruffridge  
Senator Löki Tobin

## ARIZONA

Senator Ken Bennett

## CALIFORNIA

VACANCY

## COLORADO

Representative Jennifer Bacon  
Representative Dafna Michaelson Jenet

## HAWAI'I

Senator Michelle Kidani  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa  
Representative Amy Perruso

## IDAHO

Senator Kevin Cook  
\*Senator Dave Lent  
Senator Carrie Semmelroth  
Representative Julie Yamamoto

## MONTANA

Representative David Bedey  
\*Representative Llew Jones  
Senator Daniel Salomon  
Representative Paul Tuss

## NEVADA

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop  
Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui  
Senator Melanie Scheible  
Senator Robin Titus

## NEW MEXICO

\*Senator Bill Soules  
Representative G. Andrés Romero  
Representative Debra M. Sariñana

## NORTH DAKOTA

\*Senator Kyle Davison  
Senator Karen Krebsbach  
Representative Bob Martinson  
Representative Mark Sanford

## OREGON

Senator Lew Frederick  
Representative Ricki Ruiz

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Senator Casey Crabtree  
Representative Roger DeGroot  
Senator Reynold Nesiba  
Representative Tim Reed

## UTAH

Representative Melissa Ballard  
Senator Keith Grover  
Senator Michael McKell  
\*Senator Ann Millner

## WASHINGTON

Representative Debra Entenman  
Representative Mari Leavitt  
\*Representative Gerry Pollet  
Representative Vandana Slatter

## WYOMING

\*Senator Fred Baldwin  
Representative Landon Brown  
Senator Wendy Schuler  
Representative Art Washut

## U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

Representative Manny Gregory Castro  
\*Senator Kalani R. Kaneko  
Senator Tina Rose Muña Barnes  
Senator Amanda Shelton

\*Denotes WICHE Commissioner

# WICHE COMMISSION *as of June 30, 2024*

The Commission's 48 members are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and, in the case of the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States, the presidents of the three sovereign nations. The WICHE Commission has fiduciary responsibility, stewards the organization's mission, and sets its priorities.

## ALASKA

Tom Begich – Executive Director, Nick Begich Scholarship Intern Fund  
Pearl Brower – President/CEO, Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corporation  
Sean Parnell – Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage

## ARIZONA

John Arnold – Executive Director, Arizona Board of Regents  
Kathleen Goeppinger – President and CEO, Midwestern University  
Todd D. Haynie – President, Eastern Arizona College

## CALIFORNIA

Christopher Cabaldon – Mayor-in-Residence, Institute for the Future  
Ellen Junn – President Emerita, California State University, Stanislaus  
Robert Shireman – Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

## COLORADO

Jim Chavez – Executive Director, Community College of Denver Foundation and Government Affairs  
Antwan Jefferson (WICHE Chair) – Associate Professor, CTT; Associate Dean for EDI, University of Colorado Denver, School of Education & Human Development  
Angie Paccione – Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

## HAWAII

David Lassner – President, University of Hawai'i  
John Morton – Vice President Emeritus, University of Hawai'i Community Colleges  
Colleen Sathre – Vice President Emerita, Policy and Planning, University of Hawai'i

## IDAHO

Rick Aman – President, College of Eastern Idaho  
Matt Freeman (WICHE Immediate Past Chair) – Executive Director, Office of the Idaho State Board of Education  
Dave Lent – Senator, Idaho State Legislature

## MONTANA

Maryrose Beasley – Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Homestead Veterinary Service  
Clayton Christian – Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System  
Llew Jones – Representative, Montana State Legislature

## NEVADA

Catherine (Cathy) Dinauer – Executive Director, Nevada State Board of Nursing  
Dale Erquiaga – Retired Acting Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education  
Fred Lokken – Chair, Advocacy Committee, Instructional Technology Council, Truckee Meadows Community College

## NEW MEXICO

Barbara Damron (WICHE Vice Chair) – Professor and Senior Advisor to the Dean, University of New Mexico College of Nursing  
Bill Soules – Senator, New Mexico State Senate  
Patricia Sullivan – Associate Dean, College of Engineering, New Mexico State University

## NORTH DAKOTA

Danita Bye – Board Member, North Dakota State Board of Higher Education  
Kyle Davison – Senator, North Dakota Legislative Assembly  
Mark Hagerott – Chancellor, North Dakota University System

## **OREGON**

Ben Cannon – Executive Director, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission  
Hilda Rosselli – Educational Policy Consultant, Rosselli Consulting  
Lisa Skari – President, Mt. Hood Community College

## **SOUTH DAKOTA**

Nathan Lukkes – Executive Director and CEO, South Dakota Board of Regents  
Larry Tidemann – Retired Legislator, South Dakota State Legislature  
Diana VanderWoude – Workforce Strategic Advisor, Sanford Health

## **UTAH**

Patricia Jones – CEO, Women’s Leadership Institute  
Geoffrey Landward – Commissioner of Higher Education, Utah System of Higher Education  
Ann Millner – Senator, Utah State Legislature

## **WASHINGTON**

John Carmichael – President, Evergreen State College  
Mike Meotti – Executive Director, Washington Student Achievement Council  
Gerry Pollet – Representative, Washington State House of Representatives

## **WYOMING**

Fred Baldwin – Senator, Wyoming State Legislature  
Kevin Carman – Provost and Executive Vice President, Office of Academic Affairs, University of Wyoming  
Joseph Schaffer – President, Laramie County Community College

## **U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES**

*Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*  
Frankie M. Eliptico – Vice President, Administration and Advancement, Northern Marianas College

### *Guam*

Rodney J. Jacob – Partner, Calvo Jacob & Pangelina

### *Republic of the Marshall Islands*

Kalani Radford Kaneko – Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senator Majuro Atoll

# OUR TEAM *as of June 30, 2024*

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Demarée Michelau, President  
Laura Ewing, Executive Assistant to the President and to the Commission  
Jeanette Porter, Senior Administrative Coordinator

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Raymonda Burgman Gallegos, Vice President  
Peace Bransberger, Interim Director, Programs and Evidence\*  
Margo Colalancia, Director of Student Access Programs  
Cherie Curtin, Senior Administrative Coordinator  
Onnika Hanson-White, Administrative Assistant III  
Kay Hulstrom, Associate Director, Operations and Program Implementation  
Kate Springsteen, Assistant Director of Student Access Programs  
Olivia Tufo, Manager, Community Engagement and Development  
Camelia Naranjo, Interim Assistant Director – Academic Partnerships Learning and Development

## POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Patrick Lane, Vice President  
Peace Bransberger, Interim Director, Programs and Evidence\*  
Liliana Diaz Solodukhin, Senior Policy Analyst  
Colleen Falkenstern, Senior Research Analyst  
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA)  
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA  
Melissa Sanders, Administrative Assistant III  
Christina Sedney, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Dennis Mohatt, Vice President, Behavioral Health and Co-Director, Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)  
Jason Alves, Director of Veterans Initiatives  
Genevieve Berry, Project Manager, MHTTC

Erin Briley, MHTTC School Mental Health Coordinator  
Gina Brimner, Director of Special Projects  
Madison Chamberlain, Fidelity Reviewer  
Brittany Copithorn, Project Coordinator – HI Recruitment  
Kristy Crawford, Fidelity Reviewer  
Janell Daly, Senior Administrative Coordinator  
Margie DeAnda, Administrative Assistant II  
Karly Dickinson, Psychologist – Technical Assistance Associate  
Madison Dupré, Administrative Assistant III  
Nicole Eastin, Fidelity Reviewer  
Ashley Fortier, Technical Assistance Lead – Psychologist  
John Gomez, Director of Operations  
Vanessa Gonzalez, Technical Assistance Associate – RCORP/ROTAC  
Caitlyn Grubb, Program Evaluation and Research Coordinator  
Andie Hancock, Budget Coordinator  
Todd Helvig, Director of Education and Training  
Miah Jacobs-Brichford, Fidelity Reviewer  
Debra Kupfer, Senior Consultant  
Andrew Martinez, Budget Manager  
Mikayla Nelson, Administrative Assistant III, Together with Veterans  
Bobbi Perkins, Director, Mountain Plains ROTAC/ Technical Assistance Lead  
Annette Robertson, Fidelity Review Program Manager  
Flora Shirzadian, Data Specialist  
Allison Treu, Quality Assurance and Fidelity Reviewer  
Ivory Tubbs, Technical Expert Lead, Rural Communities Opioid Response Project (RCORP)

## WCET – THE WICHE COOPERATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

Russell Poulin, Executive Director, WCET, and Vice President for Technology-Enhanced Education  
Jenni Atwood, Manager, Grants, Contracts and

Finance, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Sherri Artz Gilbert, Senior Director, Operations and Membership Administration  
 Karen Cangialosi, Director, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Emilie Cook, Manager, Digital Marketing and Communications, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Laura DaVinci, Associate Director, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Van Davis, Chief Strategy Officer  
 Cheryl Dowd, Senior Director, State Authorization Network and WCET Policy Innovations  
 Lindsey Downs, Assistant Director, Communications and Community  
 Leigha Fletcher, Administrative Assistant III  
 Norma Hollebeke, Senior Manager of Network Services and Programs, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Joyce Holliday, Administrative Assistant III, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Kathryn Kerensky, Director, Digital Learning, Policy and Compliance  
 Kim Nawrocki, Assistant Director, Events and Programs  
 Patricia O'Sullivan, Manager, Content Development and Special Projects, Every Learner Everywhere  
 Megan Raymond, Senior Director, Membership and Programs  
 Jana Walser-Smith, Director, Interstate Compliance and SAN Member Outreach

**ACCOUNTING SERVICES**

Craig Milburn, Chief Financial Officer  
 Drew Elkshoulder, Accounting Specialist  
 Diane Haslett, Accountant I

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Melanie Sidwell, Director of Communications  
 Bella Ciarico, Digital Communications Coordinator  
 Joseph Garcia, Graphic Designer

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

Deirdre Coulter, Director of Human Resources  
 Georgia Frazer, Human Resources Assistant

**IT SERVICES**

Dave Clark, Chief of Digital Services  
 Chris Cartwright, IT Systems Administrator

\*Works across both units

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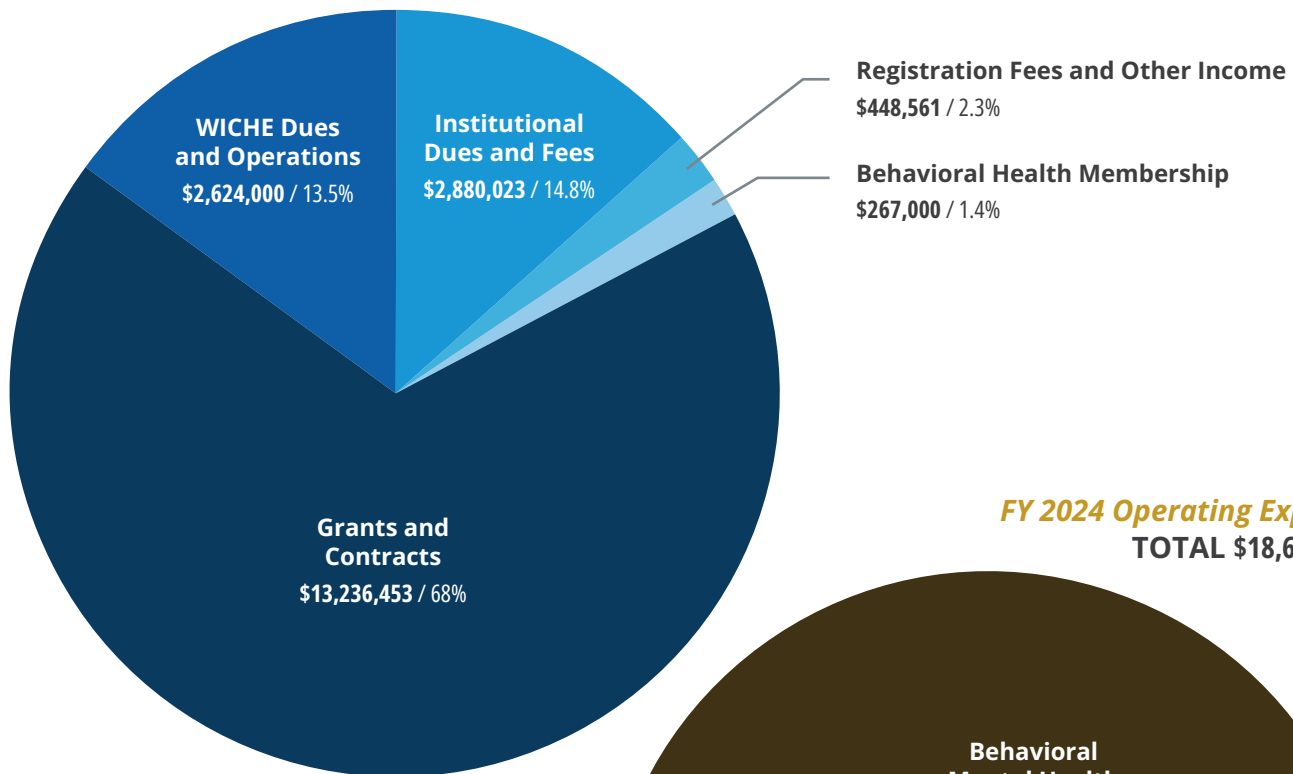
**95** TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES  
**75** STANDARD EMPLOYEES  
**20** INTERNS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

In FY 2024, WICHE had an annual operating budget of nearly \$19.5 million. Beyond that, WICHE paid out over \$14.8 million in Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) fees that is passed from our states and territories on to participating institutions which support students pursuing careers in 10 high-demand health fields, especially in underserved rural areas of the West.

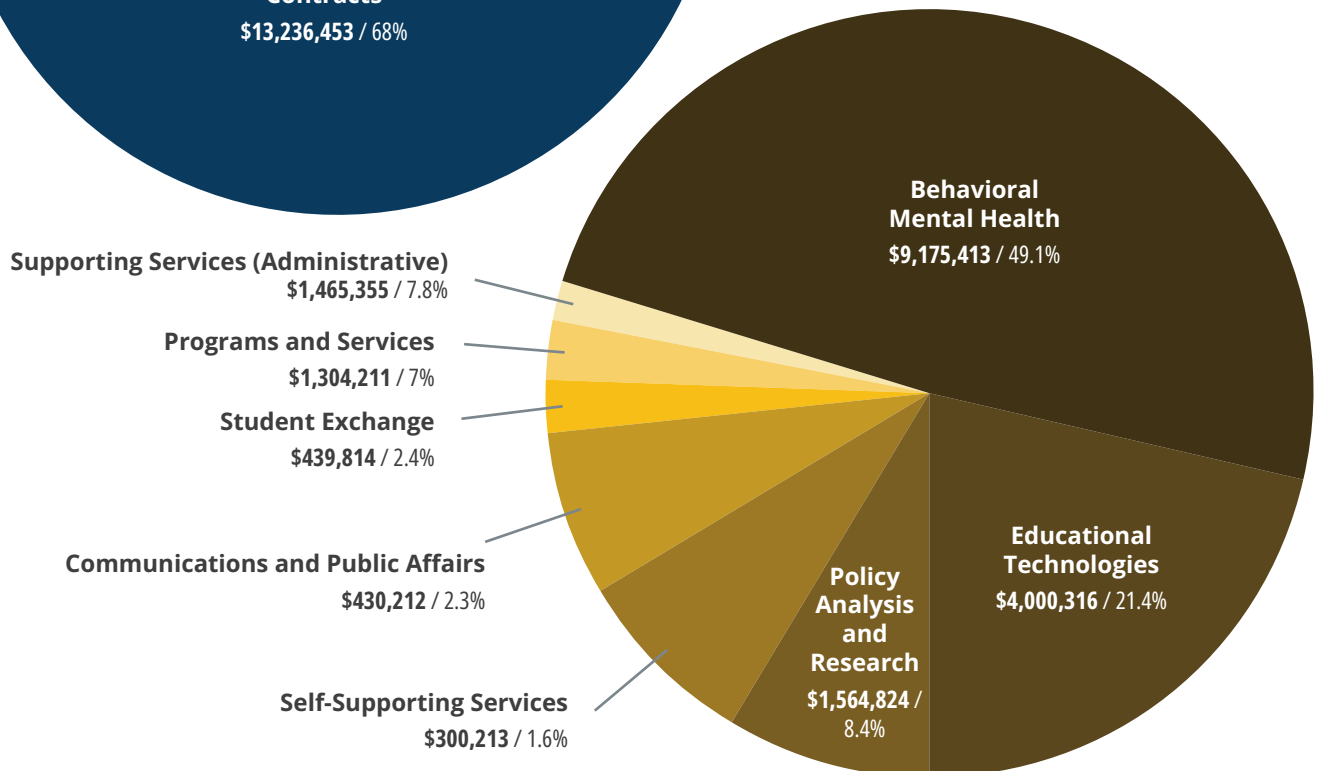
## FY 2024 Operating Revenue

TOTAL \$19,456,037



## FY 2024 Operating Expense

TOTAL \$18,680,358



# THANK YOU

## PARTNERS

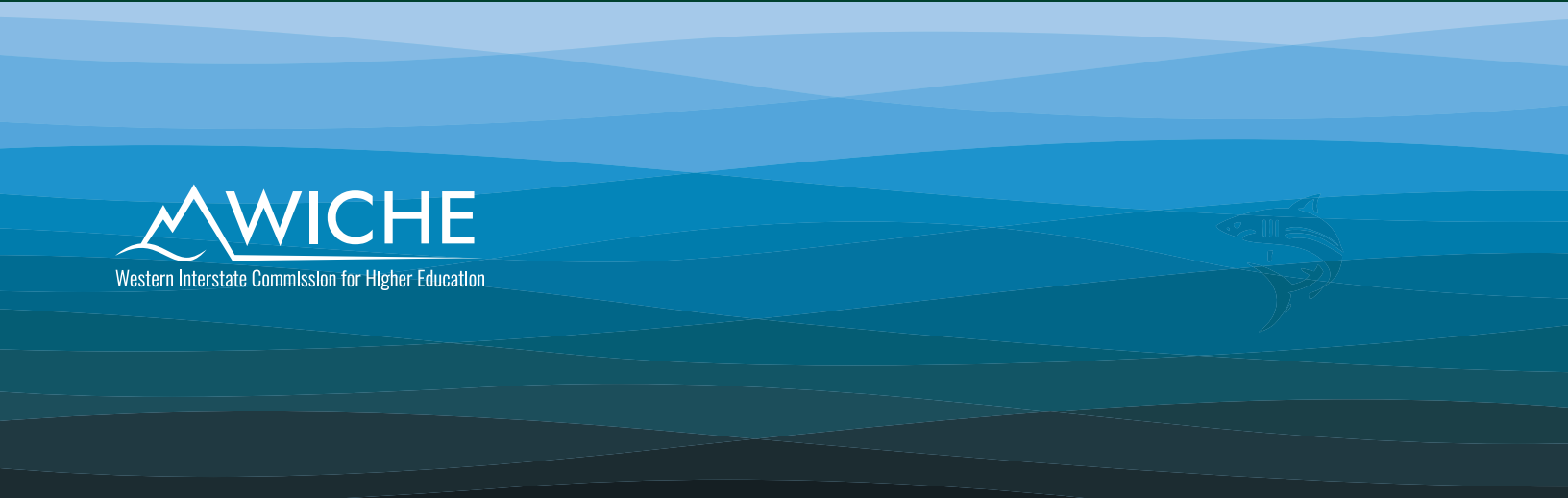
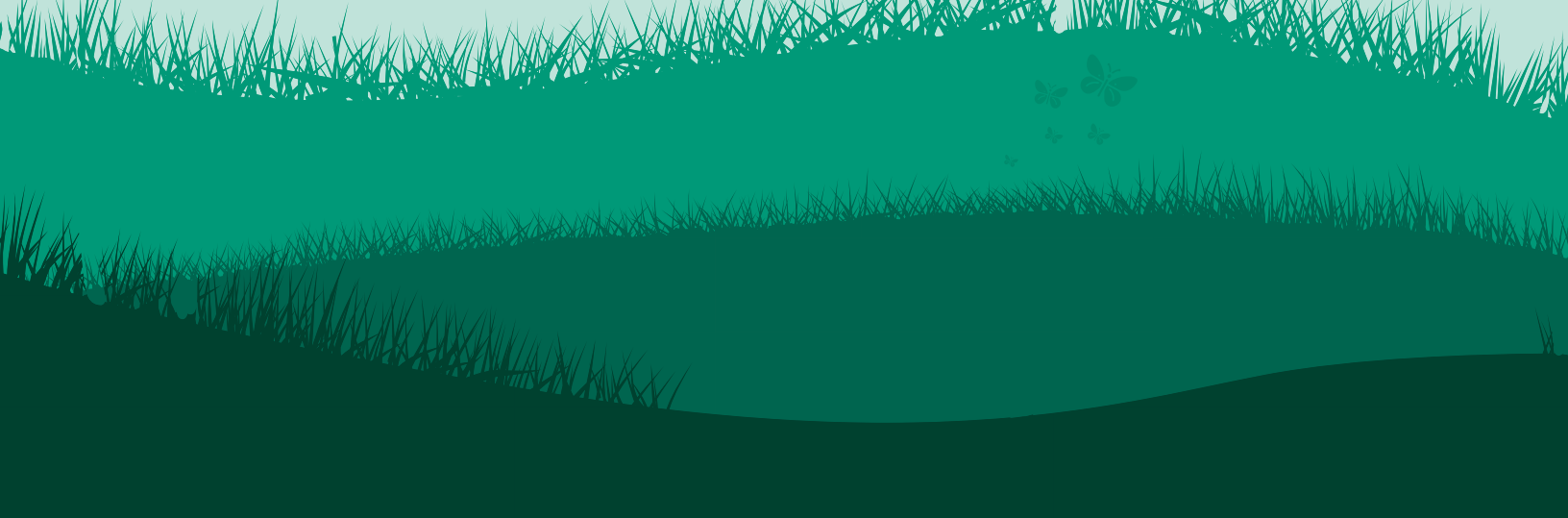
Academic Search  
Achieving the Dream  
Active Minds  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Anthology  
Association of Chief Academic Officers  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Beyond Campus  
BibliU  
Brigham Young University  
Brown Book Software  
California State University, Officer of the Chancellor  
Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education  
Colorado State University  
CORA Learning  
D2L  
Digital Promise  
EDUCAUSE  
GEGI  
The Hardy Group  
Higher Education Licensure Pros  
Higher Learning Commission  
Hispanic Educational Technology Services  
Honorlock  
iDesign Innovative Educators  
Intentional Futures  
JBS International  
Lakefield Veterinary Group  
LearningMate  
Michigan State University  
Midwest Higher Education Commission  
National Association of College and University Business Officers  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems  
National Rural Health Association  
National Student Clearinghouse  
New England Board of Higher Education  
New Mexico Beef Council  
New Mexico State University, Department of Extension Animal Sciences & Natural Resources  
Northwest Indian College  
Online Learning Consortium

Pacific Behavioral Health Collaboration Council  
Parchment  
Phil Hill & Associates  
Quality Education for Minorities  
Resilient Futures  
Risepoint  
Southern Regional Education Board  
Sophia Learning LLC  
Straighterline  
Tyton Partners  
University of Alaska – Center for Alaska Native Health Research  
University of Arizona  
University of Florida  
University of North Dakota – College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)  
VISN 19 Rocky Mountain MIRECC

## FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

Academic Search  
Alaska Division of Behavioral Health  
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Alaska Psychiatric Institute  
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System  
Ascendium Education Group  
Avondale Elementary School District #44, Arizona  
Cambridge International  
College Board  
Colorado Behavioral Health Administration  
Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands – Department of Human Services  
Federated States of Micronesia – Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Gates Foundation  
Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center  
Hawai'i Department of Education  
Hawai'i Department of Health  
Hawai'i Department of Public Safety  
Higher Education Equity Network  
Idaho Department of Health & Welfare  
Lumina Foundation  
Mellon Foundation  
Mercy Care Arizona  
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health and Disabilities Division

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Institutes of Health – National Institute of Mental Health  
National Institutes of Health – Native American Research Centers for Health  
National Student Clearinghouse  
New Mexico Department of Human Services – Behavioral Health Services Division  
North Dakota Division of Behavioral Health  
Northern Navajo Medical Center – New Mexico  
Oregon Health Authority  
Republic of Palau – Division of Behavioral Health  
Saipan (Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation)  
Sanford Health North Dakota  
State of Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health  
State of Utah – Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health  
South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health  
Southern Utah University  
University of North Dakota – School of Medicine & Health Sciences  
University of South Dakota – Department of Psychology  
University of Wisconsin – Madison  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources Administration  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation  
Washington State Health Care Authority  
Wyoming Community College Commission  
Wyoming Department of Health



 **WICHE**  
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education