



# IDAHO & WICHE

## Working Together for Over a Half Century

Since 1953 Idaho has been a member of the Western

Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success.

In the six decades since Idaho joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

Tens of thousands of students from Idaho have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE's Student Exchange Program, saving millions of dollars, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Idaho students and their families have saved **\$121 million** since 1988, when Idaho began participating in the program. (See "Doing the Math," below, for Idaho's return on investment.)

- ▶ Idaho has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Idaho has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

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

### Doing the Math: Idaho's Return on Investment

In 2013-14 Idaho, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in over \$11.3 million through WICHE and spent \$131,000 for membership in the commission, yielding an 86-fold return on investment.

In the last 5 years, Idaho students' savings from WUE alone have totaled \$46.5 million, yielding a 74-fold return on the state's investment in WICHE.

### WICHE's Student Exchange & Related Programs

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

Idaho is active in two of three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2013-14 Idaho's students and families saved over **\$11.3 million**. Idaho saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

**Western Undergraduate Exchange.** Idaho students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Idaho's borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2013-14, 1,274 students from Idaho are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving more than \$10.3 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$8,094. In the last 10 years, students have saved **\$83.7 million**. Idaho benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Idaho's institutions can choose how many out-of-state slots to offer and in which areas, allowing them to make the best use of their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There's a workforce benefit for the state,

too, as students often stay in Idaho after graduating. In 2013-14 Idaho received 2,031 students through WUE.

**Professional Student Exchange Program.** Idaho has sent **850 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) in past years. In addition, in 2013-14 the state received two students and over \$30,000 in support fees from other Western states.

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

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

**Figure 1. Idaho Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2013**

**Student Savings**

WUE	\$10,331,493
WRGP	\$980,280
<b>Total Student Savings</b>	<b>\$11,291,773</b>

**Revenue to ID**

<b>Institutions (PSEP)</b>	<b>\$30,089</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,321,862</b>

**WICHE’s Added Value**

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

**Policy & Workforce Development.** Idaho has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. In addition, WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues. President David Longanecker and Brian Prescott, director of

“ISU’s program in Communication Sciences & Disorders is new to WRGP this year, and we are very happy to be able to provide a tuition reduction to students from our fellow WICHE states. We have been very pleased with the quality of WRGP applicants to our program. The continual increase in tuition has made higher education in the health sciences out of reach for many students, but WRGP makes it more accessible and affordable. WRGP demonstrates that learning passes well beyond the boundaries of individual states, as do the benefits of education.”

– Tony Seikel, professor & associate dean,  
Idaho State University

policy research, testified before the Idaho House and Senate Education committees in early 2013 on higher education policy related to accountability, college preparation, and financial aid.

Idaho is one of four states participating in the Gates-funded *Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange* pilot project, which attempts to enable a more comprehensive regional view of the **creation of human capital and its flow among multiple states by exchanging data across K-12 education**, postsecondary education, and the workforce. WICHE held one of its working group sessions in Boise, which allowed a larger number of Idaho officials to attend and participate. In addition, WICHE has provided counsel to Idaho State Board of Education related to its own efforts to build a state longitudinal data system. The state also participated in a Gates-funded meeting that brought together the stewards of the data systems in 14 of the WICHE states for discussions around linking data internally and with other states. A central topic of conversation was how to address the challenges to **data sharing** presented by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Another meeting was the **Western Summit on Workforce Certification and Higher Education** for policymakers in the West, held in response to the national demand for more highly skilled workers in a host of fields, from healthcare to high tech. Participants explored how states might use a workforce certification system – which would allow business and higher education to communicate with a common language about workforce demand and supply – to improve their ability to prepare individuals for productive careers and enhance the health of their economies.

Idaho participates in WICHE’s **College Access Regional (CAR) Network and Consortium**, a collaborative effort that brings together state projects focused on increasing postsecondary access and success for low-income students. The CAR Network began as the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Network, an

"My parents were not able to finish high school or earn their college degree because they had me at a very young age. They worked hard to give me a life they were not able to have themselves as children. Going to college was the only thing my parents ever asked of me. We are of a lower-income bracket, and I have three younger siblings, and we are all very close in age. We have all graduated or are graduating college. Without WUE there would've been no way for me to attend college for financial reasons. I am now in my third semester at Montana Tech. My estimated cost of tuition is around \$19,000 because I am out of state. However, with WUE, I am paying about the same as an in-state student. Thanks to WUE I'm able to continue my degree, get a good job, and pay my parents back for every ounce of effort they put forth to raise me and help me get where I am today"

– Shelby, Idaho resident, Class of 2015,  
Montana Tech of the University of Montana, Mining Engineering

effort to spur collaboration between states who were receiving the federal CACG, which aims to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. In 2013, WICHE expanded eligibility for the Network to include other large scale programs focused on similar goals.

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

Idaho also participated in another Lumina project, *Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems*, which seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their **articulation and transfer** programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions, focusing on strategies that increase access to and success in higher education.

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

**Technology.** Several Idaho colleges and universities are active participants in the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)**, a national membership cooperative that accelerates the adoption of effective practices and policies to advance excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education.

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

**Mental Health.** A nucleus for researching mental health policy and a provider of technical assistance in such areas as service innovation, system reform, workforce development, program evaluation, and other areas, WICHE's **Mental Health Program** is another well-used resource. The program supported the Idaho Governor's Office and the Legislature in a strategic-planning process focused on supporting improvements in the state's behavioral health system, conducting research for and providing technical assistance to the Governor's Transformation Workgroup. The program also provided technical assistance to the Division of Mental Health in its efforts to examine the need for a forensic psychiatric hospital facility. In addition, two Idaho higher education campuses participated in a



"WUE makes dreams possible. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my college aspirations in the manner I had hoped and planned ever since I was in 5th grade. One of my top priorities was to experience a new living environment, meet a more diverse group of people and gain exposure to a variety of educational opportunities not available in my home state. With college costs almost doubling in the past few years, I faced financial constraints which limited my choices. WUE made it possible for me to follow my dreams within my budget. I wake up every day excited – and grateful – to be working towards my scholastic goals. It is a competitive program, but worth every effort. I am proud to be a participant and I will always value the opportunity WUE provided me."

– Alex, Idaho resident, Class of 2016,  
Western Washington University,  
Biology and Anthropology

“The WUE program is helping me to reach my goals. Without it I would not be able to study at one of the top research institutions in the nation and pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. Thank you!”

– Josh, Idaho resident, Class of 2014,  
University of Utah, Biology

research study, funded by the National Institute for Mental Health, that focuses on campus mental health and the effects of mental health first aid training for campus residence life staff.

**Other Initiatives.** Another initiative, the **Master Property Program (MPP)**, helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes 58 member institutions with total insured values of \$86.4 billion. The College of Idaho is a member institution. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer **MHECare**, a new health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans.

### Idaho & WICHE’s Leadership

Michael Rush, executive director, State Board of Education, Boise, is the vice chair of the **WICHE Commission**, whose members mold the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Idaho’s other commissioner is J. Anthony Fernandez, president, Lewis-Clark State College. One appointment is pending.



J. Anthony Fernandez



Michael Rush

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

### WICHE Commission & Staff

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

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

Staff leadership includes:

**David Longanecker**, president

**Erin Barber**, executive assistant to the president and to the commission

**Mollie McGill**, interim co-executive director, WCET

**Jere Mock**, vice president, Programs and Services

**Dennis Mohatt**, vice president, behavioral health

**Russell Poulin**, interim co-executive director, WCET

### How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at [www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu) or contact President David Longanecker at 303.541.0201.

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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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