The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success. Hawai‘i has been a member of WICHE since 1959.

Benefits to Hawai‘i

- Tens of thousands of students from Hawai‘i 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, Hawai‘i students and their families have saved $225.7 million since 1988 when the program was founded.
- Hawai‘i has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- Hawai‘i has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: Hawai‘i’s Return on Investment

- In 2016-17 Hawai‘i, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in $21.1 million through WICHE and spent $145,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a 146-fold return on investment.
- In the last five years, Hawai‘i students’ savings from WUE alone have totaled $77.9 million, yielding a 114-fold return on the state’s investment in WICHE.

WICHE’s Student Exchange & Related Programs

Hawai‘i is active in all three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2016-17 Hawai‘i’s students and families saved $21.1 million in tuition. Hawai‘i saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Hawai‘i students have enrolled in undergraduate programs on the mainland through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988. In 2016-17, 2,205 students from Hawai‘i were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving $19.8 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to $8,986. In the last 10 years, students have saved $138 million.

Hawai‘i benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Hawai‘i’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 Hawai‘i after graduating. In 2016-17 Hawai‘i received 2,507 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Hawai‘i has sent 1,294 students to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including dentistry, occupational therapy, optometry, physical therapy, and veterinary medicine. Historically, some 67 percent of PSEP students return to Hawai‘i to pursue their professional careers. In addition, in 2016-17 the state received one student and $32,650 in support fees from other Western states.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Hawai‘i’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to some 450 high-quality, distinctive programs at 61 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 2016-17 Hawai‘i sent 31 students to out-of-state institutions, receiving 37.

Interstate Passport® is a program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education based on learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It includes learning outcomes for nine knowledge and skill areas developed by faculty at institutions in multiple states as well as an academic.
progress tracking system for Passport transfer students designed by registrars and institutional researchers. The goal of the Interstate Passport is to eliminate transfer students’ unnecessary repetition of learning previously achieved.

**WICHE’s Added Value**

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

One of WICHE’s most widely known publications is the *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates* series, which for almost 40 years has provided strategic data about how high school graduates are likely to change in the years ahead. The 9th edition of *Knocking at the College Door*, released in December 2016, describes how the nation has entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates, with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations. After about 2025, the nation and most states will produce fewer high school graduates than in recent years, due to a recent “baby bust”. The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but it will be less impacted by the contraction of White youth and more influenced by a projected 20 percent increase of Hispanic high school graduates through 2024 and then decrease by about the same amount between 2025 and 2032.

There is an abundance of information on [knocking.wiche.edu](http://knocking.wiche.edu), including the publication and other reports, projections data, interactive data dashboards, recorded webinars and presentations, and Hawai‘i’s state profile, which indicates that:

- Hawai‘i is projected to produce 14,600 high school graduates per year, on average, between school years 2012 and 2032. Hawai‘i will produce about 12% more high graduates by 2026, before they decline in number about 5% by 2032.
- The number of Hispanic public high school graduates in Hawai‘i is projected to more than triple, from about 500 in 2012 to 1,900 in 2032. White and Asian/Pacific Islander graduates will be relatively steady in number throughout the projected years, with minor increases out through 2026.

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**Figure 1. Hawai‘i Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Savings</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WUE</td>
<td>$19,814,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEP</td>
<td>$846,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRGP</td>
<td>$460,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Student Savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,121,354</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue to HI Institutions (PSEP)</th>
<th>$32,650</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,154,004</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Policy & Workforce Development.** Hawai‘i has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. In addition, WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues, including the state’s workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio between grants, loans, and scholarships, as well as between merit- and need-based aid.

Hawai‘i was one of four original states chosen to participate in the Gates-funded Facilitating Development of a Multistate Longitudinal Data Exchange pilot project (the others were Idaho, Oregon, and Washington). The project aims 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. Hawai‘i is receiving customized technical assistance, including a Hawai‘i-specific report, to aid the state in its examination of the data governance in place for each of those sectors, how data governance might be improved, and how the state can advance its efforts in developing its statewide longitudinal data system to meet state needs and fulfill commitments it made to the federal government as part of its successful Race to the Top application. The success of that pilot led Gates to fund a second phase in which the MLDE project will expand to other states.

The Adult College Completion (ACC) Network, funded by Lumina Foundation, was an 800-member learning network that united organizations and agencies working to increase college completion by adults with prior college credits but no degree. Activities included an annual workshop, a webinar series, publications, a listserv, and other resources. The ACC Network and WICHE became national leaders in the area of adult learners and continue to be an important resource to those who strive to better serve non-traditional students.

The State Higher Education Policy Database (SHEPD) is WICHE’s online searchable database. It provides state and national policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, and education consumers with an inventory of state-level policies and resources in key issue areas related to access and success in higher education. It contains a blog and an electronic SHEPD alert distribution list to keep subscribers current on important updates. A related resource is the Policy Publications
Clearinghouse, a depository of publications, reports, and briefs related to higher education.

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.

Former WICHE President David Longanecker worked with the Governor’s Office and Senate Higher Education Committee to help them develop a state authorization process to certify nonpublic institutions to operate in Hawai‘i.

In January 2015, the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents sought to explore and analyze the current structure of the University of Hawai‘i system. Specifically, they wanted to address whether the Board of Regents should reconsider the 2001 separation of roles of the president of Hawai‘i’s system and the chancellor of the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa or seek other changes in the management and leadership structure of the system in order to better serve the state and its citizens. To accomplish this, the Board of Regents engaged the services of Longanecker, former president of WICHE, and Dr. Demarée Michelau, vice president of policy analysis and research for WICHE, to lead a research effort that included reviewing historical documentation; reviewing relevant literature and research; and conducting interviews with past and present stakeholders, national experts on leadership and governance, and leaders in other state higher education systems similar to that of Hawai‘i. In April 2015, WICHE produced a report that outlined the findings and recommendations of that research effort. The report can be found on the WICHE website at www.wiche.edu. In May, WICHE presented its findings to the Hawai‘i Board of Regents.

The University of Hawai‘i System and University of Hawai‘i-West O‘ahu are members of the Western Academic Leadership Forum (the Forum), the chief academic leaders of the four-year institutions and their related system and state agencies, who address regional higher education issues, and engage in resource sharing. The Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders (the Alliance) 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. Hawai‘i Community College, Honolulu Community College, Kapiolani Community College, Kauai Community College, Leeward Community College, University of Hawai‘i Maui College, University of Hawai‘i System, and Windward Community College are members.

Technology. Several Hawai‘i colleges and universities are active participants in the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. WCET is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations regarding the role of technology and innovation in higher education. Our growing membership includes more than 350 institutions, state and system-wide higher education agencies, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in nearly all U.S. states and many Canadian provinces. 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 email list-based discussions among members. Major topics of interest to the WCET membership include student success, managing e-learning, faculty success, emerging technologies, and evolving policy issues.

Mental Health. WICHE has been very active in Hawai‘i, focusing on issues of behavioral health workforce development. In FY15, the Hawai‘i Psychology Internship Consortium graduated its first cohort, and matriculated its second cohort of doctoral psychology clinical interns. This very successful partnership between WICHE, the Hawai‘i Children’s Mental Health Division, Hawai‘i Department of Education, and Hawai‘i Public Safety Department also achieved contingency accreditation by the American Psychological Association in FY15. WICHE provides administrative support, technical assistance, and data collection to HI-PIC. Since 2015, WICHE and the Hawai‘i Department of Education have partnered to recruit a range of behavioral health professionals to fill vacancies across the public school system in Hawai‘i.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The effort initially was funded by $3.2 million in grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is now supported by fees paid by institutions. The initiative is administered by the country’s four regional higher education compacts – the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

“WICHE’s PSEP played a significant role in my journey to becoming a veterinarian. The State of Hawai‘i does not have a veterinary program, so in addition to the stress of applications, I was worried about the financial costs and the lower ratio of out-of-state students who are accepted. CSU’s student financial adviser, Chad Jones, had wise words for us: Dream big, but with your eyes wide open. When I got the news that I was going to be supported through WICHE, I breathed a huge sigh of relief! I am so grateful that this program exists because it provided me with the support I needed to overcome these hurdles.”

– Norine, Hawai‘i resident, Class of 2020, Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences
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 Sen. Brian Taniguchi – has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep the commission’s Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and advises 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, the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states (the various entities can decide to participate), Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

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

Staff leadership includes:

- Joseph A. Garcia, president
- Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET
- John Lopez, special assistant to the president and chief administrative officer, and director, W-SARA
- Demarée Michelau, vice president, policy analysis and research
- Jere Mock, vice president, programs and services
- Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health

How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at www.wiche.edu or contact President Joseph A. Garcia at 303.541.0201.

May 2017

Student testimonials

“WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) is something that I highly recommend for all students who are interested in careers for which a program of study is not available in their home states. Being from Hawaii, I always dreaded moving out-of-state for school due to the high costs of nonresident tuition and travel. However, thanks to WICHE, I not only get to pursue my goal of becoming a physical therapist, but I get to do it at an affordable price. I’m so grateful for this awesome opportunity and I can’t wait to see what the future holds.”

– Mac, Hawai‘i resident, Class of 2019, University of Nevada Las Vegas, Doctor of Physical Therapy

– and overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states, and better resolution of student complaints. Hawai‘i is among the WICHE states that are members of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

Other Initiatives. The Master Property Program (MPP), helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and expanded to the WICHE region, the MPP includes more than 160 campuses with total insured values of over $106 million. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer MHECare, a health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of MHECtech to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase off competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs on a range of hardware and software products and services.

Colorado & WICHE’s Leadership

The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each state, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Hawai‘i’s commissioners are David Lassner, president, University of Hawai‘i System, and interim chancellor, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu; and Carol Mon Lee, attorney, and retired associate dean, University of Hawai‘i Richardson School of Law, Honolulu; and Colleen Sathre, vice president emeritus, planning and policy, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu.

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