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## WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (WICHE)

### 2002-03 OVERVIEW

#### Background

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) was created to expand educational opportunities for citizens in western states, and to provide additional educational programs, research and policy analysis to member states. WICHE student exchange programs enable students to attend participating public and private colleges and universities outside their home states at reduced tuition levels. Each year through these exchanges, Washington residents attend college in other western states, while Washington schools enroll students from other states. The commission was created in 1950, through an interstate compact that was ratified in 1955 as RCW 28B.70. In 1974, the Washington Legislature designated the Higher Education Coordinating Board to coordinate the state's participation (RCW 28B.80).

Fifteen western states currently participate in the compact (see accompanying list). Each state pays the same dues to participate in the compact (\$103,000 in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 academic years.) Dues are expected to increase to \$105,000 in the 2004-05 academic year. The dues support the WICHE administrative structure to operate the student exchange programs. WICHE also performs policy studies, develops other interstate initiatives to improve higher education, and convenes policy-makers to address issues of concern to member states. Many WICHE projects are funded substantially by foundations and the federal government.

<b>WICHE Member States (2002-03)</b>	
Alaska	New Mexico
Arizona	North Dakota
California	South Dakota
Colorado	Oregon
Hawaii	Utah
Idaho	Washington
Montana	Wyoming
Nevada	

The original exchange of students was initiated after World War II in response to the marked shortage of professional schools – and professionals – in western states. This shortage eventually led to the creation of the three student exchange programs. The first of the exchange programs, the Professional Student Exchange, was created in 1953.

<b>WICHE Student Exchange Programs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)</li> <li>• Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)</li> <li>• Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)</li> </ul>

WICHE established an administrative structure to operate these programs, and a regional commission to oversee them. Each state's governor appoints three commissioners to represent the state, subject to legislative confirmation. The Higher Education Coordinating Board's executive director, Senator Don Carlson, and Washington's policy advisor for higher education, Debora Merle, serve as Washington's commissioners. WICHE commissioners approve state participation dues and student exchange program support fees; authorize studies of regional higher education issues; and provide oversight for the agency's administration.

- The **Professional Student Exchange Program** includes 13 professional fields of study. Participating states that do not offer these particular programs can enroll their students in out-of-state schools that do have the programs. The student pays resident tuition (or reduced tuition at private institutions) and the sending states pay an additional "support fee" established by WICHE.
- The **Western Regional Graduate Program** includes designated graduate programs in all WICHE states, except California. To be included, programs must undergo an extensive review intended to assure that they are distinctive and have demonstrated high quality. Students pay resident tuition.
- The **Western Undergraduate Exchange** includes a wide range of programs in two-year and four-year colleges and universities. States include programs in which they are prepared to enroll residents of other participating states at a tuition rate equal to 150 percent of resident tuition. Approximately 1,210 two-year and four-year institutions participate.

States that participate in the Professional Student Exchange Program pay "support fees" to the receiving institution for each enrolled student. Direct appropriations are not required for the Western Regional Graduate Program or the Western Undergraduate Exchange, in which institutions discount their tuition for participating students. When students are accepted into a WICHE exchange program, they generally agree to keep their designation as out-of-state residents during the entire academic program.

Member states may participate in some, all, or none of the three exchange programs. By agreeing to participate in the Western Regional Graduate Program or the Western Undergraduate Exchange, a state agrees to be both a "receiving" and "sending" state. For the most part, these exchanges are managed directly between the institutions and WICHE. Higher Education Coordinating Board staff certifies student eligibility for Washington students going out of state in the Professional Student Exchange Program. State law directs the Board to coordinate state participation within the exchange programs (RCW 28B.80.150), and to periodically report to the Legislature about WICHE programs (RCW 28B.80.170).

## **Benefits of WICHE Membership**

WICHE membership offers Washington a variety of resources to develop higher education policy, facilitate student exchanges, and foster interstate resource sharing. Investment in the Professional Student Exchange Program has supported Washington students in professional programs not offered in the state and offers an incentive for them to return and practice here. The Regional Graduate Program and Western Undergraduate Exchange give Washington residents access to distinctive graduate and undergraduate programs offered in other states at tuition rates lower than they would normally pay as non-residents. And, when financially appropriate and when space is available, Washington institutions can offer students from other member states relatively inexpensive educational opportunities – and possibly encourage them to remain in the state after graduation.

Across all the exchange programs, Washington sent about 1,800 students out-of-state in 2002-03 and received about 800 students. In the Professional Student Exchange Program, the only exchange program requiring a state appropriation, Washington institutions received significantly more total revenue than they sent to other states.

<b>Washington's WICHE Appropriations (1994-2004)</b>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>Appropriation</i>	<i>Dues</i>	<i>Support Fees</i>	<i>Number of Awards</i>
1994-95	<b>\$215,500</b>	\$ 79,000	\$138,700	19
1995-96	<b>215,500</b>	79,000	135,600	15
1996-97	<b>215,500</b>	79,000	134,400	14
1997-98	<b>216,000</b>	81,000	113,200	10
1998-99	<b>220,000</b>	83,000	130,700	12
1999-00	<b>220,000</b>	85,000	134,100	13
2000-01	<b>225,000</b>	88,000	99,500	10
2001-02	<b>234,000</b>	99,000	142,800	13
2002-03	<b>240,000</b>	103,000	138,700	13
2003-04	<b>259,000</b>	103,000	169,800	14

The state appropriation includes both dues and student support fees. The specific amount available for support fees is a function of what remains from the state appropriation after dues are paid. In 1993-94, 63 percent of the appropriation went to pay student support fees. However, WICHE dues have increased by 37 percent since 1993-94, and the cost to support each student in the Professional Student Exchange has increased significantly. As a result, the percentage of funding available for support fees has declined to 58 percent, and the state supports six fewer students in the PSEP today than it did in 1993-94.

### **Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)**

This program allows students from member states to enroll at approximately in-state tuition rates (or reduced rates at private institutions) in specific professional programs generally not offered in their home states' public institutions. The student's home state pays pre-determined support fees directly to the receiving institution to defray the student's cost of tuition. In Washington, these support fees are considered a conditional loan to the student, who must fulfill certain obligations in exchange. The support fees are generally designed to make up the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition. The WICHE Commission sets the fees based on a study of actual tuition rates in each of the recognized professional programs. Students receive assistance in the form of a partial tuition payment and a certain level of preference in admission. The amount of this support fee can vary by academic program, but all participating states use the same rate for each program as they send and receive students. Washington sends fewer students out of state than it accepts into the state.

**Washington, a sending state.** Washington currently supports two professional programs not offered in the state – optometry and osteopathy. Support fees help qualified Washington students attend schools with these programs in other compact states. In 2002-03, Washington sent 13 students to other states. Washington public and private institutions received 74 students from other states during the same period. This is the only exchange program for which WICHE surveys students to generate comprehensive data about enrollment and program choices.

**Programs  
Washington  
Supports in  
PSEP**

- Optometry
- Osteopath

When Washington entered the program in 1974, professional students received this support fee in the form of a grant. At that time, the only eligible program was optometry. The program was converted for all new recipients to a conditional loan program when WICHE added the higher-cost osteopathy program in 1995. Washington is the only state that requires students to demonstrate financial need to receive the assistance. Four other states operate their tuition assistance programs as conditional loans: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. Alaska operates its tuition assistance program as a full loan program.

In Washington, students accepting the conditional loan agree to:

- Serve one year in a Washington-designated professional shortage area for each year of award, or a minimum of three years, whichever is greater; or
- Repay the entire amount of the award plus 8 percent interest within a five-year period if the entire service obligation is not met.

In 2002-03, Washington contributed \$138,700 for 13 students to attend school out of state. Generally, over the length of the academic program, each student receives conditional loans of between \$30,000 and \$68,000 in state support fees.

<b>Washington Students Who Attended Out-of-State Institutions through the Professional Student Exchange Program (2002-03)</b>			
<u>School</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Pacific University in Oregon	11	Optometry	\$113,300
Southern California College of Optometry	1	Optometry	10,300
Arizona College of Osteopathy	1	Osteopathy	15,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>\$138,700</b>

Since 1974, a total of 196 Washington residents have participated in the program. A total of 165 students received state support as an outright grant. More recently, 31 students have received the support as a conditional loan.

Of the 31 conditional loan recipients:

- 13 remain in school;
- Seven are practicing in the state;
- Three are serving their medical residency;
- Three are in their grace period;
- Two are in the military and receiving deferment;
- Two are repaying their loans; and
- One has repaid the loan in full.

When participation is measured by support fees appropriated and paid, Washington is the third lowest of the 13 western states that participate in PSEP. Participation ranges from Arizona at the high end, sending 153 students out of state with \$2,706,300 in support fees, to Idaho at the low end, with eight students going out of state with \$82,400 in support fees.

WICHE published in its 2002-03 Statistical Report, a chart of students who had completed their programs. WICHE located 128 Washington alumni; eighty-seven (or 67 percent) reported practicing in Washington. The last location survey was completed about five years ago.

**Washington, a receiving state.** Washington is a net importer of students under this program. In 2002-03, Washington sent 13 students to other states at a cost of \$138,700. The four participating schools in Washington enrolled 74 out-of-state students in eight different professional program areas and received over \$1.2 million in support fees from other states.

<b>Out-of-state Students Who Attended Washington Universities through the Professional Student Exchange Program (2002-03)</b>			
<b><u>Schools</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Students</u></b>	<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Fees Received</u></b>
<i>Washington State University</i>	45	Veterinary Medicine	\$989,336
<i>University of Washington</i>	3	Pharmacy	16,500
	6	Dentist	95,400
	5	Pharmacy	27,500
	2	Physical Therapy	22,400
	2	Occupational Therapy	28,000
	1	Physician Assist	9,600
	1	Public Health	3,867
<i>Eastern Washington University</i>	2	Physical Therapy	14,000
<i>University of Puget Sound</i>	5	Physical Therapy	42,000
	2	Occupational Therapy	22,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>		<b>\$1,271,003</b>

The largest numbers of students attending Washington universities were from Hawaii (11), Montana (14), Arizona (13) and Utah (13). Washington public institutions ranked fourth among the 15 WICHE states in the amount of support fees collected. Colorado collected the most (\$4,512,220) and Wyoming the least (\$5,500).

To further detail the process, if a student enrolled in a “Group A” program (medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic medicine, or physician assistant), by state agreement the university would receive only the support fee to cover the nonresident tuition differential. No additional amount above the resident tuition may be charged to the student. Because the support fee is standard across states, but includes institutions with potentially higher tuition rates, occasionally in a comparatively low tuition state, the amount of the support fee plus the student’s payment of the resident fee amount may exceed the total non-resident tuition charge.

If a student’s program is graduate library studies, pharmacy, public health, or architecture, it would fall into “Group B.” Institutions accepting students in Group B fields can charge the student any shortage of the nonresidential difference the WICHE support fee does not cover. This means the student may pay the resident tuition rate plus the amount of the nonresidential tuition charge that remains after the WICHE support fee has been applied.

## Western Regional Graduate Program

Established in 1981, the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) makes distinctive graduate programs available to students in WICHE states at a reasonable cost. Out-of-state students enrolling in WICHE-designated programs at public institutions pay tuition at resident rates. Students complete the regular admission process indicating on their applications that they would like to participate in the Regional Graduate Program. The student also contacts a designated person in the academic department. There is no requirement that students meet financial aid criteria, but they must fulfill all admissions requirements and deadlines of the institution.

Individual departments usually make admission decisions either on a rolling basis or an annual basis with the department normally determining a specific number of students to participate. The Regional Graduate Program designation remains with the student for the entire program as long as the student maintains satisfactory academic progress.

Institutions participate to publicize their programs and diversify their enrollments. Currently, only two Washington public universities participate (Washington State University and Eastern Washington University). The Regional Graduate Program operates directly between the institutions and the student. For example, the HECB has no direct role in certifying applications. However, HECB staff occasionally help other states verify an applicant's Washington residency. Washington has participated in the Regional Graduate Program since its inception.

**Washington, a sending state.** In 2002-03, 47 Washington students were accepted in out-of-state graduate programs through the WRGP. There are no appropriated costs to the state for this program. When space is available, Washington residents have the opportunity to enroll in approved programs in other states at the resident tuition rate.

### **Washington Students Attending Institutions in Other States through the Western Regional Graduate Program (2002-03)**

- Oregon (16 students)
- Colorado (13 students)
- Arizona (10 students)
- Other states (8 students)

In Oregon, for example, the most popular programs were oceanography, exercise/movement, and marine resource management. Further details on enrollments by state, program and institution are available from WICHE. No alumni surveys have been done to calculate "return-to-state" rates because WICHE does not track individual students.

**Washington, a receiving state.** Currently two institutions (Washington State University and Eastern Washington University) offer four graduate programs through the Regional Graduate Program. To be included, programs must meet the criteria of distinctiveness and quality. Institutions nominate their programs, and other peer graduate institutions in western states review the programs. The WICHE Student Exchange Program Advisory Council, a policy body that represents all participating states, approves new programs every two years.

<b>Washington's Western Regional Graduate Programs (2002-03)</b>
<b><i>Washington State University</i></b>
American Studies
Archaeology
English, Emphasis in Rhetoric
Food Science
Neuroscience
Nutrition
Public History
<b><i>Eastern Washington University</i></b>
Creative Writing
Social Work, Rural Populations

In 2002-03, this program brought 63 students to Washington institutions. Most of the students came from Idaho (30). The most popular programs were rural social work (28 students), public history (10 students), and archaeology (9 students).

## **Western Undergraduate Exchange**

The Western Undergraduate Exchange allows students in participating states to enroll in designated two-year and four-year academic programs at public institutions in other participating states at reduced tuition rates. WUE students pay the regular in-state tuition plus 50 percent of that amount. This cost is substantially less than nonresident tuition.

In this decentralized program, students (usually freshmen or transfer students) locate a WUE-eligible school and apply for admission. The student marks the application to indicate he/she is seeking admission as a WUE student. Based on available space and in some cases academic standing, the institution decides whether to admit the student under the WUE program.

Occasionally, in the past, states have asked HECB staff to confirm that students were Washington residents. On behalf of WICHE, HECB staff annually collected information from each participating school about the student's state of residence, the school he/she attended, and the program in which the student enrolled. Beginning in fall 2002, WICHE is collecting this information via a Web-based enrollment reporting process. WUE liaisons at the participating institutions respond to the survey electronically, and the database automatically calculates enrollment by program, institutions, and state. The HECB staff will have electronic access to the report.

**Washington, a sending state.** According to WICHE, 1,757 Washington residents enrolled at colleges and universities in other states through WUE in 2002-03. Of these, 156 attended a two-year college.

<b>WICHE States Receiving Washington Students through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (2002-03)</b>	
<b><u>State</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Students</u></b>
Oregon	398
Idaho	287
Nevada	230
North Dakota	165
Hawaii	155
Montana	133
All Others	389
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,757</b>

No alumni surveys have been done to calculate “return-to-state” rates because, prior to 2002, WICHE did not track individual students in this program. WICHE believes the new automated enrollment system will facilitate gathering information on participating students if the receiving institutions are willing to provide the student data. Detailed enrollment reports by state, school, and program are available at the WICHE Web site: [www.wiche.edu/sep](http://www.wiche.edu/sep).

**Washington, a receiving state.** In the 2002-03 academic year, 649 students came to Washington, mainly from Alaska, California, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Hawaii. The most popular programs were social sciences (60 students), biology (36), business management and administration (35), education (32), nursing (24). Other academic programs had fewer than 20 students enrolled. Most institutions accept students on a “space available” basis. A few institutions reserve some slots in their programs for highly qualified Western Undergraduate Exchange students.

<b>Washington Institutions Receiving Out-of-State Students through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (2002-03)</b>	
<b><u>Institution</u></b>	<b><u>Students</u></b>
Eastern Washington University	255
Washington State University	286
Central Washington University	79
Western Washington University	26
The Evergreen State College	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>649</b>

## **Other WICHE Initiatives**

WICHE Scholars is a fourth exchange program. According to WICHE, no students participated in this program in 2002-03. The program was conceived as one in which any WICHE state could assist its residents at any degree level and in any field not covered by the other exchanges. To participate, states pay the difference between resident tuition (paid by the student) and the receiving institution’s nonresident tuition.

WICHE also recently published reports on tuition and fees, a regional fact book and policy indicators for higher education, and projections of high school graduates through 2012. In addition to the student exchange programs described here, WICHE is involved in the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, a Mental Health Program, CONAHEC (a tri-national consortium of North American countries), and the Western Policy Exchange. WICHE operates other services and programs too. A sampling of WICHE’s other current programs include:

- Western Consortium for Accelerated Learning
- Pathways to College Network
- The American TelEd Communications Alliance (a technology and telecommunications purchasing initiative.)
- North American Tuition Bank
- Northwest Academic Forum
- Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy

WICHE projects and publications focus on current issues and concerns for Washington. They are often useful sources when a state is reviewing higher education policy issues, such as tuition. Conferences and workshops facilitate information exchange among states, helping state policymakers find appropriate solutions and avoid pitfalls that other states have encountered.

For more information:

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WICHE Web site: [www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)

## Statutory and Rules References

RCW 28B.70	Western Regional Higher Education Compact
RCW 28B.80.150 to 170	Higher Education Coordinating Board Authority
WAC 250-28	Professional Student Exchange Program (Optometry and Osteopathy)
RCW 28B.70.050	Permission to exempt nonresident tuition fees differential
RCW 28B.15.544	Permission to exempt nonresident fees in WUE for WSU, CWU and EWU
RCW 28B.15.910(2)(u)	Indicates how waivers will be counted for receipt of state general funds
RCW 28B.15.910(4)	Limit to waive for WUE within overall limits
RCW 28B.15.915	Fully opened all public institution’s waiver authority