

## POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT: DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ACCESS PROGRAMS

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**Position Title:** Director of Student Access Programs

**Classification:** Full-time, Exempt

**Salary:** \$90,000 - \$100,000

**Reports to:** Vice President, Programs and Services

**Position Available:** October 1, 2025. This position is in person in our Boulder, CO office. Limited funds are available for relocation to Colorado.

### The Position

The Programs and Services unit within the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) seeks a strategic collaborator who will focus on students while delivering exceptional service in a collaborative environment with multiple stakeholders, including institutional leaders, policymakers, and local workforce development organizations. The Director of Student Access Programs will guide and elevate several longstanding programs, which served nearly 53,000 students and saved residents \$671 million last year. These programs expand access to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across 15 Western U.S. states, the three U.S. Pacific Territories, and the Freely Associated States.

The director's role presents a unique opportunity to lead programs that are vital to the region's social, economic, and civic life, where more than 45% of adults hold an associate's degree or higher, yet access remains crucial. The director will assess and strengthen existing initiatives while exploring new ways to articulate and add value, fostering cross-state collaboration and dialogue, and mobilizing partners to use data-driven processes and WICHE-produced resources to understand and meet the evolving needs of learners and regional stakeholders.

The director will represent foundational programs with over 70 years of impactful work and strong partnerships that have created new pathways for educational attainment across the West. Success in this role depends on respecting the past while recognizing trends that require Commission or partner input and potential action. The director will also demonstrate superior project management skills and emphasize the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships. The ideal candidate has a strong interest in

student aid policy and practice, understands how education impacts workforce outcomes, and is skilled at combining strategy with practical application.

### Strategic Leadership

- Leading with curiosity through open, informed dialogue that fosters trusted relationships, surfacing regional access and workforce needs.
- Fostering cross-state collaboration through evidence-based strategies that expand student access and success.
- Championing a student-first approach that balances institutional autonomy with broader regional goals.
- Planning for sustainable long-term success by anticipating trends, articulating value, and guiding sustainable growth.
- Aligning programs with big-picture priorities, including state and territory postsecondary attainment goals and workforce needs.

### Operational Excellence

- Translating complex policy into clear practices that students, families, and institutions can easily understand.
- Strengthening internal operations by optimizing staff workflows, adhering to known administrative policies, and leveraging WICHE technology investments.
- Building program visibility through strategic communication, detailed outreach efforts, and partnership with a creative and experienced communications team.
- Supporting an adaptable, high-performing team through thoughtful change management and professional development.
- Safeguarding program integrity by ensuring compliance with residency, student data privacy, and aid eligibility policies established by participating states, territories, and institutions.

### Responsibilities

#### LEADERSHIP (35%)

Provide strategic leadership to ensure WICHE's student access programs remain responsive, innovative, and aligned with regional priorities.

- Promote and guide the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), and Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), which collectively serve tens of thousands of students annually.

- The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), launched in 1987, helps undergraduate students save on out-of-state tuition and offers access to a wider range of schools and programs. Students pay no more than 150% of in-state tuition at partner institutions across the West. Currently, 170 public colleges and universities participate in the program.
- The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), launched in 1981, helps graduate students save on out-of-state tuition for graduate certificate, master's, and doctoral programs. They gain access to specialized programs that might not be offered in their home state and pay no more than 150% of in-state tuition at partner schools across the West. Nearly 70 institutions participate.
- The Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), established in 1953, helps eligible students pursuing careers in 10 healthcare fields—including allopathic medicine, dentistry, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, and veterinary medicine—find an affordable pathway into these careers. Participants can enroll in programs within the WICHE region and receive significant tuition support from their home state or territory. Currently, twelve states and Pacific territories appropriate funds to support student tuition savings, and 135 academic programs are offered by participating institutions.
- Collaborate with WICHE leaders to shape program direction, launch pilot initiatives, and respond to emerging higher education and workforce needs.
- Develop a strategy to position WICHE as a leading voice on tuition savings and reciprocity through thought leadership and stakeholder engagement.

#### MANAGEMENT (35%)

Oversee program operations to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and impact.

- Lead staff in executing program goals, managing budgets, delivering high-quality services, and reporting program value and significance in coordination with other WICHE staff.
- Collaborate with IT and IT partners to maintain and improve the technology infrastructure that supports student access programs and ensures a high ROI.
- Partner with WICHE's Communications team to develop materials, oversee and update web content, and promote the value of the programs to key audiences.
- Convene meetings with stakeholders, develop sponsorship strategies, and assess program outcomes.

## OUTREACH (20%)

Build and sustain strong relationships across the region.

- Represent WICHE at conferences, meetings, and events—virtually and in person.
- Engage with institutions, school districts, policymakers, workforce and industry partners, and other associations to expand understanding and support for student access programs.
- Create tools and templates that help others tell the story and impact of WICHE's work.

## PERSONNEL (5%)

Foster a collaborative and high-performing team.

- Supervise key staff (Assistant Director of Student Access Programs and Senior Outreach Coordinator) and consultants in alignment with WICHE policy and procedures.
- Set clear expectations, support team members' professional development, and cultivate a strong team culture aligned with WICHE's mission.
- Request additional staff support for program delivery and propose a staffing plan to support special projects and initiatives.

## OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES (5%)

- Stay current on trends in higher education affordability, tuition reciprocity, and access.
- Write concept papers and contribute to external funding efforts.
- Share best practices with other regional compacts and partners as needed.
- Perform additional duties as needed.

## Required Education, Experience, and Skills

1. Master's degree or equivalent in a relevant field (e.g., higher education, public administration, non-profit management, or public policy).
2. Knowledge of higher education-related systems, including admissions, student aid, career and workforce, or policy.
3. Proficient with technology; quick to learn new platforms and tools.
4. Entrepreneurial mindset with a collaborative approach to developing new initiatives.
5. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills to engage with internal and external stakeholders effectively with clarity and purpose.

6. Flexible with the ability to work independently or with a team; self-motivated, detail-oriented, and team-focused.
7. Strong project, analytical, and problem-solving skills with the ability to manage complex initiatives, shifting priorities, and a geographically dispersed team.
8. Sound judgment, discretion, and professionalism in all interactions.

### Preferred Skills and Experience

1. Doctorate in a relevant field or 10 years of experience in program design, implementation, and evaluation.
2. Superior project management and knowledge of cloud-based database or relationship management systems, with internal staff and technical consultants developing and maintaining those systems.
3. Ability to identify, analyze, and explain relevant program data to support program development; promote a strong data-driven mindset in the team and with stakeholders.
4. Published professional writing or presentations on higher education policy and practice.
5. Recent professional experience in higher education in a position requiring leadership and innovation in a multi-institutional, multi-state, or association environment.

### The Programs and Services Unit

The Director of Student Access Programs will be a senior member of the Programs and Services unit, where students thrive and institutional leaders collaborate. The unit's primary goals are to broaden student access and success and to foster higher education collaborations that address institutional strategic goals. The Programs and Services unit manages WICHE's three Student Access Programs and other initiatives that help institutions and students — undergraduate, graduate, and health professional — save money and efficiently use available resources. The unit also oversees initiatives that bring together the West's higher education leaders to address shared goals and concerns and develop a new cadre of college and university leaders. The Programs and Services unit notes when a particular topic or issue warrants further exploration. The unit works with campus leaders to create communities of practice, often grant-funded, to examine these issues and explore solutions. Additionally, the unit helps institutions achieve cost savings through several programs in collaboration with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), which created and administers the joint purchasing programs.

### About WICHE

Since 1953, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop

innovative solutions that address some of our society's most pressing needs. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping states get the most from their technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy.

### Travel

Given the geographical reach of the WICHE region, this role requires occasional availability outside of regular office hours for outreach and travel. Travel is required to regional and national meetings (approximately two to four trips per year) and periodic travel (approximately two to four trips per year) associated with project, initiative, or program management.

### Benefits

Benefits: WICHE offers a competitive benefits package which includes medical insurance with generous employer contribution to health savings account (H.S.A.), dental, life, and disability insurance; flexible spending accounts (medical and dependent care); 403(b) retirement plan with employer match of 200% on employee contributions up to 5% after six full months of employment; and vacation accrual, sick leave, paid holidays, paid family leave and personal leave time.

*WICHE does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, veteran status, marital status, or any other legally protected status.*