



***Nevada Governor's Office of the Western Regional Education Compact
Nevada Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (Nevada WICHE)***

Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 28, 2020
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

Fred Lokken: Executive Commissioner, Nevada WICHE

Dr. Gillian Barclay: Nevada WICHE Commissioner

Dr. Thom Reilly: Nevada WICHE Commissioner

David Gardner: Senior Deputy Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General

Jennifer Ouellette: Nevada WICHE Director

Brian Mitchell: Director, Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology (OSIT)

- 1. Call to order.** The meeting was called to order. This meeting was posted in accordance with *Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 241*, Nevada's Open Meeting Law (OML).
- 2. Public Comment.** There was no public comment.
- 3. Discussion, recommendations, and action, regarding the minutes from the June 19, 2019 October 23, 2019, and November 12, 2019 Commission meetings.**

Director Ouellette stated that only the minutes from the November 12, 2019, meeting were ready. Commissioner Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Barclay. Commissioner Lokken called for all those in favor of accepting the November 12, 2019 minutes. All voted aye. The motion carried unanimously.

- 4. Strategic Planning Session.** Director Ouellette detailed the intent of the second strategic planning session was to evaluate how the agency programs are operating. The session will also revisit the career fields the Commission supports and provide feedback for budget planning.

Nevada WICHE operates two programs: the regional WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) and the Nevada Health Care Access program (HCAP).

WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

The WICHE PSEP provides funding to individuals studying professions not available at a public Nevada institution. Students supported by the PSEP attend public schools out-of-state or private universities (either in-state or out-of-state). Regional WICHE ranks and recommends students to support and sets the support fees. In return for funding, students commit to returning to Nevada after graduation and working anywhere in the state – one year of employment is required for each year of funding.

She explained the traditional model of the PSEP program is when a state opens a school of its own, they transition out of that field in the PSEP program. For example, Nevada supported dental students until the UNLV School of Dental Medicine opened; and law students were funded until the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law opened. Nevada exited the field of optometry in 2015 as workforce data indicated there was an adequate supply of optometrists. Some western states, including California, Oregon, and Washington, have stopped participating in the PSEP completely as they have created their own in-state programs.

Nevada Healthcare Access Program (HCAP)

Created in 1997, the Nevada HCAP provides funding to individuals pursuing education in healthcare professions. Students may attend any university although the majority of participants attend Nevada schools. Support fees are set by the Nevada WICHE Commission and applicants are selected by the program. In exchange for funding, students commit to practicing in health profession shortage areas in the state upon graduation. One year of employment is required for each year of funding, although employment requirements are capped at a maximum of two years pursuant to *NRS 397.0617*. The program's mission is to increase the number of providers in medically underserved areas.

Annual Expenditures by Field

Director Ouellette explained the agency is spending 41% of its budget on veterinary medicine students (14 students per year for a total of \$453,600). The Nevada Legislature has discussed in the past the need for large animal veterinarians, however, Nevada WICHE does not require participants to commit to a large animal specialty in exchange for funding.

Aside from veterinary medicine, Nevada WICHE is budgeted to fund 33 graduate nursing students, 17 pharmacy students, and 10 graduate social work students in fiscal year 2020. Outside of the aforementioned fields, only a handful of students are supported in the fields of physician assistant, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Commissioner Reilly suggested fields outside of veterinary medicine be funded through the Nevada HCAP. Director Ouellette affirmed veterinary medicine is the only field currently supported that is not available in Nevada. Commissioner Lokken stated that a growing number of states are stepping back from the PSEP and noted the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine is no longer accepting PSEP students. He recalled that Nevada provided

funding to Colorado State University's veterinary medicine program and that Nevada had been approached by Utah for a partnership. There are schools that are still open for partnerships. Commissioner Reilly considered reducing the number of veterinary medicine slots and allocating the slots for large animal veterinarians. Commissioner Lokken noted that in the past, veterinary medicine was funded as the agency did not have any applications in the other fields due to a lack of marketing.

Other Prospective Fields and Workforce Data

Commissioner Barclay suggested looking at fields such as biotech and pharmaceutical research, product commercialization, and drug discovery. A discussion ensued with the Commissioners regarding workforce data. Commissioner Barclay noted the information presented at this meeting is from the Nevada Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) and represents supply data. They do not have the demand data - what do employers need? She explained that Nevada's health care sector is incredibly privatized. The Commission may have an idea of the type of workforce demand there is for given occupations in the public sector, but not for the private sector. Another issue is the data is old and frequently lags 18 months behind. Commissioner Barclay further suggested one possible way of capturing live demand data is by surveying privatized health care industries, associations, and other entities on projected occupational need.

Commissioner Lokken acknowledged the difficulty of data collection, that the Commission could investigate this issue, but has concerns on staff workload. Director Ouellette suggested research options be discussed at the end of the presentation and the Commission can select fields for further discussion. Director Ouellette stated that while the workforce data presented at this meeting was prepared by OWINN, other datasets from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), and the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) were also reviewed and presented similar findings.

Overview of Fields Currently Supported by Nevada WICHE

Director Ouellette then proceeded to highlight each professional field currently funded.

Occupational Therapy (OT) - Director Ouellette reported that UNLV will be opening their inaugural OT class of 36 students in the summer of 2020. Touro University opened their OT program in 2005 and currently has capacity for 36 students as well. Nevada currently supports 3 students in this field through the PSEP. Director Ouellette asked for input whether to continue the program under PSEP or other options.

Commissioner Reilly confirmed that if the program were placed under the HCAP, the Commission could determine a funding model for the two Nevada schools - UNLV and Touro. Director Ouellette responded that moving the field from the PSEP to the HCAP could be accomplished but should also obtain legislative approval. Commissioner Lokken asked if moving the field from the PSEP would require a change in state law and Director Ouellette

responded that when the agency goes through the budget building process for the next biennium, they would present their proposal to move fields from the PSEP to the HCAP.

Commissioner Reilly asked why the Commission would continue funding through the PSEP when there are schools in the state that provide these programs. He suggested that the Commission keep veterinary medicine in the PSEP but scale it back and add specific conditions to receiving support. He also suggested moving all the other fields into the HCAP, so the agency has control over the candidate selection process and can grow the number of professionals in medically underserved communities.

Commissioner Barclay added there will likely be increased demand for occupational therapists due to Nevada's aging population. Commissioner Lokken added that the agency's primary mission is for recipients of funding to stay in Nevada. Regional WICHE says Nevada's PSEP return rate (students who return to Nevada after graduation) is 87%. If most of our students go to Touro University and Roseman University, it makes sense that the return rate would be high.

Pharmacy - Director Ouellette proceeded to review the pharmacy field noting there were 17 students supported by the agency, with the majority of students attending Roseman University in Henderson through the PSEP. Under the HCAP model, the service requirement is capped at two years in statute. If pharmacy is funded through the HCAP, the Commission would be funding students for three or four years, but only receiving two years back in service/employment. Hawaii does the opposite - if they are funding an accelerated program such as the PharmD program at Roseman University, they require an extra year of service. The Commissioners supported a year-for-year service payback period. Director Ouellette explained that if the Commission desires to move pharmacy into HCAP they would need to remove the cap of two years' service requirement through a bill draft request, unless two years is acceptable to the Commission.

Physician Assistant (PA)- Director Ouellette proceeded to review the physician assistant field, noting the agency supports 6 individuals, the majority of whom attend Touro University in Southern Nevada. UNR opened their PA program in 2018 with a class size of 24 students. She also noted that workforce data demonstrated the critical demand for this profession is in Southern Nevada. Commissioner Reilly confirmed that if moving the physician assistant field from the PSEP to the HCAP, the Commission could fund both UNR and Touro University programs but would need to step up marketing activities. Commissioner Lokken agreed noting that bringing the physician assistant program under the HCAP provides the agency with more control on selecting candidates willing to serve in underserved areas.

Physical Therapy (PT) - Director Ouellette explained the physical therapy field was one of the more challenging fields to examine. UNLV established their master's degree PT program in 1998 and its doctorate program in 2007. Nevada WICHE originally proposed to stop funding this field when UNLV's school opened, but then switched to funding students at UNLV under

the HCAP. In 2015 Nevada WICHE returned to funding PT through the PSEP model. UNLV has capacity for a class of 48 students, and Touro University has capacity for a class of 40 students. Director Ouellette noted if this field is moved again to HCAP the Commission will be funding students for three years, but only receiving 2 years of service due to the limitation in statute. Commissioner Barclay pointed out that similar to occupational therapy, physical therapy will also be in high demand with the aging population. Commissioner Lokken discussed the requirements to change the HCAP service requirement through the legislative process.

Veterinary Medicine - Director Ouellette directed the discussion back to veterinary medicine which is funded through PSEP. Commissioner Reilly asked for confirmation that there is an adequate supply of small animal veterinarians. According to the Nevada High Demand Occupation Analysis from the Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN), there is an oversupply of veterinarians in Northern Nevada and a small deficit of 83 veterinarians in Clark County. Commissioner Reilly asked if veterinarians are in competition with each other. Director Ouellette indicated she is happy to contact the veterinary boards, licensing boards and associations to inquire about demand for small animal veterinarians. Commissioner Barclay recommended the director contact Oquendo who is the largest provider for veterinary continuing education. Commissioner Lokken also noted that only three counties were identified as having a critical workforce need according to the data - White Pine, Lincoln and Nye.

Social Work - Director Ouellette explained that both UNLV and UNR have graduate level programs and all 10 slots are filled through the HCAP model, but she was not sure if the support fee of \$5,000 was adequate. Commissioner Reilly recommended only funding individuals who agree to work in the public or nonprofit sectors. Discussion ensued regarding the salary difference between the public and private sectors and the high demand for child protective service workers and school counselors.

Nursing – Director Ouellette explained that the HCAP had legislatively approved funding for approximately 33 graduate level nurse practitioners per year. Nevada workforce data show registered nurses (bachelor's degree) and nurse practitioners (graduate level) as professions with critical shortages throughout the state second only to physicians in the field of healthcare. In other words, of all the fields Nevada WICHE supports, workforce demands for nursing is the highest. Despite this, the program experienced difficulty filling slots in this field. Through conversations with Commissioner Barclay and several other nursing professionals, she has come to understand the requirements for both the PSEP and HCAP are modeled with the assumption the student is a full-time student. However, nursing students pursuing graduate level education are often part-time students who are working full-time. Director Ouellette stated this is something that can be fixed from a policy perspective to support and attract working students to the program. Commissioner Barclay stated that graduate nurses are sorely needed in the state, and practitioners in the psychiatric mental health track are in even higher demand. Commissioner Lokken expressed that most students follow the two-

year TMCC program and may not be interested in two more years. Director Ouellette committed to investigating this further, along with the support fees offered for this field.

Next Steps

A discussion ensued regarding the next steps. Director Ouellette stated she would like agreement on the fields the Commission is interested in so that she can develop funding options for the next biennial budget. Commissioner Reilly requested the Director look at reducing veterinary medicine and specifying the service requirement for large animals. Director Ouellette suggested implementing a penalty for individuals who fail to comply with the large animal service requirement. Commissioner Lokken mentioned the Nevada Health Services Corps (NHSC) which focuses on rural areas as a possibility for veterinary medicine funding. Commissioner Reilly offered to facilitate a meeting with university program directors to discuss funding availability for the different fields. Commissioner Barclay noted the need to explore grant opportunities as it would be good to attract other funding resources to the program. Finally, Director Ouellette discussed the completion of the Legislative Counsel Bureau audit which she will present at the next meeting. She then turned the meeting over to Commissioner Lokken.

Regional WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee

Commissioner Lokken explained the WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) meets every September. Legislative representation for the committee has doubled from two to four representatives for every state. Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson and Senator Hardy are the current representatives; the Commission needs to identify two more representatives.

Program Move to NSHE

Commissioner Reilly had discussed moving the Nevada WICHE program back to NSHE with the Board of Regents and the Chancellor's Cabinet. He suggested the Director meet with Vice Chancellors Crystal Abba and Nate McKinnon to determine the best fit.

5. Discussion, recommendations, and actions regarding student requests. All program participants discussed in the meeting have been notified in accordance with NRS 241, Nevada's Open Meeting Law (OML).

- Robin Reaney Smith – Ms. Reaney-Smith graduated from a physician assistant program in May 2016. She worked part-time at a federally qualified health center for one year before her husband, who is in the military, was stationed to Germany. Pursuant to NRS 397.0645, Ms. Reaney-Smith is requesting an extension of time to complete the conditions of her stipend grant and fulfill her service requirement. Ms. Reaney-Smith stated that her family holds residency in Nevada and plans on fulfilling the remainder of her service requirement when her husband's orders to remain in Germany expire in July 2022. She is requesting a 3-year extension to return to Nevada and resume her service requirement. Commissioner Reilly made a motion to approve a three-year extension to Robin Reaney-Smith's service requirement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barclay. Hearing no further

discussion, Commissioner Lokken called for the vote. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion to extend Ms. Reaney-Smith's service requirement was approved unanimously.

- Shannon Seymour – Ms. Seymour graduated from optometry school through the PSEP in May 2017. She is currently living in Oregon and wrote a letter to the Commission in 2018 asking for an extension on her service requirement under NRS 397.0645. Ms. Seymour went through a divorce and her joint custody agreement stipulates she must live no further than 60 miles from her children. Ms. Seymour anticipates returning to Nevada in 2026 when she is no longer bound to her joint custody agreement. Deputy Attorney General Gardner noted that Oregon has very strict requirements on custody agreements. Commissioner Lokken stated he had never been asked for an extension of that length. Deputy Attorney General Gardner reviewed the regulations and confirmed the only cap on time limits for extensions was two years for the professional licensing. Ms. Seymour's grant conditions do not have any cap on time extensions. With no other questions or comments from the Commission, Commissioner Barclay made a motion to extend Ms. Seymour's grant obligations until 2026; seconded by Commissioner Reilly. With no further discussion all commissioners voted in favor in extending Ms. Seymour's grant obligations until 2026 and the motion carried unanimously.
- Theodore Parento – Mr. Parento received two years of funding under the HCAP for his Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree. Mr. Parento has been employed by the Nevada Department of Corrections as a Senior Psychiatrist underfill from August 2018 to present. Pursuant to NRS 397.0645, Mr. Parento is requesting a one-year reduction to his two-year service requirement as he is an employee of the state. Mr. Parento was recently approved for the loan repayment program through the National Health Services Corp (NHSC), and is concerned that the service requirement from the HCAP and the NHSC may conflict with each other. Mr. Parento asked if it was possible to back date the stipend grant forgiveness to August 2019, when he completed one year of service. Commissioner Reilly made a motion to forgive Mr. Parento's service requirement as permitted by the regulations. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barclay. Commissioner Lokken asked for counsel's review of the law regarding backdating and if the stipend grant forgiveness could be backdated. Deputy Attorney General Gardner stated the service requirement of one year was met and the Commission may forgive the service requirement, but he was not sure how to back date it. Commissioner Lokken then asked if the Commission could amend the motion to acknowledge Mr. Parento had completed his service requirement as of August 2019. Commissioner Reilly moved to amend the original motion to acknowledge Mr. Parento's successful completion of his service requirement from August 2018 to August 2019, and that the Commission grant his request to forgive his service requirements. The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Barclay. With no further discussion, Commissioner Lokken called for the vote to acknowledge Mr. Parento's completion of his service requirements and forgiveness of his stipend grant. All voted aye and the motion carried.

- Michael Olma – Director Ouellette introduced Mr. Olma and then asked Mr. Olma to explain his request. He explained he graduated optometry school in 2015 and divorced while in school. He advised previous staff via email on March 2, 2016, that he would not return to Nevada to fulfill his service obligation. As a result, his stipend/grant was converted to a loan with interest. Shortly after, Mr. Olma was given an opportunity to work for an airline company, Jet Test, based out of Henderson, Nevada. He asked the previous director if this arrangement would qualify for meeting his service requirement and was informed by the previous director that it would. Mr. Olma recounted his history with Nevada WICHE over the past four years, stating that his account was overcharged and he had difficulty working with previous staff. Recently Director Ouellette and he connected, and he was advised that the work he did for Jet Test did not count towards his service requirement. Had he known this 4 or 5 years ago, he could have made other decisions. He is requesting his stipend/grant to be marked as forgiven and exempted from the balance due. When asked by Director Ouellette, Mr. Olma stated he did not have a license to practice optometry in Nevada. Mr. Olma does not travel to Nevada to see patients, but rather, Nevada residents come to Oregon to see him. Mr. Olma does not receive monetary compensation from Jet Test, but is compensated with travel vouchers from Jet Test. Deputy Attorney General Gardner explained that NRS requires physical residency in the state of Nevada to qualify for loan forgiveness. As Mr. Olma does not reside in Nevada, he is not eligible for loan forgiveness. Commissioner Reilly made a motion to not approve Mr. Olma’s request for loan forgiveness. Commissioner Barclay seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Mr. Olma’s request was denied.

6. Public Comment. There was no public comment.

7. Adjournment. Having no further business and receiving no public comment, the meeting was adjourned.