

**Nevada Office of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education  
(Nevada WICHE Commission) Minutes**

Nevada System of Higher Education  
System Administration Building  
2601 Enterprise Road  
Reno, NV 89512  
Room 114

Video or Telephone Conference Connection from the Meeting Site to:

Nevada System of Higher Education  
System Administration Building  
4300 S. Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89119  
Room 105

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 2:00 pm

**Members Present:** Mr. Fred Lokken, Executive Commissioner  
Ms. Cathy Dinauer, Commissioner  
Mr. Dale Erquiaga, Commissioner

**Others Present:** Ms. Patty Porter, Director, Nevada Office of WICHE  
Ms. Carrie Parker, Deputy General Counsel, NSHE  
Ms. Megan Van, Staff, NSHE Office of WICHE  
Ms. Donna Healy, Executive Assistant, NSHE Department of Academic  
and Student Affairs and Community Colleges

Executive Commissioner Fred Lokken called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

**1. Information Only – Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**2. Minutes**

The Nevada WICHE Commission approved the minutes from its January 25, 2024 and February 1, 2024 meetings. (*Ref. 2-WICHE Commission Meeting Minutes, January 25, 2024, and Ref. 3-WICHE Commission Strategy Meeting, February 1, 2024, meeting*)

Commissioner Dinauer moved approval of the January 25, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Erquiaga seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Dinauer moved approval of the February 1, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Erquiaga seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. Commissioner Updates**

The WICHE Commissioners provided the following updates on their activities as commissioners:

- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that he will be attending the May 6 and 7 Regional WICHE meeting in Las Vegas; Commissioner Erquiaga will also be attending and Commissioner Dinauer may be attending the meeting.
  - All of the upcoming meeting dates are listed on the [WICHE](#) website and in the Commissioner agenda handbooks.
  - The November 14-15, 2024 meeting will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii.
  - Executive Commissioner Lokken also noted that he has been invited to be a speaker at an upcoming WCET-WICHE event, [Distance Ed at a Crossroads: The Changing Landscape of New Regulations](#), in St. Louis, Missouri on July 30-31, 2024.
- Commissioner Dinauer stated that she attended a workforce meeting with Colleen Falkenstein (Regional WICHE) that included updates on schools that have received grant funding.
  - Director Porter asked what kinds of funding are being provided.
    - Commissioner Dinauer said that it varies; much of the funding consists of grants.
    - A more comprehensive report will be provided in the future.
- Commissioner Erquiaga noted that he was currently at the airport and had nothing to report.

#### **4. Director Update**

- Director Porter noted that on March 6, 2024, she attended the [State of Nevada Governor's Finance Office](#) (GFO) Biennial Budget Kickoff event in Carson City (on behalf of the Nevada Office of WICHE and the Nevada WICHE Commission).
  - The direction received was to plan for a flat budget (at no more than two times above the base) in submitting the FY 26-27 agency biennial budget.
  - The biennial budget submitted should reflect the Governor Lombardo Administration 2024-2026 3-year Plan Policy Matrix.
  - It was also communicated that enhancements can be submitted, but not to rely on them being funded.
- The following meetings took place on behalf Nevada WICHE to give agency history, update on SB 342 and goals of the Nevada WICHE Commissioners for biennial budget for FY 26-27:
  - March 12, 2024, Carson City: Executive Commissioner Lokken and Director Porter met with Robin Titus, Nevada Senate Minority Leader.
  - March 14, 2024, Las Vegas: Director Porter met with Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui in Las Vegas.
  - March 15, 2024, Las Vegas: There were two meetings; the first meeting was with Executive Commissioner Lokken, and Director Porter met with GOED Workforce Director Elaine Silverstone, Workforce Specialist Vance Farrow, who served as a past Nevada WICHE Commissioner, and Natalie Brown, NSHE Assistant Vice Chancellor of Workforce Development.
    - The second meeting was with Executive Commissioner Lokken, Director Porter, and Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop.
  - March 28, 2024, Carson City: Executive Commissioner Lokken and Director Porter met with Ryan Cherry, the Governor's Chief of Staff, Jim Wells, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Isabel Graf, Policy Advisor.
    - Due to the passage of COLA funding in the 2024 legislative session, the priority is to fund increases, which will make the granting of enhancement requests for FY 26-27 biennial budget difficult.
- Based on identification of a flat budget from the budget kickoff event and meeting with Governor's staff, the draft of the Nevada Office of WICHE biennial budget will reflect the following:
  - The budget is flat with no increases.

- Director Porter will be working within the budget to consider the increase in the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) support fees and regional WICHE membership; this may require cutting back on stipend slots, activities such as travel/outreach, and position upgrade.
- Administration account enhancement requests include:
  - Upgrade of the Accountant Technician I position.
  - Continuation of the Program Officer I position funded for FY 24-25 in SB 342.
  - An increase in the operating budget to cover projected increases in regional WICHE membership.
- Loan and Stipend account enhancement requests include:
  - An increase in amount for the [Nevada Psychological Internship Consortium](#) (NVPIC) from \$112,550 to \$135,000, and an increase of \$22,500 to provide a stipend of \$45,000.
- Director Porter introduced Megan Van, the temporary employee hired to help in the Nevada Office of WICHE.
  - Previously, Megan served for 17 years as the Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Student Services and Diversity at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC).
  - We hope to have her beyond a temporary basis.

### **Discussion**

- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that during the meeting with Senator Robin Titus, Senator Pete Goicoechea called in and they discussed the Utah partnership.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken also noted that there was a high energy discussion with the [Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development](#) (GOED); where we can align with their topics, we will work together.
- Director Porter noted that these Senators are both serving on the [WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee](#); Director Porter will be reaching out to meet with a third member, Senator Melanie Scheible.
- Commissioner Erquiaga noted that adding enhancements into the budget makes it possible for the legislature to add them if the money is there, which is often the case.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken asked for a clarification as to whether Director Porter was asking for an upgrade to the classified position; Director Porter confirmed that is correct.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the last funding increase to the Nevada Office of WICHE was in 1995.
  - Work is underway on updating the accounting technician position description and requirements on a statewide basis.
  - In terms of the relationship with legislators, there is a positive attitude and appreciation for what WICHE does.

### **5. Update on Contract Negotiations with Utah State University Pursuant to SB 342**

- Director Patty Porter and Deputy General Counsel Carrie Parker provided the Commissioners with an update on the status of implementation of the contract dated February 1, 2024 related to SB 342 and negotiations with Utah State University (USU) regarding a possible amendment to the contract, with possible action to include review and approval of a contract amendment or further direction to staff regarding negotiations and next steps.
- Director Porter noted that Dirk Vanderwall reached out to her regarding their consultative visit from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in September, 2023, which was in preparation for the comprehensive visit.
  - The issues noted in the AVMA feedback have been addressed and the comprehensive visit has been scheduled for October, 2024.

- The AVMA’s next meeting will take place in March 2025 to determine if USU will be granted their letter of reasonable assurance.
- The AVMA will have 30 days to notify USU of their decision; if approved, the Letter of Reasonable Assurance will likely be issued in April 2025, meaning that USU will be able to open up applications to students at that time for the fall 2025 classes.
- Due to the change in timing, an amendment to the contract has been created to reflect the new date of May 1, 2025 for USU to receive their Letter of Reasonable Assurance and if they do not, that would present an option to terminate.
  - Reference #5 (projected stipend grant disbursement) has not changed; please note that it states that the number of students per cohort year may vary.
  - Regarding Reference #7, Dr. Dirk Vanderwall, USU Interim Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, included information regarding how this program will share information about their accreditation status with Nevada residents.
    - Dr. Vanderwall shared with Director Porter that he submitted the information plan to the AVDMA and that they responded via email that they are good with the plan.
      - Dr. Vanderwall provided Director Porter with a copy of the email.

### **Discussion**

- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that he participated in the meeting to decide the scope of the contract changes, which were developed quickly.
- Commissioner Dinauer stated that the amendment is great; given the background and rationale, it seems like the right thing to do.
  - She would like assurance and validation that the plan is going to happen.
- Director Porter shared that, if approved by the Commission, the amendment will include the reference materials for submission to the State of Nevada Governor’s Finance Office (GFO) which will then be forwarded to the Interim Finance Committee (IFC).
- The target date to submit to GFO for review is April 24; upon approval by GFO, the next step will be to submit the amended contract to the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) for the June 13, 2024 IFC meeting.
  - USU Interim Dean Vanderwall is planning to attend the meeting.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the stakeholder’s group, including Senator Pete Goicoechea, has been briefed on the need and nature of adjustments.
- Director Porter noted that she is looking at setting up a meeting with Dr. Vanderwall, along with key stakeholders, and Jennifer Pedigo, Executive Director, State of Nevada Board of Veterinary Examiners, prior to the June 13 IFC meeting.

Commissioner Dinauer moved approval for the contract amendment between NV WICHE and Utah State University, pursuant to SB 342. Commissioner Erquiaga seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **6. Add University of Nevada, Reno to 2023-2024 & 2024-2025 Health Profession Education Program (HPEP) RN to BSN Pilot**

- Director Porter discussed and sought approval by the Nevada WICHE Commission to add the University of Nevada, Reno RN to BSN program as a participating NSHE institution for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 Nevada Office of WICHE HPEP RN to BSN Pilot.

### **Discussion**

- Commissioner Dinauer requested confirmation that there is no conflict with her voting on this matter, as she approves pre-licensure programs for the State of Nevada Board of Nursing.

- Deputy General Counsel Parker stated that disclosure and consideration of whether a reasonable person would be influenced in this situation would suffice.

Commissioner Erquiaga moved to add the University of Nevada, Reno RN to BSN program as a participating NSHE institution for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 Nevada Office of WICHE HPEP RN to BSN Pilot.  
Commissioner Lokken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## **7. Interlocal Contract Between the Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) and Nevada WICHE**

- Deputy General Counsel Carrie Parker presented information for possible action regarding an interlocal contract between the Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) Nevada Psychological Internship Consortium and Nevada WICHE for July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2025.

### **Discussion**

- Deputy General Counsel Parker noted the following:
  - Attachment A explains the scope of work and deliverables.
  - Nevada WICHE provides \$37,500 each for three NV Psychology Internship Consortium (NV-PIC) interns to work with Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Behavioral Health (DPBH).
    - This is a doctoral internship training program.
    - \$37,500 to be applied to 3 NV-PIC interns per year x 2 years.
    - Nevada WICHE provides the money to DPBH, who pays Regional WICHE to fund the internships.
    - DPBH sets up the member sites for the internships.
      - Rural clinics
      - Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services (SNAMHS)
  - The consortium is explained in Attachment B: DPBH, Nevada WICHE, Regional WICHE.
  - The money for this contract has already been approved through the biennial budget process, and the 2023-2024 payments have already been distributed to DPBH.
  - However, it became known that the previous interlocal agreement between Nevada WICHE and DPBH had expired.
  - The Commission is being asked to consider a new interlocal agreement covering this biennium from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025.
  - When DPBH submits the interlocal contract to the Board of Examiners (BOE) for approval, DPBH will provide the BOE with a memorandum explaining the retroactivity.

### **Discussion**

- Executive Commissioner Lokken disclosed that he insisted that a formal agreement be created for this process.

Commissioner Dinauer moved to enter into an interlocal contract between DPBH Nevada Psychological Internship Consortium and Nevada WICHE from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2025. Commissioner Erquiaga seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## **8. Interest Rate for Promissory Note Set According to Higher Education Act of 1965 for Subsidized Undergraduate/Graduate Loan Rate starting with 2024-2025 Contracts**

- Director Porter explained that per Nevada Revised Statute 397.064 section 1(a), all loans must bear a competitive interest rate, which must be established by three Nevada State Commissioners, acting jointly and requested that starting in 2024-2025 and moving forward, the interest rate in participant promissory note is set on an annual basis according to section 455(b)(8)(A) through (c) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, amended for unsubsidized undergraduate/graduate loans.
- Director Porter stated that when she entered into her position, the standard rate was 8%.
- She also noted that tying the rate to the U.S. Department of Education rate, which is based on the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, would be fair for program participants.
- The current rate will be used for the next set of contracts to be processed, and then from then on match that rate.
- Director Porter noted that she has made some rate adjustments, per her ability to negotiate rates.

### **Discussion**

- Commissioner Erquiaga asked which month would be the effective date for the rate change.
  - Director Porter noted that she reached out to Jose Quiroga, NSHE Research Analyst, and learned that the federal interest rates are set in July for the new award year but information regarding the rates is available one-month prior.
  - The PSEP application 2024-25 is online and posted; when they are awarded (likely in August), they will have the new promissory note rate, which should be established by that time.
  - Federal student aid interest rates span from July 1 – June 30 each year.
- Deputy General Counsel Parker suggested that the Commissioners may also want to allow Director Porter to negotiate a lower interest rate if warranted by circumstances.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken commented on the history of interest rates used for WICHE contracts.
- Director Porter noted that the 8% is still applicable to the promissory note; currently, the only loans are conversions.
- The only circumstance that the rate will apply is if students who do not complete their practice obligation fail to communicate with Office of Nevada WICHE staff.

Commissioner Dinauer moved that per Nevada Revised Statute 397.064 section 1(a), all loans must bear a competitive interest rate, which must be established by three Nevada State Commissioners, acting jointly, and requested that starting in 2024-2025 contracts and moving forward, with the interest rate in participant promissory note set on an annual basis according to section 455(b)(8)(A) through (c) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, amended (HEA) for unsubsidized undergraduate/graduate loans, and allow Director Patty Porter the ability to continue to negotiate the rates. Commissioner Erquiaga seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## **9. New Business**

- There was no new business.

## **10. Public Comment**

- There was no public comment.

Meeting adjourned at 3:54pm

Prepared and submitted by:

Patty A. Porter

Director, Nevada Office of WICHE