

**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

Thursday, February 27, 2025, 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. Donna Healy, Executive Assistant, Department of Academic and  
Student Affairs, NSHE

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 December 10, 2024 meeting. (*Ref. 2-WICHE Commission Meeting Minutes, December 10, 2024*)

Commissioner Erquiaga moved approval of the December 10, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Dinauer seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. Commissioner Updates**

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

- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared that he and Director Porter met with Nevada WICHE Legislative Advisory members; Director Porter shared further details regarding their visit in the Director's update.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that it was Commissioner Erquiaga's last meeting; he has been fabulous at helping the Commission through a lot of complicated issues.
  - His support and activities have been very much appreciated.
- Commissioner Dinauer also thanked Commissioner Erquiaga for his expertise and service.

- Commissioner Erquiaga noted that he was aware of WICHE since childhood and serving on the Commission has been a career capstone for which he is grateful, including for the support of the NSHE staff.
- Deputy General Counsel Parker noted that she will miss Commissioner Erquiaga; she has enjoyed working with him since he was the Superintendent of Public Instruction with the Nevada Department of Education.
- Director Porter shared that she is very grateful that she got to know Commissioner Erquiaga as the NSHE Chancellor, is thankful for his WICHE guidance and mentorship, and hopes to stay connected.
- The WICHE Vice Presidents group, the [Western Academic Leadership Forum](#), will meet April 23-25, 2025 in Reno at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa.
  - The meeting is being hosted by Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) and will be attended by President Demarée Michelau and others from the WICHE leadership team.
- The [WICHE Commission Meeting](#) will be held May 5-6, 2025 in Park City Utah.
  - The agenda will include round table sessions.
  - The WICHE President evaluation will also take place at this meeting.
- [Dr. Van Davis](#) is now serving as the President of the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) and Vice President, Digital Learning for WICHE.

#### 4. **Director Updates**

Director Porter shared the following:

##### **Health Profession Education Program (HPEP)**

- Due to receipt of loan repayment revenue at the end of February 2025 we can begin selection of round 2 HPEP participants in the fields of nurse practitioner, Master of Social Work, and RN to BSN Registered Nurse.
- Round 2 will bring the total target of 49 slots.

##### **Practice Questionnaire Project**

- There is continuing follow-up on the ECSI Open Inventory report, which is specifically regarding the fulfillment of practice obligation.
  - The focus is on participants whose five-year deadline to fulfill their practice obligation is due within the year.

##### **Nevada WICHE/Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine HPEP Stipend Selection Process**

- Meetings have continued between Nevada WICHE and Cathleen Kovarik, USU College of Veterinary Medicine Director of Admissions, and Ryan Soelberg, USU College of Veterinary Medicine Recruiter.
  - The meetings have covered additional outreach activities in Nevada, finalization of the USU application and supplemental questions, and how our offices will work together in exchange for information regarding Nevada residents applying for program and stipend.

##### **Visit to the Nevada Legislature on February 25, 2025**

- Director Porter and Executive Commission Lokken had appointments with members of the Nevada WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee, Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Senator Melanie Scheible, Senator Robin Titus, and Assemblymember Sandra Jaurequi.
  - Due to the legislative session, two meetings with Senator Scheible and Assemblymember Jaurequi had to be rescheduled.
  - Documents shared with the legislators included the [Regional WICHE Factsheet](#).

- Benefits of WICHE membership were highlighted; WICHE is more than just stipends.
- The USU partnership, the current slot matrix, and the Nevada WICHE budget were also discussed.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken added that the discussion regarding the USU partnership was really positive, which could be helpful with future requests.
  - We were also there for the Education Committee's state-of-the-system report, which was very well received by the committee.

### **Outreach Activities**

- Director Porter will be making an outreach trip to Henderson, Nevada to visit Nevada State University (NSU) and meet with staff from its School of Nursing.
  - She will also be attending the Board of Regents meeting at NSU on March 6-7, 2025 in support of Regional WICHE Vice President of Research, Patrick Lane, who will be presenting "[Knocking at the College Door](#)" data at the March 7 meeting.
  - Director Porter will also introduce Regional WICHE President, Demarée Michelau, to folks at the Board of Regents meeting at NSU.

## **5. Update on Nevada WICHE/Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine Stipend Selection Process**

Director Porter updated the Commissioners on the selection process for the Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine Health Profession Program stipend.

### **Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine HPEP Stipend application and rubric:**

- Based on conversations with USU College of Veterinary Medicine Director of Admissions, regarding admission and application process and discussions with two Nevada veterinarians, a draft of the Nevada WICHE application and rubric has been created.
  - The first meeting with the two Nevada veterinarians is scheduled tomorrow to finalize the application and rubric.
- A Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine HPEP Stipend secure website has been created for veterinarians to review applications.
- The [American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\) Council on Education](#) will meet next month, March 2025, to review their comprehensive site visit made in October 2024 to determine if the USU College of Veterinary Medicine will earn a "Letter of Reasonable Assurance."
  - The AVMA will then have up to 30 days to inform USU of their decision; we may expect a decision from them in early to mid-April 2025.
- If the AVMA grants the letter of reasonable assurance, USU can open their application in advance of August 2025 for the start of the first class.
  - When USU opens their application process, Nevada WICHE will open the HPEP stipend application.
    - Note that prior to this, any outreach and information disseminated by USU must be very careful in how information is presented since they are seeking provisional accreditation.
    - Discussion has occurred regarding USU making another outreach trip to Nevada after approval by AVMA and a press release.
- Due to the USU College of Veterinary Medicine short application period for fall, 2025, the decision on Nevada WICHE/USU stipends will be conducted on a rolling basis based on meeting certification criteria of being a Nevada resident one-year prior to application, and acceptance into professional school; in this case, acceptance to USU College of Veterinary Medicine and scoring of the Nevada WICHE application.
- Tentatively, the total number of slots for fall 2025 is 15; outreach communications indicate that this number might be met.

## Discussion

- Commissioner Dinauer asked if there any reason to think the program may receive the letter of reasonable assurance.
  - Director Porter responded that as of the last meeting it is hopeful and that once it is received, outreach and a press release will be used to publicize the program.
  - Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that this is consistent with what has been discussed.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared that there are four slots for PSEP; we may have a very strong start in this program, which is reassuring having gone through this process.
  - He is planning to visit USU.

## 6. Update on Nevada WICHE 2025-2027 Governor Recommended Budget

Director Porter gave an update on the Nevada WICHE 2025-27 Biennial Governor Recommended Budget for Loan and Stipend and Administration accounts.

- The Governor's recommended budget for Administration and Loan and Stipend accounts reflect an adjusted budget to account for increases in WICHE membership fees and support fees.
  - With this adjustment for the Nevada WICHE Administration account, we will be able to pay for the ECSI Loan Servicer, the DocuSign contract, and travel funds.
  - The adjustment for the Loan and Stipend account restored slots that were reduced to balance the budget.
- Regarding the Nevada Office of WICHE enhancement request, the Administration account request to reclassify the permanent Accounting Technician I to Program Officer I and making it permanent for the USU stipend program was not approved.
  - For the Loan and Stipend account additional slots were not approved, but the ones that had been reduced were restored.

## Discussion

- Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that the budget holes are accumulating, but now they have to consider possible federal funding cuts.
  - It would not be productive to ask for additional funds outside of the budget process.
  - By the next legislative session, the USU program will be up and running along with the possibility of adding slots; additional staff will be required, which may help to document the need for a position and justify a staffing funding request at that time.
  - We have the chance to help the state boost programs at community colleges (in teaching and nursing) and may want to address the need for future technology-related positions.
- Director Porter noted that a bill was passed in 2023 which gave \$6M to the treasurer's office for loan repayment; they just started marketing the [Nevada Heal](#) program which includes everything from acupuncture to social work.
  - There was also a loan repayment in the Office of Information Technology (OIT) with a proposal to move it to the Department of Public Behavioral and Health (DPBH).
  - Some of that is being discussed this legislative session; some is being picked up in loan repayment fashion.
- Commissioner Dinauer stated that the more healthcare you can get and access, the better.
  - She is aware of Nevada Heal and thinks it is great.
- Commissioner Erquiaga noted that it is a pretty good budget considering where they are and the size of this agency; he would be surprised if the adjustments in the budget (which could happen in K-12 and higher ed) would affect the WICHE budget.
  - To prepare for 2027, whether it is about healthcare or workforce in general, Nevada WICHE needs to prepare for "forcing your way into the conversation."

- There may be a new chancellor who will address degrees versus certificates.
- There is a chance that there will be a new State Superintendent of Instruction; that individual will bring new points of view.
- The Office of Workforce Innovation has not exerted much leadership for the last eight years; that would be a good idea to go in July.
- Survive the session and look for ways to have real workforce conversations across agencies, with the convener being NSHE or WICHE; be the lead in those conversations which have not yet occurred.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared he and Director Porter met with Vance Farrow, Healthcare Industry Specialist, [Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development](#) (GOED); they discussed partnerships being funded through GOED.
- Having Commissioner Dinauer meet with Mr. Farrow may be a good place to start, particularly regarding mental health and rural areas; we need a strategy that has identified projects and funding targeted to each three key areas in the state.
  - Director Porter questioned whether money flowing from GOED to WICHE has to be tied to come kind of business partnership.
    - Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that Mr. Farrow had indicated that WICHE would be a good partner to GOED projects using this model; our challenge is putting together our critical needs list.
    - Director Porter shared that a report will be out soon that will include a critical needs list with comparison between NSHE and statewide needs.
      - Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that there is a perception that NSHE and WICHE needs are closely related.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that there are efforts to reduce the number of state agencies; WICHE's relationship with NSHE makes so much sense.
  - Commissioner Dinauer noted that there is a bill (SB78) which would consolidate all of the occupational boards under the [Department of Business and Industry](#); WICHE is specifically exempted from this bill.
- Director Porter noted that March 11 is the tentative date for the WICHE budget hearing presentation.
- Director Porter stated that there is a bill, Senate Bill 78, that will consolidate all the occupational boards under Business and Industry.
  - A white paper for Senate Bill 78 states that WICHE is exempted from it.

## **7. New Business**

There was no new business.

## **8. Public Comment**

- Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that he has been having a lot of conversations with and is the “technology voice” for the Regional WICHE Executive Committee and staff.
  - As the WICHE Cooperative Education Technologies ([WCET](#)) liaison, he has been working with Regional WICHE and advocating for technology programming on various agendas.
  - He has been advocating for a partnership with regional accreditation to create a 3-year bachelor's degree and a 1-year master's degree and also accelerate the process for cancelling degrees that no longer make sense and creating new ones as quickly as needed.
  - The dividend of this would include the west having a better supply of these skillsets, have greater control over where they are going, and become a leader in the country, all of which would benefit our economies and where we are on technology.

- We have a close relationship with Northwestern accreditation and Western would need to be a part of the conversation, and possibly North Central; we could start with Sonny Ramaswamy at Northwestern.

Meeting adjourned at 2:58pm

Prepared and submitted by:

Patty A. Porter

Director, Nevada Office of WICHE

DRAFT