

**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

Friday, May 9, 2025, 2:00 pm

Members Present:

Mr. Fred Lokken, Executive Commissioner
Ms. Cathy Dinauer, Commissioner
Ms. Patty Charlton, Commissioner

Others Present:

Ms. Patty Porter, Director, Nevada Office of WICHE
Ms. Carrie Parker, Deputy General Counsel, NSHE
Dr. Daniel Archer, Vice Chancellor, Academic & Student Affairs, NSHE
Dr. Cathleen Kovarik, Utah State University (USU) Associate Dean,
College of Veterinary Medicine
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. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

2. Commissioner Updates

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

- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared that he and Commissioner Dinauer attended the WICHE Commission Meeting on May 5-6, 2025 in Park City Utah.
- The annual review of the WICHE President, Demarée Michelau, was conducted; she has been in the role for five years and has the confidence of her staff and Commissioners.
 - A national study of non-profit organization compensation will conclude in July; it will let us know if her salary is in the appropriate range.
- The biggest focus of the meeting was round table sessions, the majority of which included discussions regarding changing situations at the federal level.
 - This was the first time that “red state” and “blue state” issues emerged; frustration with issues was expressed.

- One of the unique things about regional WICHE is that while we have embraced that reality we celebrate our successes, not because of party affiliation but because we move the needle forward on higher education and quality of life in the west.
- The Pacific Island programs are increasing their use of WICHE benefits, including the [Western Undergraduate Exchange](#) (WUE) and graduate programs that are bringing apprentices and staffing, especially in mental health and behavioral sciences.
- Many other states are also experiencing budget and grant funding problems similar to Nevada's.
- There are 37 specific [behavioral health programs](#) that are managed by regional WICHE.
 - Many of them target rural mental health issues.
 - We may want to meet to with Dennis Mohatt, Vice President for Behavioral Health at WICHE, to discuss Nevada WICHE's possible involvement in additional groups.
- Upcoming [WICHE Commission](#) meetings include:
 - Washington: May 18-19, 2026
 - Colorado: November 5-6, 2026
 - New Mexico: May 3-4, 2027
 - Colorado: November 4-5, 2027
 - Alaska: May 8-9, 2028
 - Colorado: November 9-10, 2028
 - Agenda books for previous meetings are available on the [WICHE](#) website.
- Commissioner Dinauer echoed that the meeting in Park City, Utah was great; she noted that she always learns something new and finds them valuable, including the networking opportunities.
 - She appreciated the discussions regarding the federal level actions and their impact on higher education.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that he serves as the WICHE liaison to the [WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies](#) (WCET).
 - He attended the March 7, 2025 NSHE Board of Regents meeting presentation, ["Knocking at the College Door"](#) by Patrick Lane, Vice President WCET.
 - Regional WICHE President Demi Michelau flew in the night before the presentation and got together with some folks but had to fly out the next morning prior to the presentation.
 - The presentation included comparison information regarding every state, including Nevada and prompted a robust discussion with the Regents.
- Commissioner Charlton expressed thanks for being appointed to the Commission; she apologized for not being able to participate in the recent WICHE Commission meeting due to being deep in legislative activities and that she is looking forward to engaging with WICHE as a Commissioner.
 - She agreed that the "Knocking on the Door" presentation at the board meeting was well received and showcased the level of expertise and significant "brain trust" that WICHE provides to NSHE.
 - Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that with Commissioner Charlton's breadth of experience and ability to represent Nevada in dialogue with regional partners, he is very happy that Commissioner Charlton has joined the WICHE family.

3. **Director Updates**

Director Porter noted that NV Office of WICHE manages appropriated funds which pay for fees for the state's WICHE membership and shared the following information:

Summary of FY 2025 Nevada WICHE Stipend Disbursement

- Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) Slots, total \$703,571

- Occupation Therapy: 5, 2 new and 3 continuing
- Physical Therapy: 5, 3 new and 2 continuing
- Physician Assistant: 12, 3 new and 9 continuing
- Veterinary Medicine: 4 continuing
- Total FY 2025 PSEP slots: 36
- Targeted FY 2025 PSEP slots: 36
- Health Profession Education Program (HPEP) Slots, total \$240,400
 - Master of Social Work: 12, 9 new and 3 continuing
 - Advanced Practice Nursing: 20, 17 new and 3 continuing
 - Geriatric Advanced Practice Nursing: 1 continuing
 - RN to BSN, 9, 7 new and 2 continuing
 - Total FY 2025 HPEP slots filled: 46
 - Targeted FY 2025 HPEP slots: 49 thus remaining funding will revert to the state.

Posting of FY 2026 Nevada WICHE Stipend Application

- PSEP FY 2026 posted at the end of April 2025 and the response has been strong.
- HPEP FY 2026 will be posted at the end of May 2025.
- Change for FY 2026 is RN to BSN to Registered Nurse, which is open to Nevada residents in associate or bachelor program who have been accepted into their professional program, not pre-nursing.
- An outreach visit was conducted at Nevada State University (NSU) and Touro University in March 2025 regarding this change.
- Director Porter has scheduled an outreach visit to Western Nevada College (WNC) for May, 2025.
- HPEP NV WICHE/USU Veterinary Medicine FY 2026: posting in anticipated for January-February 2026.

4. Consent Items

4a. Minutes

The Nevada WICHE Commission considered approval of the minutes from its February 27, 2025 meeting. ([Ref. 2-WICHE Commission Meeting Minutes, February 27, 2025](#))

4b. ECSI Master Service Agreement and Servicing Select Service Order Amendment 2025-2027

The Nevada WICHE Commission considered approval of the ECSI Master Service Agreement and Servicing Select Service Order Amendment to extend the agreement from 2025 to 2027. Nevada WICHE Executive Commissioner Fred Lokken will be designated to act as a signer.

([Ref. 3 -ECSI Master Service Agreement and Servicing Select Service Order Amendment 2025-2027](#))

Commissioner Dinauer moved approval of the Consent Items.

Commissioner Charlton seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Update on Nevada WICHE/Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine Health Profession Education Program (HPEP) Stipend Implementation

Director Porter, USU College of Veterinary Medicine Dean/Professor Dirk Vanderwall, and Cathleen Kovarik, Associate Professor/Director of USU Veterinary Admissions updated the Commissioners on the implementation of the Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine Health Profession Program contract, including status of admissions and the stipend process.

- Director Porter congratulated Dr. Cathleen Kovarik on having received the letter of reasonable assurance (related to accreditation) for the Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine Health Profession Program.

- Dr. Kovarik noted that the letter was received on March 26, 2025 and the 2025 application cycle opened on that day.
- There were some technical issues due to the portal not being ready to handle the heavy amount of applicant traffic; the issues have since been corrected.
- Applications are reviewed to ensure that they are complete then they are sent to selection committee.
 - This work has been done in a rolling process; some offers have been made to students and many more are in process.
 - Fifteen Nevada applications have been received; all except for one have been reviewed with one offer extended and another will possibly be extended next week.
 - Some applications (from both Nevada and Utah applicants) did not meet grade point average (GPA) cutoffs and some are not as competitive as the committee had hoped.
- There will be 40 seats available for the fall class, with 15 allocated for out-of-state and 25 for in-state students.
- The [Veterinary Medical College Application Service](#) (VMCAS) 2026 cycle opened in January.
 - Schools can have a presence on VMCAS in May; they are working on it and looking at June for creating the presence for this program, including an email blast.
 - Students will have until mid-September to get applications in for the 2026 cycle.
 - VMCAS is the main way that students apply to nationwide (except for Texas) veterinary schools.
 - Schools can be selected within the app; students can fill out one application and apply to as many schools as they would like.
 - USU will add the program's VMCAS info to their website as soon as possible.

Discussion

- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that we need to reconvene and identify ways by which we will have a more abundant application pool.
 - Dr. Kovarik stated that they are open to ideas and noted that some students may not have applied due to the very unique application cycle and the new curriculum.
- Commissioner Charlton noted that there are opportunities for more outreach throughout Nevada schools and that she appreciates the work being done to get this program off the ground.
- Director Porter offered to assist with getting the information out to Nevada schools and noted that she and Dr. Kovarik have worked very closely via weekly communications.
- The deadline to apply is May 23, 2025; some emails have been sent as reminders to NSHE institutions.
- One application has been processed and sent for review; the next step will be to send a contract.
- We need to start working on 2026; the deadline is May 23, 2025; Director Porter agreed with Commissioner Charlton that more outreach needs to occur in southern and rural Nevada.
- There are some events in the rural areas that we missed this year but can be sure to attend them in 2026.
- Director Porter wants to visit students in Las Vegas classes; she will talk about the advantages of the recruitment process, and the importance of one's grade point average (GPA) in the sciences.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken confirmed with Director Porter that we are working with the [Nevada Veterinary Medical Association](#) (NVMA); Director Porter shared that she is in touch with the director and looking into participating in their outreach.
 - This is worthy of an alert to members; some of the veterinary clinics may be willing to assist with recruitment.

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

Director Porter gave an update of the May 1, 2025 Economic Forum, the current legislative budget process, and requested approval for any adjustments necessary for the Nevada WICHE 2025-2027 Biennial Governor Recommended budget for the Loan and Stipend and Administration accounts.

[\(Ref. 4-Nevada WICHE Governor Recommended 2025-2027 Slot Matrix, Ref. 5-Nevada WICHE Administration and Loan and Stipend 2025-2027 Governor Recommended Budget Governor Recommended Budget\)](#).

- The May 1, 2025, the Economic Forum brought in a lower number than was forecasted in December 2024.
 - This number, though lower, was not as bad as some thought it would be.
 - There is uncertainty due to the impact of tariffs on the economy and the outcome of the federal budget in September that could have an impact on the state budget.
- On May 2, 2025, the Senate Committee on Finance and Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on K-12/Higher Education/CIP approved closure of Nevada WICHE Loan and Stipend and Administrative budget as recommended by the Governor.
 - The committee also added that a letter of intent was to be included that allows Nevada WICHE to keep the remaining Loan and Stipend revenue on May 15 and after for the next fiscal year.
- On May 5, 2025, the Joint Meeting of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means approved closure of the budget.
- We are now waiting to see how the legislature will balance the budget with the remaining bills that have funding requirements to see if our budget will remain intact.
 - Upcoming we have deadlines of May 23, 2025, for second house passage and June 2, 2025, for the end of the session.
 - There may be a special session if the state budget is not finalized; a special session may also take place in fall if Nevada receives federal cuts and the state budget needs to be reduced.
- Director Porter stated that she is seeking approval to adjust the Nevada WICHE Loan and Stipend and Administrative budget if cuts are required before the next commission meeting in July 2025.
 - If cuts are required for the Loan and Stipend Account, priority would go to funding the continuing PSEP/HPEP Nevada WICHE participants.
 - A reduction would focus on new PSEP/HPEP slots, using the 2025-2027 slot matrix with reductions as a guide to the cuts.
 - If cuts are required to the Administrative Account, priority would be the operation account that funds the State of Nevada Western Regional Compact membership fee, ECSI Loan Repayment Servicer, and DocuSign.
 - Further reductions would be focused on staff positions and travel.

Discussion

- Commissioner Charlton noted that other shortfalls are pending.
 - Regarding grant funding, especially in the areas of mental health and rural communities, we continue to navigate changes in the federal landscape, particularly pertaining to Medicaid and how that will impact the greater state budget environment; much of it is unknown and we are also navigating changes with indirect cost.
 - We will also need to watch for the impact on our students going to out of state programs; when state support decreases, resources may be constrained.
- Director Porter agreed that we need to watch for the impact on students; particularly if loans are eliminated or limited for graduate students.
- Commissioner Dinauer agreed with recommendations by Director Porter that would minimize any compromise on the operations of the office.

- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared that Director Porter already has the authority; going forward, to note that she was already empowered by the Commission to make those decisions in a timely way.

Commissioner Charlton moved approval to give Director Porter the authority to make budget adjustments if necessary after the closing of the budget. Commissioner Dinauer seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

7. New Business

Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that in addition to possibly reviewing the 37 existing behavioral and mental health WICHE programs, that the Commission monitor them and determine which ones are a good fit for NV WICHE.

8. Public Comment

Commissioner Dinauer wished all the nurses a Happy Nurses Day.

- Director Porter thanked Commissioner Dinauer for her service.

Meeting adjourned at 2:58pm

Prepared and submitted by:

Patty A. Porter

Director, Nevada Office of WICHE