

**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 June 4, 2026, 1:00 pm

Members Present: Mr. Fred Lokken, Executive Commissioner
Ms. Patricia Charlton, Commissioner

Absent: Ms. Cathy Dinauer, Commissioner

Others Present: Ms. Patty Porter, Director, Nevada Office of WICHE
Ms. Carrie Parker, Esq., Assistant System Counsel
Ms. Jennifer Porrier, Executive Assistant, Department of
Academic and Student Affairs, NSHE
Dr. Cathleen Kovarik, Director of Veterinary Admissions,
Utah State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
Mr. Rhett Vertrees, Assistant Chief Financial Officer,
NSHE
Ms. Janis Baldwin, Finance and Treasury Accountant,
NSHE
Mrs. Patty Lokken, General Public

Executive Commissioner Fred Lokken called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

1. Information Only: Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

2. Information Only: WICHE Commissioner Updates

- Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that he and Commissioner Charlton attended the Regional WICHE meeting in Seattle, WA. This was a beneficial meeting for connection with other regional commissioners. Prevalent topics included AI, Dual Credit, Workforce and Department of Education changes in Washington, DC. An increase in WICHE membership dues was also approved. Change in WICHE staff members.
- Commissioner Charlton added that she was able to participate in the new commissioner orientation at the meeting, which she found very beneficial to learn

about the role and activities of WICHE. She also mentioned the Tuition and Fees report that was recently released by WICHE, valuable resource and in the subcommittee on policy had the opportunity to hear from WICHE Vice President Patrick Lane regarding this report. It is important tool that is not only referenced by the institutions but by the system and the legislature. Echoed the themes mentioned by Executive Commissioner Lokken especially around AI and Dual Enrollment and discussion with Director Porter at the meeting regarding financial aid.

- Commissioner Charlton thanked Director Porter for her work on Nevada's PSEP pilot program addressing the internal needs of Nevada.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared the results of a report that showed the declining use of PSEP and shared that they have been challenged in previous years to find different ways of doing it, noting that PSEP has served Nevada and other states well. Thus, with fresh thinking Nevada was granted the opportunity to do some things differently and they granted a pilot program.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken pointed out that WICHE opened membership to the Pacific Islands which provided various WICHE benefit programs such as WUE. Nevada has largest number of islander enrollments in WUE of any of the states. As enrollment continues to increase, perhaps there needs to be an NSHE liaison/contact for the island enrollees. It did not seem to be indicated at the time but possibly in the future.

3. Information Only: Patty Porter, WICHE Director, Update

Director Patty Porter shared the following updates:

1. Nevada WICHE PSEP 2026-2027 Stipend Application.
 - a. 76 applications were received and we have 34 slots to fill. We have sent out contracts.
 - b. 1 Occupational Therapy slot for first year will not be filled due to lack of applicants.
2. Nevada WICHE/USU HPEP 2026-2027 Stipend Application.
 - a. 16 applications were received and 15 were selected for the stipend.
3. Nevada WICHE HPEP 2026-2027 Stipend Application.
 - a. Application posted in May 2026, and we are in the process of receiving them.
 - b. 49 slots are available to fill.
4. WICHE Certifying Official Meeting, May 17, 2026.
 - a. Attended meeting in Seattle, Washington.
 - b. Received presentation on One Big Beautiful Bill and effect on graduate loan caps from WICHE Vice President Patrick Lane.
 - c. Presentation by WICHE Student Access Programs on WICHE PSEP selection using rankings by PSEP schools and normalization by WICHE staff to share with compact states who use rankings. California does not participate in PSEP.
 - i. Students apply to PSEP schools who then rank applicants against other applicants in their state. This ranking is then sent to regional WICHE to normalize the data and then sent to the state.

- ii. Nevada does not participate in using rankings and evaluates by eligibility and funding availability, as well as date and time application is submitted.
 - iii. Reason why we do not use rankings is due to several fields such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant are already being offered at a Nevada public institution and in the future Veterinary Medicine.
- 5. Meeting with Governor's Deputy Budget Director and Governor's Finance Office Director.
 - a. Reviewed current budget priorities discussed with Nevada WICHE Commissioners in past meetings and needs of the Nevada Office of WICHE.
- 4. **February 14, 2026 Minutes Approval** (*Ref. 2-Nevada WICHE Commission Meeting Minutes February 13, 2026 meeting*)

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of the February 13, 2026 meeting minutes.

Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

- 5. **Information Only: Nevada WICHE 2024-2025 Financial Statement** (*Ref. 3-Nevada Office of WICHE Combining Statements of Net Position, Nevada Office of WICHE Combining Statements of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Position in 1,000's*)

Director Porter introduced NSHE Assistant CFO Rhett Vertrees to present the amendment to the statement discussed at the February 2026 meeting.

Assistant CFO Vertrees shared that the only change to the Financial Statement is the inclusion of the Veterinary Medicine program. The statement shows \$8 million coming in as state appropriations and going out as payment to Utah State University. This report does not keep track of the ongoing balance.

No other changes since last presentation and two quarterly reviews have been completed already this year.

Commissioner Charlton asked if WICHE would be required to report on the financials and expenditures of \$8 million. Director Porter responded that it is being tracked by USU. For 2025-2026 there were only two stipends awarded and this year with the fifteen awarded that amount is going to increase. Per the signed negotiated contract at the end of the year USU will provide a report showing money received, spent and balance. The amount reported would need to be separated since the way the funds were appropriated had to be spent by 2025 and that money went. We have an LCB legal opinion that states that once the funds are sent to USU by 2025 they are considered gone. What we do have to watch is if these students do not fulfill their practice obligation and we do a conversion, it will come to our books, and we will need to track their loan payments.

Executive Commissioner Lokken and Director Porter thanked Assistant CFO Vertrees. Commissioner Charlton also thanked Assistant CGO Vertrees for assistance in tracking the loan funds and introducing a best practice with the recognition of the time lag in payments.

6. Information Only: Update on Nevada WICHE/Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine

Director Porter introduced Director of Admissions Dr. Cathleen Kovarik of Utah State University College of Veterinary Medicine to provide an update on the recruiting activities and status on admissions cycle for Nevada applicants.

Dr. Kovarik stated that USU is and will remain provisionally accredited until they get their first Navle scores. They will be receiving a visit from AVMA COE this November and currently putting together their self-study for this visit. They are also preparing to move into their new building next month. Enrollment and recruitment are more successful this year with the typical VMCAST application. We had 39 applications from Nevada students, and 29 made the GPA cut off which is 2.9 cumulative and 3.1 prerequisite math/science which is much better than last year. One did not complete the Kira Talent Assessment so 28 of those applicants moved forward to selection committee and 20 offers were made with 17 students accepting with 2 declining the offer and 1 who did not get back to them. 15 students with approved stipends will be attending this year, 1 student opted to attend USU without the stipend and 1 was denied the stipend.

Nevada WICHE Commissioner Lokken asked how large the incoming class and Dr. Kovarik answered 80 students. Seating a class of 80 and currently have 78 students with 1 in the pipeline and 1 who is returning from last year to fill the 80 seats.

Commissioner Charlton asked overall how many total applicants did you receive? Dr. Kovarik answered with VMCAST that there were 1,500 total applicants. Commissioner Charlton thanked Dr. Kovarik for the additional outreach as well as outreach by Executive Commissioner Lokken and Director Porter. Students attending seem representative among the State of Nevada and very excited to see these students graduate. Commissioner Charlton asked that we keep the activity of recruitment going and expand. Dr. Kovarik agreed and said they like filling their out of state seats with Nevada students.

Director Porter asked Dr. Kovarik if they have seen any effect on the implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill and loan caps on incoming cohort. There is no real data to back it up but anecdotally they had trouble filling their out of state seats versus comment they heard by Washington State Admissions representative that they had an easier time. Dr. Kovarik thought it might be due to WSU ability to offer instate residency to out of state students after attending their program for one year and USU does not but there is no actual data to back it up. Director Porter agreed though anecdotal and mentioned that if there is a PSEP student who wants to attend WSU they must sign a document stating they will not seek instate residency.

Director Porter and Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the recruiting process seems to be working very well in NV and thanked Dr. Kovarik for her assistance and good work in shepherding the students through.

7. Nevada WICHE 2027-2029 Biannual Budget Priorities

Director Porter presented updated recommendations for Nevada WICHE 2027-2029 biannual budget priorities for discussion and possible action.

- a) Approval requested to ask for adjustment for Loan and Stipend account due to the increase in proposed WICHE PSEP support fees for 2027-2029 biennium. (Nevada WICHE PSEP

program fields being proposed for increase: Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Pharmacy.)

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 7a.
Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

- b) Approval requested to ask for an increase in Loan and Stipend account PSEP program slots for the 2027-2029 biennium as follows: Occupational Therapy (3 slots), Physical Therapy (5 slots), and Physician Assistant (3 slots).

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 7b.
Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

- c) Approval requested to ask for the projected loan repayment revenue, which factors into Nevada WICHE biennial budget for 2027-2029, to be replaced by state appropriation and all loan repayment revenue collected by Nevada WICHE revert to the State of Nevada general fund.

Commissioner Charlton stated that they looked at NRS 397 because there is a spell out regarding loan repayment and how the budget is appropriated. It would be easier reflection on the financials since state appropriation would be the full budget and the loan repayment would come in and be a reversion. This makes the process clean and easier to administer. It does not release our obligation to ensure that those loans be repaid, easier reflection on the financials. Supports recommendation to advocate for this. If this were to happen and there is complementary language to ensure through the budget process that the corresponding legislation be updated to reflect this change.

Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that the first meeting they had with the Governor's staff covered an update about the agency, such as higher level policy and the efficiency's needed to run the office that is stopping us from having our top efficiency. This meeting led to a second meeting with key budget leaders and support. We have had number of changes to this with it originally starting as revenue that still went to the general fund with an option to keep some it. The financing has changed and not reliable supply with loan repayment dwindling which makes it hard to budget and award stipends.

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 7c.
Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

- d) Approval requested to ask for a Program Officer II position, in addition to the Program Officer I position for the Nevada WICHE biennial budget for 2027-2029.

Executive Commissioner Lokken said that discussion with the governor's staff regarding the current workload, recruiting, tracking students' compliance over five years there was a need for additional assistance and they agreed but is dependent upon the outcome of the state budget for the rest of the year they would like to address some of our needs. They also agreed on the change from Account tech position.

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 7d.
Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

- e) Approval requested for flexibility from Nevada WICHE Commissioners for Nevada WICHE Director to adjust biannual budget requests for Administration and Loan/Stipend accounts.

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 7e. Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

8. New Business

Commissioner Charlton requested that Director Porter bring an update for possible action on the impacts of new legislation as it pertains to professional programs and Nevadans.

10. Information Only: Public Comment.

- There was no public comment or written comment.

Executive Commissioner Lokken adjourned the meeting at 1:55 pm