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, August 14, 2026, 1:00 pm

Members Present: Mr. Fred Lokken, Executive Commissioner
Ms. Patricia Charlton, Commissioner
Dr. Michelle Johnson, 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
Ms. Lindsay Couzens, Interim Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, NSHE
Keri Shoemaker, Financial Officer, College of Veterinary Medicine, Utah State University

Executive Commissioner Fred Lokken called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm. Roll call was taken: Executive Commissioner Lokken was present in Reno and Commissioner Charlton was present in Las Vegas. Commissioner Johnson joined the meeting later via Zoom (see Item 4). Staff and guests then identified themselves for the record.

1. **Information Only: Public Comment**
   - There was no public comment offered in Reno, in Las Vegas, or online or by telephone, and no written public comment was received.

2. **Information Only: WICHE Commissioner Updates**
   - Executive Commissioner Lokken stated that the budget process has kept the office busy. He and Director Porter have held several meetings with the Governor's Office to identify the Commission's priorities, and the conversations have been positive and productive.

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- Executive Commissioner Lokken explained that regional WICHE's Executive Committee has one representative from each state, and the Executive Commissioner is Nevada's voting member. The Executive Committee meets nearly monthly between the two scheduled commission meetings (May and November), has full authority to act in between, and regularly approves items such as NC-SARA state application renewals. The two major meetings are intended to be more informational, focusing on what is happening in higher education in the West, including legislative, workforce and quality-of-life issues affecting the states.
- Going forward, the Executive Committee agenda and support packet will be shared with the Nevada commissioners for informational purposes, so that they know what is being discussed and can request that topics be placed on a future Nevada WICHE agenda.
- Regional WICHE now has 99 employees and an operating budget of approximately $28 million, and it recently renewed its grant with the Gates Foundation. The next regional meeting is scheduled for the first week of November in Westminster, Colorado.
- Commissioner Charlton shared that she will attend the Legislative Advisory Committee meeting of WICHE in Bozeman, Montana. WICHE leadership asked her to present, along with others, on outcomes-based funding because of legislators' interest in learning more about certain kinds of financial modeling. Materials for the presentation are still being prepared.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the Legislative Advisory Committee has been reinvigorated, with increased legislator participation and attendance, and that he sees real value in the communication it fosters among states.
- Executive Commissioner Lokken shared that the May 2026 regional WICHE meeting, which two Nevada commissioners attended, was very productive. The round-table sessions covered important, timely issues and reflect the organization's effort to remain relevant to member states. He thanked Commissioner Charlton for attending.
- Commissioner Johnson, who joined the meeting after Item 4, thanked the Commission for the warm welcome and said she looks forward to contributing. Executive Commissioner Lokken welcomed her and noted that she may direct questions to him, Commissioner Charlton or Director Porter.

3. **Information Only: Patty Porter, WICHE Director, Update**
   Director Patty Porter shared the following updates:
   1. Nevada Veterinary Medical Association (NVMA) Board of Directors meeting.
      a. Attended the NVMA Board of Directors meeting via Zoom on the evening of August 13, 2026, reviewed the update provided to the Board, and reported the number of stipends awarded.
      b. The Board was very pleased with the number of Nevada residents admitted to USU and with the number of stipends.
   2. Nevada Office of WICHE staffing.
      a. The Program Officer 1 position has been posted and applications are being received. The position is open until filled.

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3. Planned Las Vegas visit.
    a. Meetings are being arranged for the last week of September 2026 with UNLV's PT and OT staff regarding the pilot program and to gauge whether they remain interested in participating in PSEP.
    b. Director Porter also hopes to meet with the two Las Vegas commissioners during the visit and will contact Commissioner Charlton to arrange this.

4. **June 4, 2026 Minutes Approval** *(Ref. 2-Nevada WICHE Commission Meeting Minutes June 4, 2026 meeting)*
APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of the June 4, 2026 meeting minutes.
Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Johnson then joined the meeting via Zoom, was acknowledged by the Chair, and was marked present. The Chair returned to Item 2 so that she could offer remarks (see above).

5. **Nevada WICHE/Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine**
Director Porter introduced Dr. Cathleen Kovarik to provide an admissions update from USU. Dr. Kovarik reported that USU received 39 Nevada applicants for the current cycle and made 20 offers. Seventeen applicants accepted, and 15 of the 17 are stipend recipients. Classes begin the week of the meeting.

Dr. Kovarik then reported on upcoming recruitment efforts by the USU recruiter:

- Fall 2026: visits to the University of Nevada, Reno pre-vet club and Intro to Veterinary Medicine class; a meeting with UNLV's Pre-Vet Club and potentially the Pre-Health Club; participation in Nevada State's pre-graduate fair and a meeting with its pre-vet club; and a booth at the Wild West Veterinary Show in Reno.
- Spring 2027: a return visit to the University of Nevada, Reno pre-vet club and Intro to Veterinary Medicine class, and an invitation to all Nevada institutions to attend USU's pre-vet conference, currently expected on March 9.

Commissioner Charlton asked whether this outreach is consistent with last year's efforts and expressed appreciation for USU's level of engagement, hoping to exceed the number of applicants in the next cycle. Dr. Kovarik confirmed it is consistent with last year's efforts, which showed good return on investment and student interest.

Commissioner Charlton also asked about outreach to veterinarians across the state. Director Porter explained that, as a state agency, she obtained the list of Nevada veterinarians and veterinary technicians and emailed them information about the stipend and USU's recruitment visits. A few recipients asked to be removed from the list, and she plans to repeat the outreach. She also works with the USU recruiter to take advantage of other opportunities as they arise. Dr. Kovarik confirmed USU's participation in the Wild West Veterinary Show and concurred that more Nevada residents have visited USU this past year.

It was noted that, as students complete the program and return to Nevada, the Commission should begin planning, starting in the spring, efforts that make Nevada a

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place where graduates choose to remain. Participation and ideas from USU would be welcome, and the topic will be placed on a future agenda this fall.

Director Porter then introduced Keri Shoemaker, Financial Officer, College of Veterinary Medicine, Utah State University, to provide the finance report on the status of the stipend and interest accrual required under the USU contract. Ms. Shoemaker shared information regarding the Nevada WICHE/USU College of Veterinary Medicine Stipend Fund, student status, and the projected tuition schedule for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program, including:

- the $8 million received, the earnings on it for the last fiscal year, the payments made for the stipends, and a current balance of just over $8.1 million. Information for the current fiscal year was not yet available and will be included in the next report. The balance is expected to change next year because 15 students have been brought in;
- the process for investment, return, and payment to each student, with distribution by semester; and
- projections through FY2029-30 that assume a tuition increase of approximately 3% to 4%, which is an estimate and subject to change. USU's goal is to keep the differential between in-state and out-of-state tuition constant over time so that the Nevada stipend amount stays the same.

There were no questions. Executive Commissioner Lokken thanked USU for its transparency and ongoing partnership.

6. **Nevada WICHE 2027-2029 Biennial Budget Slot Matrix with Loan Repayment Projection**

Director Porter explained that the Commission previously approved the slot matrices and priorities and that she was returning to the item because Nevada WICHE received 2027-2029 loan repayment projections from ECSI, the loan servicer.

a. Requesting approval for the updated Nevada WICHE DRAFT 2027-2029 Governor's Office Biennial Budget Slot Matrix with Loan Repayment Revenue.

    1. Received from ECSI Loan Servicer 2027-2029 loan repayment projections and updated Nevada WICHE Draft 2027-2029 Biennial Budget Slot Matrix with projections. See supplemental material reference number 5-7.
    2. Reference 5 reflects no adjustments (no increase in support fees) and shows a few decreases in slots; Reference 6 reflects adjustments; and Reference 7 reflects adjustments with enhancements, including the additional slots requested.
    3. Projected loan repayment revenue is $91,105.91 for FY2027-2028 and $87,331.73 for FY2028-2029. The increase in the first year reflects several stipends that were converted to loans and are now included in the projections for the upcoming biennium.

Commissioner Charlton thanked Director Porter and Executive Commissioner Lokken for their work with the Governor's Office and Governor's Finance Office, voiced her support for the version with adjustments and enhancements (Reference 7), and offered her assistance. Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the

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Governor's Office was told the Commission shares that view. Commissioner Johnson had no questions.

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 6a, the 2027-2029 biennial budget requests for submission to the Governor's Office. Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

b. Request approval in the Loan and Stipend account be carried forward to the next fiscal year without any restriction if the loan repayment revenue is not replaced with state appropriation. This approval is for a contingent occurrence if the BDR is not approved.

    1. Update: A Bill Draft Request (BDR) was submitted this week to the Governor's Finance Office to request replacing Nevada WICHE projected loan repayment revenue with state appropriation. To support this request, Director Porter created additional supplemental reference item 9, Nevada WICHE Loan Repayment Revenue Analysis FY2025-FY2029, to provide to the Governor's Finance Office that shows the projected versus actual loan repayment revenue. There is a forecast caveat that assumes future repayment activity that generally aligns with FY 2026 loan repayment activity but notes that actual loan repayment may differ due to early loan payoffs, repayment modifications and other portfolio-level changes.
    2. Director Porter explained that the BDR is the first choice and the Governor's Finance Office knows it is coming, so Item 6b may not be needed. She asked for approval as a contingency (Plan B) in case the BDR is not approved.

Commissioner Charlton thanked Director Porter for re-projecting revenue based on historical trends, recognizing prior-year fluctuations, and agreed that a contingency is needed. Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that the motion operates as an if-then statement, which is reflected in these minutes, and that discussions with the Governor's Office have been productive. He invited Commissioner Johnson to ask questions; she had none.

APPROVED: Commissioner Charlton moved for approval of agenda item 6b, that the budget request include approval for any remaining funds in the Loan and Stipend account to be carried forward to the next fiscal year without restrictions, consistent with prior practice, if the BDR is not approved. Executive Commissioner Lokken seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The Commission recessed at approximately 1:36 pm and reconvened at approximately 1:42 pm.

7. **Nevada Open Meeting Law Training**
Because a new commissioner has joined, Nevada WICHE NSHE Assistant System Counsel Carrie Parker provided the Nevada WICHE Commissioners with training on the Nevada Open Meeting Law (OML). Highlights included:

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- Overview: The OML was enacted in 1960 (NRS Chapter 241). The public is entitled to at least three business days' notice of a meeting and an opportunity to participate. Counsel stressed following both the letter and the spirit of the law.
- Violations: Action taken in violation of the OML is void, and civil and criminal penalties are possible. There is no criminal or administrative penalty for following counsel's legal advice, and a violation can be corrected within 30 days by placing the item on a new agenda. Commissioners were encouraged to ask counsel when in doubt.
- What is a meeting: A quorum gathering to deliberate or take action. A quorum is a simple majority, which for the three-member Commission is two members, and it can never be fewer than two even with a vacancy. Deliberation includes exchanging facts and receiving updates on information items. Action includes making a motion, taking a position or voting, in person or by remote technology.
- Exceptions: Social functions, trainings on the OML and ethics, receiving information from an attorney about potential or existing litigation, and gatherings without deliberation or action are not meetings. This training could have been held outside an open meeting but was recorded so that future commissioners can review it.
- Group communications: Because two members make a quorum, commissioners should be careful with group emails and social media. A staff person can also carry a quorum by relaying one commissioner's views to another, so Director Porter does not do this.
- Notice and agendas: Meetings must be properly noticed and posted, and agendas must be clear and complete. Action items are labeled "for possible action," and public comment must be offered at the beginning and end of the meeting or before each action item. Agenda items may be taken out of order or combined, any limit on public comment (three minutes) must appear on the agenda, and accommodations are provided on request. Most OML violations involve straying from the agenda. Additional notice is required before considering a person's character or professional competence. This is not an issue with loan conversions because that authority has been delegated to the Director, which means conversions do not occur in an open meeting.
- Supporting materials: Materials provided to at least a quorum that the Commission may reasonably rely on, and that relate to an agenda item, must be made available to the public, posted with the agenda, and provided to anyone on the notice list who requested them.
- Records and conduct: Meetings must be recorded or transcribed and minutes taken; the minutes are the permanent record, while recordings are kept for a shorter period. The public may record the meeting if they do not interfere. Because meetings have public locations, they are not entirely virtual, so the call-in number no longer needs to be read. Action requires a majority vote, and an abstention does not count toward the number needed.
- Hypotheticals: (1) During New Business, a commissioner may suggest an agenda item for a future meeting but should not state or discuss what a regulation should say, since that would be deliberation or action not on the agenda. (2) Two commissioners discussing the effect of federal legislation on professional students

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at lunch, without discussing slots or stipend amounts, would likely be acceptable but is a close call. Counsel's takeaway was that commissioners can still be friends but should be careful discussing matters within Nevada WICHE's jurisdiction and should ask Director Porter to place such topics on an agenda.

Questions and discussion:

- Commissioner Charlton asked how the OML applies when commissioners attend regional WICHE meetings together. Counsel advised that commissioners may participate fully in regional WICHE topics but should save Nevada-specific subjects for a public meeting, and that receiving the regional agenda in advance will allow open discussion of Nevada's concerns. Commissioner Charlton noted that scheduling will need to account for this, particularly when a vote is involved, since the Executive Commissioner casts Nevada's vote.
- Commissioner Charlton asked whether trainings other than those on the OML and ethics may be held outside an open meeting. Counsel will review NRS 241.015 and follow up with her.
- Commissioner Charlton asked whether members of the WICHE Legislative Advisory Committee are subject to the OML. Counsel stated that the group is advisory only and does not report back to the Commission, so it is not a public body or subcommittee under the OML.

Commissioners were invited to email any further questions to Ms. Parker and Director Porter.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**
   There was no new business. Executive Commissioner Lokken noted that commissioners may contact the Director if an item should be placed on a future agenda.

9. **Information Only: Public Comment.**
   - There was no public comment or written comment.

Executive Commissioner Lokken adjourned the meeting at 2:10 pm.

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