

Community College Commission

Mission and philosophy

The mission of the Wyoming Community College Commission is to advocate community college education, provide coordination among system colleges, present budget requests, and collaboratively develop reports on college performance to the legislature and governor. The community college system is essential to the civic and economic health of Wyoming, and every resident seeking access to the system is a valued commission constituent.

Results of outcomes

The WCCC establishes tuition rates for the community colleges. Tuition rates for 2003-2004 academic year were set by the commission on December 13, 2002 at \$53 per credit hour for resident students, \$77 per credit hour for WUE students, and \$159 per credit hour for non-resident students. Setting tuition at these rates was a continuation of a long-term tuition policy that was adopted in 2001. As part of the policy, data showing the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) states' tuition rates and ratios of tuition and fees to median household income were reported in the 2002 Annual Tuition Review. In the analysis presented to the commissioners, Wyoming's mean of 4.0 was near the WICHE mean of 3.7 meeting the commission's goal of maintaining cost-to-the-student relative to median family income near the average of WICHE states. Therefore, the commission adopted the anticipated four percent increase in tuition for the next academic year resulting in the tuition rates above.

The WCCC negotiates contracts and provides financial support for the college system's approved administrative computing system components and related education delivery support systems. In 1992, the community college system converted to fully integrated administrative computing software—Datatel "Colleague." This computing system provides on-line transaction processing for daily business operations, reporting and student services. Mandatory annual software maintenance for Datatel Colleague is termed ESSA (Extended Service and Support Agreement) and is maintained by the WCCC. ESSA comprises 86 percent of total administrative computing system costs.

Since initial deployment numerous enhancements and value added products have been implemented and developed enabling individual colleges to meet unique institutional needs and increase the ability to provide a user-friendly environment for students and staff. In 2003, system enhancements consisted of implementation of the ASG-Safari InfoTools™ Reporting software and the Datatel graphical user interface. Training, consulting and software implementation were provided to enable development of the products.

General information

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Other locations

None

Year established and reorganized

Established 1951; reorganized 2000.

Statutory references

W.S. 21-18-202

Number of authorized personnel

10

Organization structure

Does not apply

Clients served

Community Colleges, Governor, Legislature, Wyoming residents

Budget information

Administration	\$1,516,192
State Aid to Colleges	63,870,240
Contingency Reserve (Coal Bonus)	\$1,600,000
Wyoming Public Television	\$2,288,237
LEAP	\$168,750
Incentive Funds	\$250,000

Agency to which your group reports

Does not apply

Number of members

Seven

Meeting frequency

quarterly

Integral components of college administrative computing are wide area networks and Internet. The Wyoming Equality Network provides the college system with outstanding telecommunications at a reasonable cost. This network has experienced a 400 percent growth in required services since 1997, yet costs remain at \$30,000 annually. In 2003, new equipment was installed to enhance college connection speed.

All the products, services, training, and hardware discussed above comprise the community college administrative computing system. The cost of this system in FY03 was \$558,434 (36.5 percent of FY03 WCCC administrative budget.) Projections indicate an annual cost increase of seven percent with projections for the 2003-2004 biennium at more than 39 percent of the total WCCC administrative budget.

The WCCC maintains a funding allocation model that determines the funding gap (if one exists) between the Wyoming community college system and comparator institutions. The funding model also determines the distribution of state-aid-to-colleges.

During FY02, the WCCC contracted with Dr. Burke Grandjean, Director of the UW Survey Research Center, Director of the UW Statistical Consulting Center, and Professor of Statistics and Sociology at UW to revise the funding formula due to changes in national data collection standards. The revised model was developed in collaboration with WCCC staff and college personnel, receiving approval by the commission.

Comparator colleges were selected and based on data gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It was determined that the Wyoming community college system was funded \$14.7 million below the average of the comparator group. Senate Enrolled Act No. 43 dated March 11, 2002 appropriated the funding to bring the system up to the average. During the first year of the biennium, the funds were then distributed to the colleges with the purposes of achieving parity with the comparator group, and equity among the seven Wyoming colleges.

On April 14, 2003, Dr. Grandjean, in collaboration with the office of budget and finance, reviewed the funding formula to determine the impact of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board reporting changes (GASB 34/35) on data available through NCES and then to run the funding model using current data. The reporting changes resulted in a revision to data element definitions only. A consultant from NCES confirmed these revisions on June 24, 2003. The existing funding model was then used to determine if a funding gap persists with the comparator colleges, in preparation for the 2005-2006 biennium budget. It was determined that the Wyoming community college system is now funded \$4.6 million below the average of the comparator group.

The WCCC establishes and promotes accomplishment of statewide priorities for the college

system in consultation with the colleges. This is illustrated through the use of the plus allocation funds. The commission adopted the base-plus funding allocation model to achieve funding equity among the seven community colleges and to secure funding parity with comparators as stated above. The base allocation supports the operation and maintenance of the college system. The plus allocation, granted by the legislature to support specific educational purposes, addresses incentive or performance funded initiatives. Approved during the 2002 Budget Session were distance education incentive funds.

As a result of system planning sessions with distance education faculty and administrators in the state, FY03 distance education funds of \$250,000 were used in statewide projects involving all seven community colleges and the WCCC. Accredited coursework transmitted digitally observes no boundaries, so Wyoming colleges compete nationally when developing and delivering distance education. The field is burgeoning with multiple software platforms and transmission media, while faculty skilled at traditional methods are challenged to develop technical skills to stay abreast, in some cases just to maintain local enrollment levels. Like students across the country, Wyoming students choose from a wide range of distance education providers. Recently, many community college distance delivery courses were full to capacity, so the WCCC made it a top priority to increase the number of faculty with the skills necessary to offer distance coursework.

A faculty conference was conducted May 28-29, 2003 at Central Wyoming College in Riverton. The emphasis was on helping faculty use distance education resources in their classrooms, including designing and offering new courses. Over 100 college faculty and staff participated in concurrent workshops provided by Wyoming community college faculty and two nationally recognized distance education pioneers, who provided keynote presentations and follow-up hands-on workshops. Stipends were provided for faculty identified by the colleges who were not on contract during the conference dates. Also, support was provided to Central Wyoming College to cover costs of hosting the event: a total of \$40,000 was dedicated to this project by the commission.

The commission continued a highly successful "Smart Choice - Wyoming Community Colleges" campaign initiated the previous year with Kelly Rizley Advertising. Informational materials were developed that were shown on Wyoming television stations, radio stations and in newspapers to inform Wyoming residents of the high quality, yet low cost opportunities to receive educational services through their community colleges. Digital video diskettes (DVDs) that provided summary information about the colleges were produced and were provided to Wyoming high school students, public school teachers and counselors and to the colleges. All the information especially emphasized the many services available through distance education delivery

options. A display board was created that was used during the 2003 Legislative Session covering these same information subjects. Approximately \$100,000 was expended for these information services.

Support for workforce training courses was provided to expand on the Georgia QuickStart courses that had been purchased the previous year. Additional QuickStart courses were purchased and courses from Developmental Dimensions International were also acquired. Many of these courses are being prepared to offer through distance education methodologies in order to extend college services to unserved and underserved populations. Approximately \$30,000 was expended on these workforce training projects.

Incentive funds were applied to enhancing public television services to Wyoming residents. Wyoming community colleges are a principal outlet for most Wyoming Public Television (WPTV) educational services. For example, General Equivalency Services (GED) telecourses were provided both in English and Spanish as well as the telecourse *Workforce Essentials* on WPTV. A needs assessment study conducted by WPTV of the colleges and the University of Wyoming was completed. The cost of these distance education-related services was about \$26,000.

In order to significantly update and clarify the governance, service, and technology needs of WPTV, a comprehensive study was commissioned, resulting in *The Bornstein Report*. It was used as a primary source of legislative information in presenting the WPTV plans in the 2003 session. The service opportunities for the colleges through public television were classified by this study that cost \$45,520. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting also contributed \$18,500 to the study.

The Western Compact for Educational Telecommunications, a component of the Western Interstate Council for Higher Education (WICHE), assisted the Colleges through the Wyoming Community College Executive Council to provide best practices information to college presidents, college distance education coordinators and commission staff. A series of live communications with distance learning practitioners were held and strategic planning discussions were conducted to advance college understandings and distance education capacity. These services cost \$9,418.

The WCCC approves all new credit certificate and degree programs. The WCCC approved one new credit program in FY03. A request from all the colleges served as the impetus for the Technical Studies Program that would lead to either an Associate of Applied Science degree or a Certificate. This unique program provides each college with the flexibility to custom design a curriculum that responds to business and industrial requests for associate degree level learning and skill building. Once the short-term need is met, the custom-designed curriculum is terminated.

If the custom-designed program becomes sustainable over time (beyond three years), the community college would immediately apply for program approval from the WCCC and would fully justify, according to WCCC rules, the need for the program of study that would then be given a specific title.

The Technical Studies Program for either a degree or certificate was approved unanimously at the March 28, 2003 meeting of the WCCC.

The WCCC approves all capital construction requests in excess of fifty thousand dollars for which state funds are or could be eventually applied. To parallel the statutory language regarding bond issues and revenue bonds (W.S. 21-18-313), the commission standard has been to recommend that the colleges establish a seven percent sinking fund (reserve funds) for future maintenance of large projects. One capital construction project was approved on December 13, 2002. Below is a summary of this project.

Sheridan College
Upgrade of Allied Health Wing \$1.2 million
The Allied Health Wing contains the Dental Hygiene, Dental Assisting, Nursing and Massage Therapy programs. A private donor provided funding for this project and state funding was not requested.

The WCCC prepares the budget requests for the operation and support of the colleges and the commission. Individual colleges prepare budget requests pursuant to the Uniform Municipal Fiscal Procedures Act, W.S. 16-4-101 through 16-4-601. The WCCC acts as a liaison between the colleges and the Wyoming Legislature. The WCCC prepares budget documents and administers the distribution of funds allocated to the college system.

The 2003-2004 biennium budget request was prepared by commission staff and approved by the commission at a public hearing on September 6, 2001. This document directed overall fiscal management for the commission during FY03. The budget document is too lengthy to include here, but can viewed at <http://ai.state.wy.us/budget/pdf/00057.pdf>

During the 2003 legislative session, the governor and a majority of legislators agreed that the commission should receive funding to support nursing education programs (Senate Enrolled Act 42), the Wyoming Public Television Council (Senate Enrolled Act 58), major maintenance funding (House Enrolled Act 79) and increased funding for employee benefits (House Enrolled Act 79). Funding for these programs was made available on July 1, 2003 and will be managed by the WCCC.

The WCCC reports financial and enrollment audit findings. Audit reports prepared by independent certified public accountants were received from the seven community colleges from October 2002 through January 2003. One reported finding from a previous (FY01) audit has yet to be resolved. The impacted college has advised it will provide a report on its resolution for the commission when the matter is finalized.

All Colleges received reports with no findings

or questioned costs. Central Wyoming College had an explanatory paragraph pertaining to the questioned cost from prior audit findings. The 2001 audit report for Central had questioned costs in the amount of \$300,000 for advance payments to REANET Corporation, who filed for bankruptcy protection. This resulted from payments on behalf of Mountain Plains Distance Learning Partnership. This matter is not yet resolved and the commission is to be informed as it progresses. As a result of the unresolved finding, Central Wyoming College was the only college not to qualify as a low-risk auditee.

Three colleges (LCCC, Northwest, and Sheridan) reported Adult Basic Education (ABE) funds as passed through the Wyoming Department of Education, rather than WCCC. It was not requested that the schedules of federal expenditures be revised for this year. However, all colleges and their CPAs should be informed effective July 1, 2002 ABE moved to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services so this can be correctly stated next year.

Two colleges (Casper and LCCC) had management letters concerning disbursements of financial aid for those students who withdrew or stopped attending classes. Both letters recommended the calculations be monitored more closely to avoid possible violation of student financial aid control systems.

Two colleges (LCCC and Sheridan) had management letters and two colleges had footnotes (Central and Western) referencing this year's implementation of GASB 34/35. A consensus of early planning and preparation was encouraged to avoid unforeseen difficulties and higher costs associated with the implementation. The Academic Services Committee (ASC) has set up a task force to work on these issues.

The WCCC maintains a management information system for the studies and reports outlined in statute. As part of this objective, the WCCC has developed an MIS Handbook to ensure timely and consistent report development and delivery. All information necessary for completion of all statutorily required reports is included in this document. This handbook is viewable on the WCCC website to electronically assist colleges with vital reporting tasks and deadlines.

The WCCC and community colleges continue to develop the data element dictionary to provide a capability at the WCCC to access and report on data for evolving research needs. Sixty percent of the required elements have been reviewed and coded into the WCCC MIS data harvest program. Work continues to collaboratively validate the remaining data elements and refine the harvest program to provide consistent and accurate data for community college system reporting.

The WCCC reports on the outcomes of partnerships between the colleges and UW and other entities. Serving as comprehensive community colleges, Wyoming's seven colleges recognize the need for

collaborative relationships that enable each institution to successfully achieve its mission. In December 2002, the first annual *Partnership Report* was published highlighting the many relationships that Wyoming's community colleges have cultivated and maintain. The report condenses the hundreds of vital partnerships that the colleges have with other entities at the local, state, regional and national levels.

In addition to the partnerships each college maintains, the Wyoming Community College Commission is actively engaged in substantive relationships with 45 key groups and agencies, both within Wyoming, regionally, as well as nationally. The major categories of partnerships include: distance education (4), Education (15), Wyoming State government (6), workforce development (5), Wyoming Community College Commission (10), public television (1) and four others that do not fit a specific category. All these partnerships enable the commission to better serve Wyoming's seven community colleges.

Community College Commission organization chart

