



WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program

Serving Arizona Students and Communities

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), created in 1953 to promote the sharing of higher education resources in the Western states, is dedicated to:

- *Providing access to professional education in the western U.S.*
- *Assisting states in developing the technically and professionally trained people they need to serve their citizens and communities.*
- *Helping states increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their higher education systems.*

Today, Arizona is among 15 participating states that share higher education programs and facilities through WICHE. This provides Arizona students with access to high quality, cost-effective professional education programs.

Overview of Professional Student Exchange Program

WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), managed by the Arizona Board of Regents, enables Arizona students to enroll in one of six professional programs: Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathy and Physician Assistant. *These programs are not available at Arizona's public universities.*

WICHE enhances access to professional education programs in two ways:

- Arizona residents receive preference in admission over students from states that are not part of the WICHE compact.
- The costs are lower for students and the state. The student pays resident rates and the state contribution is less than the state would spend to educate the student, if it created and ran comparable professional schools in the state.

The student is responsible for books, supplies, lodging and other costs of attendance.

WICHE and its exchange program are financed through state general fund appropriations. The state pays a support fee to the participating university where the student attends. The fee covers part of the total cost of education for the student.

During 2002-03, 154 Arizona students are participating in the PSEP. The total cost is \$2.7 million. The average cost per student is about \$17,575. The students attend the six programs in the following distribution:

Dentistry	40
Veterinary Medicine	65
Occupational Therapy	04
Optometry	20
Osteopathy	17
Physician Assistant	08

Benefits to Arizona

WICHE is an important resource to Arizona's social and community development . . .

- h Through WICHE, Arizona acquires trained medical-professionals who contribute to the state's economy. Each participant in the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program is required to return and practice in the state one year for each year of support received or to repay 50 percent of the funds paid by the state, plus interest. This requirement ensures a return on investment for the State of Arizona and its communities. More than 70 percent of PSEP participants have returned to establish professional practices in Arizona.
- h Those who practice in underserved areas in Arizona work off their obligation at a rate of two years for every year of practice.
- h Arizona saves millions of dollars by avoiding the cost of duplicating costly academic programs available through WICHE. The costs of operating a veterinary school, for example, range as high as \$19 million annually.
- h The exchange program brings students from other Western states into Arizona. In addition to tuition and other contributions to the local economy, Arizona's universities receive educational cost reimbursements from these students' home states, who attend the library studies, medicine, and pharmacy programs at the University of Arizona and the architecture program at Arizona State University.

Benefits to Arizona's students

- h PSEP provides Arizona students with access to a wider array of professional programs at reduced tuition rates, and with access to professional programs not offered in Arizona.
- h WICHE student applications receive preferential consideration for admission at participating schools, giving them an advantage over students from states not in the program.

WICHE Student Support

During 2002-03, 154 Arizona students were served by the exchange program. Expenditure data and the number of students served for each professional field over the past several years are shown on the following table:

	OSTEOPATHY		DENTISTRY		VETERINARY MEDICINE		OCCUPATIONA L THERAPY		OPTOMETRY		PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT		TOTAL	
Year	Students	\$	Students	\$	Students	\$	Students	\$	Students	\$	Students	\$	Students	\$
98-99	18	\$241,200	50	\$742,411	69	\$1,373,100	13	\$111,002	15	\$132,859	07	\$ 34,168	172	\$2,634,740
99-00	17	\$226,050	50	\$762,670	67	\$1,356,600	15	\$179,871	16	\$148,800	10	\$ 54,600	175	\$2,728,591
00-01	21	\$287,000	48	\$749,700	69	\$1,431,650	06	\$ 65,650	15	\$142,500	12	\$ 65,930	171	\$2,742,430
01-02	18	\$262,800	48	\$780,300	69	\$1,497,300	06	\$ 64,800	21	\$207,900	16	\$121,600	178	\$2,934,700
02-03	17	\$241,600	40	\$662,500	65	\$1,469,000	04	\$ 50,400	20	\$206,000	08	\$ 76,800	154	\$2,706,300

Future Need for WICHE

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by the year 2005, the demand for practitioners in the six areas of WICHE-study sponsored by Arizona, is expected to grow, nationwide, by:

Physician Assistants	36 percent or more
Occupational Therapists	21 to 35 percent
Veterinarians	21 to 35 percent
Osteopaths	10 to 20 percent
Optometrists	10 to 20 percent
Dentists	as much as 9 percent

Arizona's demand for professional practitioners is expected to at least match national rates. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Arizona is one of the fastest growing states in the country, with more than 1.6 million people moving into the state by the year 2025. This rapid growth and changes in these industries will have an upward push on the demand for practitioners in these medical fields. For example, due to the emergence of managed care plans, doctors of optometry are in demand as primary eye care providers.

Conclusion

The state's involvement in the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program has and continues to be a positive step in providing additional access to Arizona's students. Moreover, the PSEP has proven to be an efficient, cost effective, and beneficial resource for Arizona. To establish and fund such programs as Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathy and Physician Assistant in Arizona would represent an outlay of millions of dollars. Through participation in the exchange program, Arizona can offer its students the opportunity to earn degrees which assist in meeting the state's needs for these

medical professionals. More important, state resources are used effectively to serve the needs of the student as well as the state.