

Department of Education & Early Development
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)
History of the WWAMI Medical Education Program
February 2019

History and purpose of WWAMI –

WWAMI is a collaborative medical school among universities in five northwestern states, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho, and the University of Washington, School of Medicine (UWSOM). Alaska WWAMI reserves seats at UWSOM specifically for Alaska students who would not otherwise have access to a high quality regional medical school.

The Alaska WWAMI Program began at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (as WAMI) in 1971. The program moved to the University of Alaska Anchorage in 1989 and is currently in its 48th year of educating Alaska physicians.

The purpose of Alaska participation in WWAMI, as set out in the Alaska Administrative Code 20 AAC 19.010-19.900, and authorized in AS 14.42.033, is to provide access to medical education not otherwise available to Alaskans.

Return rates –

To date, 500 Alaskans have earned their medical degrees through WWAMI; 60% return to practice in Alaska, with an additional 10% from other WWAMI states coming to Alaska to practice. (See attached document: *How Does WWAMI Benefit Alaska*).

Education pathway –

Prospective students apply to UWSOM. Starting in 2015, upon admission, Alaska's WWAMI students take classes at the University of Alaska, an 18-month experience for the equivalent of the first and second years of medical school. The third and fourth years of the medical school curriculum are comprised of "clerkship" rotations in the various medical specialty areas. These clerkships may be taken in any of the five WWAMI states. Students can take nearly all of these clerkships in Alaska.

Cost to the State and loan repayment –

Residents of Alaska compete only with other Alaska residents for 20 positions reserved annually at UWSOM. For the residents of Alaska, who participate in the WWAMI program, Alaska pays the educational costs of the program that are not covered by tuition.

Alaska WWAMI students pay resident tuition to UWSOM, and the State pays a fee to reserve each Alaska seat. Generally, 80 Alaska students participate in WWAMI each year (20 students admitted per year for four years each). As a condition of participation, Alaska participants agree to a loan in the amount of 50% of the fee the State pays. A participant who does not return to Alaska and become employed in the medical field for which the support was provided must repay the State a portion of the costs. (See attached document: *Alaska WWAMI Medical Education 2018 (Fact Sheet)*, State Support section). In 2018, the State's bill for its 80 WWAMI students was \$3,084,628.

WWAMI loan history and current student pipeline –

WWAMI Loan Summary Program Year 2000 to 2018	
Total Loans	912
Total Borrowers	299

WWAMI Loans Currently Serviced by ACPE		
Status	Number of Loans	Number of Borrowers
In-School	336	132
Grace	11	4
Repayment – Current	140	44
Repayment – Delinquent	20	7
Deferment	126	39
Total	663	226

University of Washington contract termination –

The state's contract with UWSOM provides that upon contract termination, the State of Alaska will not be obligated for supporting costs beyond those funds appropriated, and UWSOM will not be obligated to admit new students for the 20 Alaska WWAMI positions. Existing WWAMI students will be permitted to continue their study; however, under these conditions, WWAMI students may be charged non-resident tuition fees, significantly increasing their costs of study.

Attachments (2):

How Does WWAMI Benefit Alaska?

Alaska WWAMI Medical Education 2018