



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Alaska Commission
on Postsecondary Education**

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March 8, 2017

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy
Chair, Education Finance Subcommittee
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Room 11
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Chair Dunleavy:

I am writing to follow up on questions from the Senate Education Finance Subcommittee regarding the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE).

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

As a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) regional compact, Alaska residents can participate in a number of student exchange programs. Membership also provides Alaska with access to research and policy analysis, consortia and reciprocity agreements, and behavioral health support. Alaska has participated since 1955. Alaska pays annual dues in the amount of \$145,000 to participate in this compact and receive the benefits listed above as well as provide Alaska students the opportunity to participate in exchange programs, including the Western Undergraduate Exchange, summarized below. ACPE absorbs the costs of the dues as part of its operating budget, funded by Alaska Student Loan Corporation receipts. Although information about the other WICHE exchange programs was not requested, I would note that the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program also provides Alaska with significant benefit by reserving seats for our students in professional healthcare programs such as dentistry and physical therapy, for which there is high employment need in Alaska but are not available in Alaska. I have enclosed a fact sheet summarizing the services WICHE membership provides to Alaska.

WICHE Western Undergraduate Exchange

One of the largest exchange programs that students of WICHE states may participate in is the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE). Through the WUE program, residents of WICHE states are eligible to receive a tuition rate of 150 percent of resident tuition at participating two- and four-year college programs outside of their home state. These rates are generally considerably less than had they paid traditional out-of-state tuition rates. In the 2015-2016 school year, 1,101 Alaska students participated in this program, saving approximately \$9.6 million dollars in out-of-state tuition. Additionally, in the same 2015-2016 school year, the University of Alaska was able to attract over 500 out-of-state students to invest their higher education dollars in Alaska.

WWAMI

The WWAMI program, which is unrelated to WICHE, provides an opportunity for 20 Alaskans each year to receive medical education through the University of Alaska Anchorage and the University of Washington School of Medicine. WWAMI stands for Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho, the member states of this program. Participants receive loans for a portion of state-paid support costs and must repay those support funds if they fail to practice medicine in Alaska. Funding for the WWAMI program in FY17 came from the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF), and the HEIF is also the proposed funding source for the FY18 program costs. The Alaska Student Loan Corporation absorbs the costs of managing the program. Currently fifty-five percent of WWAMI borrowers are licensed to practice medicine in Alaska.

I hope this information is responsive to your request. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meg Buck for".

Stephanie Butler
Executive Director

Enclosure