

Community College System “little s”

Creation of the Legislature

Wyoming Community Colleges came to be AFTER the creation and implementation of the Wyoming Constitution

Article 7: “Legislature shall provide for the establishment and maintenance of a complete and uniform system of public instruction, embracing free elementary schools of every needed kind and grade, a university with such technical and professional departments as the public good may require and the means of the state allow, and such other institutions as may be necessary (emphasis added).”

Legislative Ownership with augmented capacity

Legislative actions indicate a broad understanding that the community colleges are “necessary institutions” of education for Wyoming. The community colleges have been specifically added to the Wyoming Statutes consistently since inception with the role of the Wyoming Community College Commission in 1951 & 1967.

As a result:

- WCCC was expressly granted the primary advocacy role whenever two or more colleges are impacted to ensure community college education is considered a vital component of Wyoming education.
- Community colleges were specifically included in the Wyoming Statutes (W.S. 21-17-105) to provide post-secondary education “nearly as free as possible.”
- Locally *elected* boards provide for the operation of the individual colleges ensuring that management and governance occurs closest to the citizens served.

Evolution with Consistent Mission, Purpose, & Structure

The Wyoming Legislature created the structure as a **college system** with a coordinating commission and locally elected board governance as follows: “College system means the community colleges and the community college commission established pursuant to this act.” (W.S. 21-18-202 (iv))

Wyoming **Mission** for Community College system: The mission for the Wyoming system of community colleges represents the diverse services and opportunities that the colleges offer to their communities, individuals, and the state.

- *Wyoming community colleges provide dynamic lifelong learning environments through higher education, workforce development, innovative partnerships, and civic and global engagement that lead to responsible citizenship and economic, social, and cultural prosperity.*

State's Interests: Legislatively Created Intent for College system and Colleges

Educated citizenry: Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering them access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs.

Diversified economy: Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.

Workforce development: Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.

Efficient and effective systems: Maximize return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.

Accountability and improvement: Improve the educational success of Wyoming residents by measuring outcomes and responding to findings, whether negative or positive.

WCCC Required Statewide Priorities

2020-2021 Priorities of WCCC Effective July 1, 2020

- Educational Attainment and ENDOW statewide collaborations including the implementation of Wyoming Works and BAS
- Student Transfer Success Process (Common Transcript/Transfer Process) and SLEDs implementation
- Statewide College System Strategic Plan sunset and development of new plan aligned with Wyoming Post-secondary Educational Attainment 5- and 10-Year Strategic Plan
- Community College Sustainable Funding and Higher Education Governance
- Collaborate among education partners and the community colleges to support community college education as the colleges reopen and establish a “new normal” post-COVID-19
- Relationship building with Governor, legislators, trustees, colleges, presidents, and other stakeholders
- Explore additional opportunities for grant funding
- Organizational operations, functions, efficiency, and capacity of agency and staff

Big Efforts in the WCCC (and colleges)

1. COVID-19 impact on the colleges and State including federal funding (HEERF, GEER, CARES, and new funds)
2. New Statewide College system Strategic Plan
3. Educational Attainment Plan adoption and implementation (collaboration across sectors)
4. Budgets, Sustainable Funding, and Legislative Responsiveness
5. Gillette College Community College District application from Campbell County
6. Rules to implement state and federal legislation/compliance including College Formation, Annexation, and Service Areas
7. Common Transcript/Transfer Process: Student Transfer Success (STS) Launch and related topics of CCNS and Articulation
8. Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs)

Newly Adopted System Strategic Plan

Goal #1 Educational Attainment: Facilitate postsecondary educational attainment to the betterment of all Wyoming citizens.

Goal #2 Affordability: Facilitate community college system sustainability, funding, and affordability while keeping higher education as nearly free as possible.

Goal #3 Program Alignment: Facilitate alignment of post-secondary programs with UW, workplace, and workforce providing a seamless pathway for Wyoming citizens to their future endeavors and to the benefit of the state.

Goal #4 Economic Development: Facilitate initiatives leading to the diversification and growth of Wyoming's economy.

Post-secondary Educational Attainment

5-Year and 10-Year Strategic Plan

60-67% by 2025 and 75-82% by 2040

Focus Areas:

- I. Alignment of Workforce, Workplace, and Post-Secondary Programs
- II. Access and Infrastructure for Recruitment, Retention, and Completion
- III. Funding and Affordability
- IV. College-Going Culture K-12, Adults, and Business/Industry

Priorities Established for 2020-2021: IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES ACROSS ENTITIES: GAP ANALYSIS, MARKETING CAMPAIGN, WT & ADULT LEARNERS, WORK-BASED LEARNING, STS AND SLEDs IMPLEMENTATION, ETC.

Priorities Planned for 2021-23: Agencies, Entities, and Institutions Implementation and Accountability

1. Wyoming Community College Commission shall develop and implement a new statewide community college system strategic plan that, in part, integrates the appropriate aspects of this Educational Attainment Plan. The status of the plan development and implementation shall be required in advance of biennial and supplemental budget requests.
2. The seven community colleges shall develop their next college strategic plans, in part, in alignment with the statewide community college system strategic plan. Each college shall identify how it will create action plans and implement the attainment goals at the local and regional level consistent with this Educational Attainment Plan.

Budget Erosion since 2010--\$94 million

Budget Deficits resulting in JAC request to the WCCC to study the topic

- General Fund appropriations funding loss as of January 2020: \$53.8 million
- Prior Health Insurance cut: \$7.5 million

2020 Budget reduction Step 2 and Step 3

- Step 2 Cuts: \$22.9 million
- Step 3 Governor's Recs: \$9.8 million

Governance in a Coordinated Model with Local Control

Wyoming's current college governance structure has evolved significantly since 1946, incorporating positive contributions by educators, administrators, and legislators. The current system as established by the legislature maintains local control and is coordinated at the state-level ensuring location-appropriate programming and economic development for students, business, and communities with capturing system-wide efficiencies and opportunities.

Changing commission and college governance structure will not address the funding shortfall and could adversely impact the current structure which is working well.

Final Sustainable Funding Considerations with Options/Alternatives

In order to meet the statutory obligations, state's interests, legislative priorities, and foundational efforts of the WCCC, community colleges, and higher education, the workgroup provides the following recommendations:

1. Sustainable Funding for community colleges is imperative for operations, programs development, facilities including major maintenance, IT, and staffing.
2. Sustainable Funding for community colleges must include provisions for external cost adjustments in order to avoid inflationary pressure and to meet compliance requirements.
3. Constitutional recognition or recognition through statutory language of the importance of community colleges as “necessary institutions” in the education pipeline would provide the community colleges state-level protections.

Funding Strategies Framework Considerations with Options/Alternatives

Total Budget Needed for State Aid: \$304 million

Based on the current taxing structure, the options available resulted a two part approach comprised of General Funds and Added Taxes

I. Total State General Fund Target 45% (\$212.7 million pre-2020 budget cut)

- *Reduces state aid from approximately 60% down to 45% (approximately \$30 million reduction in Gen Fund from the adopted budget)*

II. Funding Strategies Two-Pronged Approach (\$91.2 million)

- *Prong 1: Imposing an ad valorem (property) tax in the form of some amount of mill*
- *Prong 2: Imposing a proportion of a new additional 1 or more penny sales and use tax*

Consideration of LSRA as Stopgap Measure

Until the sustainable funding measures are enacted by the Legislature, the WCCC asks the Legislature to consider a recommendation that an appropriate amount of the LSRA be used to both stabilize community college funding during the 2020 enacted cuts, as well as some portion or all of the existing deficit.