

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) Program Report
From the College of Health Sciences
1 OCTOBER 2023

[Pursuant to W.S. 21-17-109 (e)]

To the Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee

Program update

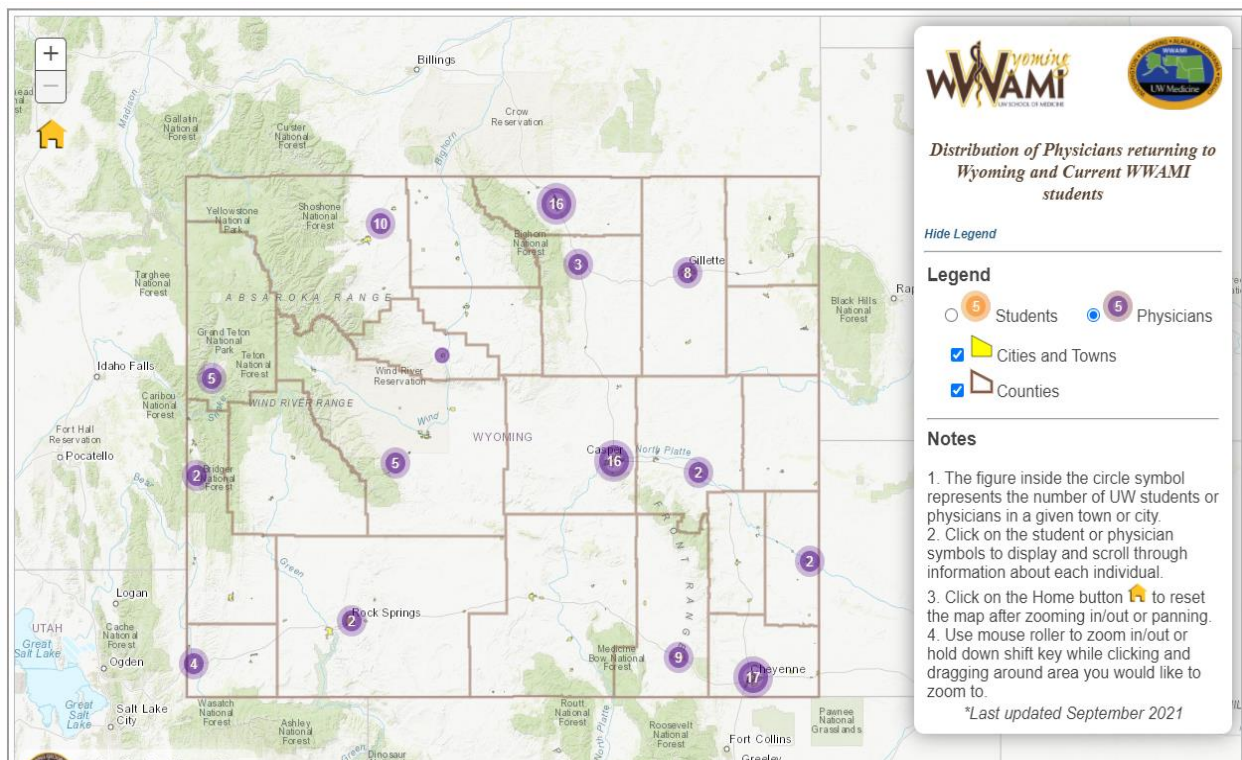
The WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) Program is the current program by which the state provides a loan to students covering the bulk of the cost of attendance to a medical school (since 1997, the University of Washington School of Medicine- UWSOM). Students have the option of repaying the loan either by practicing medicine in Wyoming or by repaying in the money with interest. The program is authorized under W.S. 21-17-109. In prior years, students attended medical school under this provision at Creighton and Utah Medical Schools.

Loan repayment does not begin until the physician has completed residency training, which can last from 3 to 8 years, or more. 423 Wyoming students will have entered the WWAMI program as of July, 2023. The program continues to be very successful:

- 336 Wyoming students have graduated from the UWSOM as of June 2023
- 242 Wyoming-WWAMI students have completed their residency/fellowship and are now practicing medicine
- Return Rate: 148 out of 225 Wyoming-WWAMI graduates (61.2%) have completed residency and returned to Wyoming to practice medicine as of September 2023.
- Non-Wyoming WWAMI in Wyoming: Even though Wyoming does not spend money on non-Wyoming WWAMI students, a benefit of the program is that WWAMI students from other states have an opportunity to do clinical rotations in Wyoming, thus exposing them to Wyoming communities. To date, 13 WWAMI students from other states practice in Wyoming, meaning that 161 WWAMI graduates are practicing or have practiced in Wyoming and fulfilled their contracts. This equates to an overall WWAMI return rate of 66.5%.
- Retention Rate: Of the 148 Wyoming returnees, 117 remain in Wyoming practicing medicine as of September 2023 for a retention rate of 79.1%.
- Primary Care Practice Rate: Of those 117 currently practicing in Wyoming, 53 (45.3%) are in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics or OB/GYN as of September 2023.
- Thirty-one of the 148 Wyoming returnees are no longer practicing in Wyoming. Twenty-two completed the three years required of their contract (and often several more years), five left without completing the full three years, one Wyoming physician is no longer practicing.

Sadly, three Wyoming physician alumni have died (one had left after completing their contract, and two were still practicing when they died). Those 31 physicians practiced in Buffalo, Casper, Cheyenne, Cody, Douglas, Gillette, Jackson, Lander, Laramie, Riverton, Rock Springs, and Sheridan. The average length of stay for all Wyoming returnees is over 6 years. This average is 8 years for those returnees that completed their return requirement.

The figure below is a screenshot of an interactive map on the Wyoming WWAMI website (<http://www.uwyo.edu/wwami/interactivemap/index.html>) that shows where WWAMI graduates are currently practicing in the state. On the website, click on the purple circles to see the names, specialties and entering WWAMI class year of those in practice.



During the 2004 Special Session, legislation was enacted to expand the size of the WWAMI program by two students each year until the WWAMI class size reached 16 students, which occurred in 2007.

During the 2010 Special Session, legislation was enacted to expand the size of the WWAMI class by four students bringing the total number of students to 20. As a result, the WWAMI entering classes since 2011 have consisted of 20 entering students. Beginning September, 2019 Wyoming WWAMI began delivering the first 1.5 years of medical school in Laramie vs. the previous delivery of only 1 year of medical school.

Required report

W.S. 21-17-109 (f) – Under this provision, the University’s Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of the President of the University, may relieve a student from repayment of a loan provided under this section for undue hardship. The provision requires the University to report to the Committee the number of students who have been relieved of the obligation to repay the loan. For FY 2023, there were no formal requests for loan forgiveness.

W.S. 21-17-109 (e) Under this provision, effective July 1, 2005, all loan repayments under this program are credited to an account to be invested by the University and the earnings from the account used exclusively for scholarships and support for WWAMI medical students. This provision requires the University to report to the Committee regarding income and expenditures from this account during the preceding fiscal year.

Enrolled Act No. 37, House of Representative of the Sixty-Third Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2016 Budget Session states : (1) Modified limit on spending the investment income from the Medical School Student Fund. The amount of income expended annually shall not exceed an amount equal to four percent (4%) of the previous five (5) year average market value of the fund, calculated from the first day of the fiscal year (Medical Student Fund Endowment 4% Monies). This investment income shall be expended by the University of Wyoming solely for direct assistance for relocation costs associated with practice in Wyoming, fees and materials for medical board examinations, rural training, dislocation, student development and scholarships to medical students as authorized by the president of the University of Wyoming and the dean of the College of Health Sciences. (2) Tuition and fees received by the University of Wyoming from students participating in the medical education program under this act will be used by the university solely for the support of education and training of WWAMI students at the University of Wyoming (Tuition/Contract Payment Monies). The receipt and expenditure of these funds shall be reported in the university’s biennial budget request.

FY 23 – Fiscal report

In recent years, through budget reductions and a lack of increase to the state support contract with the University of Washington (a 2-3% annual increase), we have had to budget to spend the vast majority of the Medical School Student Fund. We budget for a combination of operating expenses along with contingencies for facilities, technology, and equipment. This past fiscal year, due to good fortune and fiscal responsibility, we were able to spare using these proceeds but do have a plan for their use for the long-term sustainability of Wyoming WWAMI. This is in alignment with our long-range (25-year) vision is to have this fund grow to the point that new increases to the state support contract can come from the additional annual revenues through the fund.

Medical School Student Fund – FY23

Investment Earnings	\$ 686,816.61
*Expenditures	\$ 0.00

Tuition and Fees – FY23

Collections	\$1,300,876.40
Reimbursement from UWSOM (for program expenditures)	<u>\$ 981,620.00</u>
	<u>\$2, 282,496.40</u>
Expenditures	\$1,991,701.76

*Expenditure for the Medical Student fund was zero for fiscal year 2023, as we are actively sparing this fund in order to create long-term sustainability and/or offset any future funding shortfalls of the WWAMI program.