

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) Program Report
From the College of Health Sciences
1 OCTOBER 2024

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

To the Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee

Program update:

The Wyoming 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 attending medical school. Students have the option of repaying the loan either by practicing medicine in Wyoming or by repaying the borrowed money with interest. The program is authorized under W.S. 21-17-109. Since 1997, the University of Washington School of Medicine (UWSOM), has been the hosting institution for the WWAMI Program, and, in prior years, students attended medical school under a similar provision at Creighton University and University of Utah medical schools.

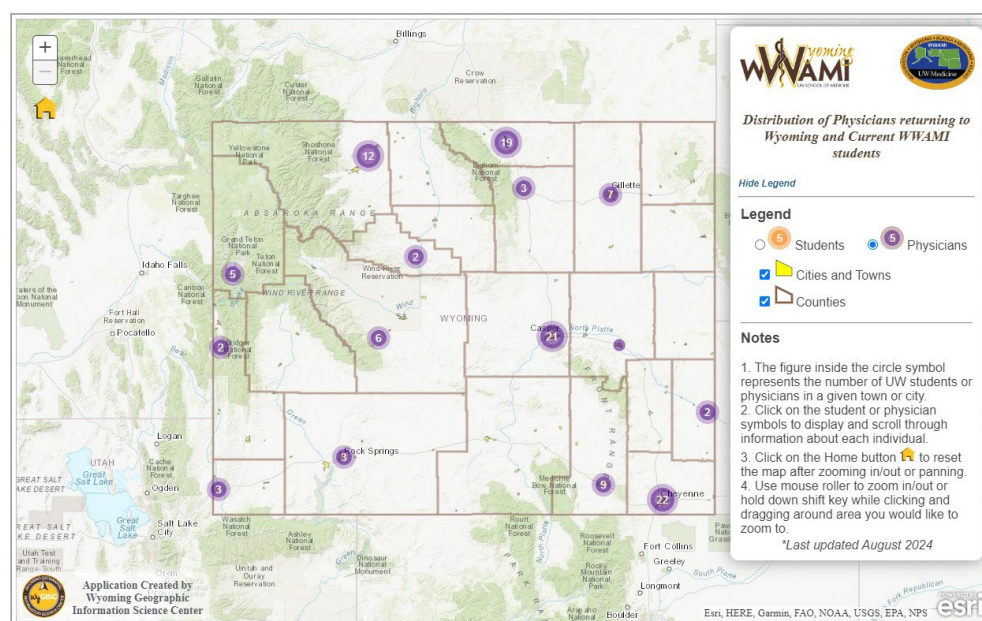
To date, 443 Wyoming students have entered the WWAMI program including the entering class of 2024 which started in July. Ideally, Wyoming WWAMI graduates return to practice medicine in the State of Wyoming upon completion of their residency and fellowship training, which typically lasts from 3 to 8 years. If Wyoming WWAMI graduates do not return to practice medicine in Wyoming upon completion of their training as outlined in their contracts, they will enter into loan repayment. The Wyoming WWAMI program continues to be very successful in recruiting our graduates to return to practice medicine in the State of Wyoming as detailed in the descriptive statistics below:

- 356 Wyoming WWAMI students have graduated from the UWSOM as of May 2024.
- 262 Wyoming WWAMI graduates are now practicing medicine having completed their residency and fellowship training.
 - **Overall Return Rate - 61.8%:** 162 out of 262 Wyoming-WWAMI graduates have completed training and returned to Wyoming to practice medicine as of September 2024.
 - **Overall Retention Rate -77.2%:** Of the 162 Wyoming returnees, 125 remain in Wyoming practicing medicine as of September 2024.
- Primary Care: Of those 125 physicians currently practicing in Wyoming, 61 (48.8%) are practicing in the primary care specialties of family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics or obstetrics and gynecology.
- Admissions: In 2023, there were 49 applicants of which 45 students were interviewed. Twenty-two students were offered acceptance with a final class of 20 students matriculating.

- Non-Wyoming WWAMI Physicians in Wyoming: A benefit of the UWSOM WWAMI program is that students from other states have an opportunity to do clinical rotations in Wyoming, thus exposing them to Wyoming communities. To date, we are aware of 13 non-Wyoming WWAMI physicians currently practicing in Wyoming resulting in a total of 175 WWAMI physicians (162 Wyoming + 13 non-Wyoming) that are practicing or have practiced in the state.
- The average length of stay for all Wyoming returnees is over 6.5 years. This average is 8.28 years for those who completed their return requirement. We expect both averages to continue to grow as more WWAMI grads remain in the state to practice each year.
- Thirty-seven of the 162 Wyoming returnees are no longer practicing in Wyoming. Twenty-seven completed the three years required of their contract (and often several more years). Seven 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 in Wyoming when they died). Those 37 physicians practiced in Casper, Cheyenne, Cody, Douglas, Gillette, Jackson, Lander, Laramie, Riverton, Rock Springs, Sheridan, and Torrington.

Interactive Map:

The figure below is a screenshot of an interactive map on the [Wyoming WWAMI website](https://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. The website is updated annually at the end of the calendar year.



<https://www.uwyo.edu/wwami/interactivemap/index.html>

During the 2004 Special Session, legislation was enacted to expand the size of the Wyoming 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 Wyoming WWAMI class by four students, bringing the total number of students to 20. As a result, the Wyoming WWAMI entering classes since 2011 have consisted of 20 entering students. Starting in September 2019, Wyoming WWAMI began delivering a revised 18-month pre-clinical curriculum in Laramie at the University of Wyoming which continues to today.

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.

Fiscal Report:

The Wyoming WWAMI program budgets for a combination of operating expenses that include but are not limited to staff and faculty salaries, student and staff travel across the five state WWAMI region, and anticipated improvements for facilities, technology, and equipment. For Fiscal 24, these expenses amounted to \$1,761,268. In past years, the vast majority of the Medical School Student Fund was used to offset annual tuition increases with the University of Washington (a 2-3% annual increase). More recently, with increases to our state budget funding, we have been able to save investment earnings, \$735,537.72, from the Medical School Student Fund in alignment with our long-range (25-year) vision to have this fund grow to the point where new increases to the state support contract can come from the additional annual revenues through the fund. This past fiscal year, due to good fortune and fiscal responsibility, we were able to spare using most of these investment earnings. Our goal is to use these funds for the long-term sustainability of the Wyoming WWAMI program to develop improvements for facilities, technology, and equipment as well as faculty and staff development, recruitment, and retention. Since 2018, the second-year students have remained in Laramie for a portion of the curriculum. The updated contract with UWSOM, returns a portion of the expenses associated with this portion of their medical education. For fiscal year 24 the amount reimbursed was \$1,020,880.00. The other collections, \$1,425,767.20, reported below consist of tuition and fee payment from students across the four years of the curriculum.

Medical School Student Fund – FY24

Investment Earnings	\$738,537.72
Expenditures	\$6,046.42
<u>Tuition and Fees – FY24</u>	
Collections	\$1,425,767.20
Reimbursement from UWSOM	<u>\$1,020,880.00</u>
	<u>\$2,446,647.20</u>
Expenditures	\$1,761,268.00