

Wyoming Colleges' Recruitment and Retention Plan

Submitted on November 30, 2017 by:

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Legislative Request

2017 HEA82, Section 67, footnote 11. The University of Wyoming, the Community College Commission and each community college shall collaborate and develop a unified plan to provide a coordinated approach to the recruitment and retention of and incentives for students graduating from Wyoming secondary schools and from schools in states contiguous to Wyoming. The university, on behalf of the university, community colleges and Commission, shall report their progress on the plan to the joint education interim committee and the joint appropriations committee not later than September 30, 2017, and incorporate a final plan for the legislature not later than December 1, 2017, within their respective 2019-2020 biennial budget requests.

Introduction

The higher education institutions in the state of Wyoming have an ideal opportunity to partner together to recruit, retain, train, and graduate students from the state, region, and beyond. An educated workforce leads to a vibrant statewide economy that will carry us into a diversified and stable future. We know that Wyoming students are capable, our colleges are affordable and high-quality, and Hathaway scholarships assist many students and families with paying tuition. However, those facts alone have not cultivated a college-going culture.

The most recent available data shows that in 2014, there were 5,429 Wyoming high school graduates. Of those, 776 attended the University of Wyoming, 1,504 attended the Wyoming community colleges, and 769 attended out-of-state institutions. The total college-going rate was 56%, down from 64% just four years before in 2010. Meanwhile, the national average college-going rate in 2014 was 68% and continues along an upward trajectory that spans decades per the *National Center for Education Statistics*.¹ By 2025, 60% of all jobs in the United States will require education beyond high school, according to Georgetown University's *Center on*

¹ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_302.30.asp

Education and the Workforce,² a figure that notably exceeds the number of students even attempting to obtain such a credential currently. For Wyoming to diversify its economy, we must shift the educational course, and we need to act now.

The first step is the development and adoption of a statewide post-secondary educational achievement goal. Together, the eight public college presidents and Wyoming Community College Commission drafted *A Resolution to Establish a Statewide Goal for Higher Education Attainment in Wyoming*. The Resolution lists recitals demonstrating the value to the state that such a goal offers, and sets the target at an increase to the percent of the working population aged 25-64 years who hold a valuable post-secondary degree or certificate to 60% by 2025, and to 75% by 2040. The resolution was unanimously endorsed by the Wyoming Community College Commissioners on October 13, 2017 and was unanimously approved by the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees on November 16, 2017, making the resolution effective as of November 17, 2017. This goal is in alignment with the Governor's ENDOW initiative and its implementation is supported through grants available from the Lumina Foundation. Now, all eight institutions are poised to collaborate in new ways to realize success in achieving this ambitious goal.

Wyoming's post-secondary education community stands ready to meet this challenge and serve the students in our state. In addition to expanding the Wyoming college-going rate, each institution can increase enrollment through targeted projects developed both individually and as outlined here. Wyoming's university and colleges have a history of collaboration as demonstrated by the *Complete College Wyoming* initiative and are poised to tackle joint initiatives such as developing attractive programs aligned with workforce needs, policies, and pricing to serve non-resident students; and by facilitating the transfer process for both traditional and non-traditional students who want to further their education and training.

Over the next three years, Wyoming's eight institutions of higher education will work together and, in partnership with the Wyoming Community College Commission, the UW and community college Trustees, and the Wyoming Department of Education, develop a statewide strategic enrollment management agenda approved by Trustees statewide. Broadly, the structure of the agenda will focus on the themes of (1) creating a **college-going culture**, (2) **removing barriers** to college participation, (3) **building a pipeline** for Wyoming's colleges, (4) **developing paths to re-entry into college** for Wyoming high school graduates entering higher education **from the workforce**, and (5) building **pathways to completion**.

Wyoming's higher education institutions will work together to expand postsecondary attainment for traditional and non-traditional students to benefit the future of our great state.

² <https://cew.georgetown.edu/>

Themes

1. *Create a College-Going Culture*

To increase the rate of college-going in the state, UW and the community colleges will partner with the Wyoming Department of Education to

- a) create a marketing and communications plan focused on the value of higher education and opportunities in Wyoming for students in grades 9-12, including the Hathaway Scholarship program;
- b) share student names and contact information such that every Wyoming student can be made aware of opportunities for study at their local community college and UW;
- c) develop a postsecondary plan for every student during 9th grade; and
- d) set a goal for increasing the rate of immediate entry into higher education from high school.

Students need to hear about college-going frequently, and from the beginning of their high school career. The co-produced marketing and communications plan will highlight statewide college and university opportunities; how to plan for earning the Hathaway Scholarship; and how to apply for college enrollment, federal financial aid, and local and national scholarships. Each community college and the university will designate a representative to form a statewide higher education marketing council to develop and implement the needed messaging. Such a communication plan requires thoughtful consideration and a team approach to designing the right materials at the right time, guiding students towards completing the Hathaway success curriculum and evaluating their best fit for college.

Unlike the national military services, The University of Wyoming and community colleges do not currently have access to the names and contact information for students enrolled in middle and high school in Wyoming. Access to those names and contact information is essential to a successful communications and marketing plan with a goal to convey the value and benefit of attending college to *all* Wyoming students.

Wyoming's K-12 and higher education institutions will work collectively towards the goal of having every student develop a postsecondary plan in the 9th grade to be on file at the high school. This will help counselors prepare individual students for their future whether that will be college, career, or entry into the military post-graduation. UW and the community colleges will collaborate with Wyoming's high schools as students develop these plans. This will ensure that all students who indicate an interest in college preparation have access to timely, appropriate information on preparation and affordability throughout their high school career. We will also involve the students' families in the decision process.

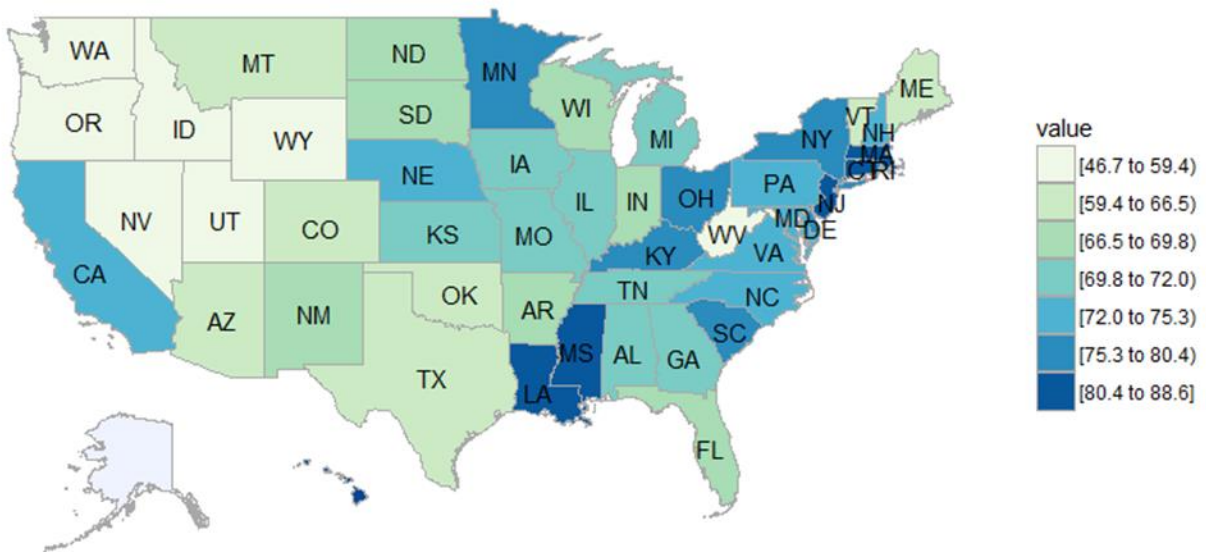
To incentivize and benchmark this cultural shift, Wyoming will develop a statewide goal for immediate entry into postsecondary education, in tandem with the statewide educational attainment goal set in fall 2017. Such a goal will facilitate expansion of the college-going rate, increase retention of a greater percentage of those who begin their education in a Wyoming

institution, and increase the number of graduates produced. Potential Lumina Foundation grant dollars and the Governor’s ENDOW initiative will provide strategies to facilitate achievement of this goal. A corresponding collaborative statewide media campaign will reinforce this messaging.

The percent of first time high school graduates who enrolled in college in 2014 by state of residence given NCES high school graduate data.

Percent of FT HS Grads in College by State (2014, NCES)									
Area	Percent	Area	Percent	Area	Percent	Area	Percent	Area	Percent
Massachusetts	88.64%	New York	75.84%	Kansas	71.79%	South Dakota	68.82%	Colorado	61.63%
Connecticut	88.64%	South Carolina	75.79%	Iowa	71.61%	Arkansas	68.72%	Arizona	59.42%
Louisiana	87.96%	Minnesota	75.33%	Alabama	71.21%	Indiana	68.11%	West Virginia	58.18%
Mississippi	83.09%	Virginia	74.94%	Tennessee	71.17%	New Mexico	68.05%	Wyoming	56.32%
District of Columbia	82.86%	Maryland	73.82%	Georgia	70.79%	Wisconsin	66.51%	Washington	53.52%
Hawaii	81.20%	North Carolina	72.74%	Illinois	70.25%	Maine	65.59%	Nevada	51.97%
New Jersey	80.44%	Nebraska	72.65%	Missouri	70.08%	Vermont	63.64%	Oregon	51.63%
Ohio	76.99%	California	72.52%	Michigan	69.84%	Texas	63.06%	Idaho	48.90%
Kentucky	76.96%	New Hampshire	72.26%	Florida	69.59%	Montana	62.49%	Alaska	47.31%
Rhode Island	76.87%	Pennsylvania	72.03%	North Dakota	69.13%	Oklahoma	62.03%	Utah	46.66%
Delaware	76.35%								

Percent of First Time HS Grads who Enrolled in College in 2014 by State of Residence (NCES)



NCES data courtesy of LCCC

Wyoming’s postsecondary institutions stand ready to provide leadership and be active partners in this process. They will be prepared to facilitate training and collaborative opportunities for superintendents and counselors throughout the state, and deepen partnerships for workforce development. Achieving a certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, or a graduate education in Wyoming can be within everyone’s reach.

2. *Remove Barriers to College Participation*

To remove barriers to entry for first-time and transfer students, UW and the community colleges will

- a) create a common application for use at each of the eight institutions;
- b) explore the cost and implementation of a potential shared student information system and opportunities for collaborations on shared data systems;
- c) jointly promote students' completion of the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*, or FAFSA; and
- d) identify a statewide goal and secure necessary resources for state-funded need-based financial aid.

A single college application for the state of Wyoming will immediately provide a single point-of entry for students who plan to attend college in our state and may serve as an extra incentive for out-of-state students to apply to Wyoming institutions. UW and the community colleges will jointly promote the common application with the intent that every Wyoming student who plans to attend postsecondary education completes it, along with the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*, or FAFSA. The FAFSA provides students with need-based aid, such as Pell grants and work-study funds, as well as unlocks the Hathaway Need awards available. Because the application process will be simple, high school counselors and college staff will be able to convey a single, unified message and focus energies on increasing form completion rates.

Students from Wyoming and elsewhere will benefit from the common application in many ways, including increased access and facilitated transfer. At the start of their education, they will have the option to indicate if they plan to obtain training or a certificate, or transfer to or dually enroll at several Wyoming institutions. Many students from surrounding states attend Wyoming's community colleges and the option of continuing their education through UW will be facilitated from the day that they apply. Students who intend to transfer within the state will not need to apply separately to the University of Wyoming, and their admission will be automatic as long as they have maintained academic, financial, and judicial good standing. Those who transfer without having received their associate's degree will have a reverse transfer facilitated so that their UW credits apply towards their community college credential.

Exploring a shared student information system and further mechanisms to develop utilization of the Wyoming Community College Commission's data warehouse has potential to be transformational in streamlining students' interactions with colleges statewide. Wyoming's colleges have already been working together on technology to improve the student experience. In 2017, five of the community colleges joined with UW and the Department of Education to jointly utilize the Canvas Learning Management System, branded WyoCourses. All seven community colleges added a Student Planning software to facilitate registration in 2017, and have worked in tandem with UW on the WYClass online course location tool. Collaborative work on statewide technology is ongoing and holds tremendous promise.

While Wyoming offers some of the best values for higher education in the nation, the costs of college are great enough to stop many students from considering furthering their education. Significantly, Wyoming does not provide state funding for college based solely on a student's ability to pay. Hathaway scholarships are an incredible asset for traditional students with a history of academic merit, but many more students are adult, non-traditional, online, or unable to meet the criteria set forth in the Hathaway scholarship. This is compounded by the availability of good-paying yet low-skilled employment opportunities in the state, incentivizing individuals to forgo the longer-term benefit of pursuing higher education. After exploring national need-based funding models, we will identify a statewide goal for need-based access aid and identify amount of necessary resources to operationalize such a program. This will ensure an education is in reach for all of Wyoming's students regardless of their financial situation, and will position our state as a national leader in accessible higher education.

3. Create a Pipeline to Wyoming's Colleges

To encourage non-resident college-going in Wyoming, UW and the community colleges will

- a) expand the use of regional pricing strategies to attract nonresident students;
- b) co-create a statewide marketing campaign for non-residents to attend college in Wyoming;
- c) reaffirm a commitment to ease of transfer and development of pathways to degrees in Wyoming, including expanding the 2+2 articulation agreements;
- d) evaluate the capacity of Wyoming's institutions to ensure a financially feasible mix of resident and non-resident students enrolled in the right programs; and
- e) analyze Wyoming college's student housing capacity.

In addition to Wyoming's own youth, many students in surrounding states will recognize that they also will benefit tremendously from an education at Wyoming's colleges. For example, in 2016, Wyoming's participation in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) meant that 1,543 non-resident students from western states attended college in Wyoming, paying just 150% of resident tuition. These students are an asset to the state in part because they are likely to consider remaining in Wyoming as they start their careers. Exploring and expanding strategic discounting for regional students can yield larger enrollments and draw many more students to Wyoming.

Further, increasing statewide marketing to non-resident students through a campaign co-produced by Wyoming's university and colleges could generate interest from nearby regions experiencing population growth, such as the Colorado Front Range and Utah's Salt Lake City metro area, among others. By offering the right mix of programs, at the right price, Wyoming higher education could take full advantage of this potential. Such efforts needs to be strategic and data-informed to ensure Wyoming attracts the right number and highest quality non-resident students to its programs, all while attracting and retaining Wyoming's in-state students.

A commitment to ease of transfer from community colleges to UW is critical to this effort. UW is already committed to ensuring that all students who transfer are successful as outlined in its strategic plan and as evidenced by the new Transfer Success Center which opened in fall 2017. Efforts undertaken over the last several years to develop 2+2 program articulation for the 50 courses of study with the highest enrollment have been very successful, and each institution is continuing to devote time and energy to maintaining and expanding the nearly 350 plans in development to date. The plans, as well as updated statewide scorecards on the articulation agreements, are now posted online.³ UW is also exploring membership as a WICHE Interstate Passport institution, streamlining general education requirements for transfers from other western states, and is committed to developing a systematized approach to reverse transfer. Through each of these examples, UW is engaged in continual improvement and considers its work with transfer students among its highest priorities. Students who come to UW from a Wyoming community college with 60 or more credit hours have a graduation rate with a bachelor's degree at 72%, significantly outperforming freshmen and other transfer students. Facilitating their enrollment is critical to developing their success.

With this in mind, UW developed a variety of scholarships to incentivize those students with a 3.4+ GPA and an associate's degree to continue their education and achieve a bachelor's degree, starting in fall 2017. The WUE program has been extended to transfer students, allowing regional nonresident students attracted to Wyoming's community colleges to continue their education in-state while paying 150% of resident tuition. Nearly 3 dozen students took advantage of this offer in its first semester. Between this, the Wyoming Transfer Scholars Award, and specifically targeting transfer students with Foundation-held funds, fully 1/3 of UW's incoming transfer class received an institutional award in fall 2017, with a value to students for the academic year at nearly \$900,000.

Key for the realization of pipeline development will be creation of institution-specific enrollment goals and capacity evaluation, to ensure that we retain a reasonable and financially feasible mix of resident and non-resident students. Many college students opt for a two-year degree with even a shorter option of a certificate program that provides the student with great employment benefits if the employer is looking for skilled workers. A market analysis-driven and entrepreneurial approach to program development will ensure that demand is met for resident and nonresident students.

This evaluation should include the need for high-quality, attractive student housing to facilitate recruitment and retention at all Wyoming colleges. The University of Wyoming will have a 10-Year Housing Plan by spring of 2018 which will provide clear guidance for meeting the University's housing needs for the next 10 years. The UW Housing Plan will align with the University's Strategic Plan for 2017-2022 to increase enrollment and advance student success and retention. Just as at UW, new and renovated residence halls will play a critical role in growing enrollment and engaging more students at each of Wyoming's colleges.

³ <http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/degree-plans/wy-2-plus-2/>

4. *Develop paths to re-entry into college for Wyoming high school graduates entering higher education from the workforce*

To serve adult students those who enter higher education from the workforce, UW and the community colleges will

- a) provide an on-ramp of transitional student services to ensure success;
- b) ensure career and technical program options are aligned with the state's economic and workforce needs;
- c) provide expansion of certificate programs for workers that are already in the workforce; and
- d) expand the Bachelor of Applied Science degree and develop a college completion degree option.

Nearly half of Wyoming's 5,400 annual high school graduates do not go on to postsecondary education right after completing high school, but many more decide later in life to do so. In addition, an estimated 87,451 adults in Wyoming, or 28.34% of Wyoming's population ages 25-64 have some college, but have not completed their degree.⁴ These non-traditional students may be site-bound, balancing careers and families, and have a variety of needs outside that of traditional college students. Students who earn a certificate are more likely to continue their education through a degree program and *Inside Higher Ed* found that 20 percent of those students with a certificate will further their education and obtain an associate degree and another 13 percent will complete a bachelor degree.⁵ Businesses and community colleges often form partnerships to ensure training provided at colleges is a match for employers. Partnerships between schools and businesses are becoming a growing trend with placement statistics on the rise as well. For Wyoming's educational institutions to truly serve the state, providing a safety net and transition support for adult students is critical and gives each one of Wyoming's citizens a new lease on their career potential. Each institution will proactively develop interventions and support for adult and non-traditional populations, depending on its unique needs.

Each of Wyoming's community colleges is engaged in growing career and technical programs to prepare students for the modern workforce. The choice of community college provides many benefits to Wyoming students. Wyoming community colleges provide short-term training in which students are able to enter the workforce quickly, ensuring job potential and family support. Community colleges in Wyoming also provide high-quality education and training, affordable tuition, and flexible scheduling. Another crucial component to Wyoming community college is small class size. Small classes allow for more interaction and contribute to better learning for some students. Remedial education has become an integral part of the community college. Students often need help in core curriculum like reading, writing, and math. Statistics are showing that almost one-third of all college students require some sort of remedial education

⁴ https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/wyoming-brief-2016.pdf

⁵ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/14/reports-highlight-woes-faced-one-third-all-college-students-who-transfer>

when they enroll in college.⁶ Wyoming community colleges provide vital assistance for these struggling students. Additionally, all community colleges are set up to provide training for workforce development.

Casper College offers a wide array of enrollment and student success services to all prospective students, including adult and non-traditional students. The institution's career and technical programs receives support from local community advisory boards, and its academic programming is coordinated with local and state organizations. The college conducts periodic academic program reviews that includes data from the Department of Workforce Services to increase understanding of community and state educational needs. The college's hospitality program was recently revised to include tourism management, Wyoming's second largest industry. The Health Science faculty collaborate directly with professionals in their respective fields to stay well-informed of current educational needs. For example, the Radiography Department recently added mammography, MRI, and CT certificates to meet new industry standards. Casper College also just added Personal Trainer and Coaching certificates to address community needs. In addition, Casper College's workforce services expanded certifications and continuing education offerings for professionals in real estate, education, safety, water quality, and health care. To meet Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act requirements, Casper College offers several short term training programs including HVAC, customer service certification, nursing assistant, clinical medical assistant, dental assistant, culinary, and a bank teller apprenticeship. In association with the University of Wyoming, Casper College faculty teach courses in the Bachelor of Applied Science degree to empower working adults to pursue their education goals while remaining in the workplace by completing their degrees online.

Central Wyoming College is expanding its industry cultivation services. In Riverton, for example, CWC is working to attract more out-of-state companies to its 59-acre business park. Through local partnerships, the college plans to bring in better internet bandwidth and more business services (e.g., mentoring, consulting) to complement CWC's training and business start-up services. Retaining local airline services will remain important in attracting companies. At its center in Jackson, CWC is working to bring its Start-Up Intensive (SUI) online. Over the past three years, the SUI has graduated 103 new and expanding businesses, with an 85% success rate, in its program that merges academic coursework, mentoring from nationally renowned business leaders, and small-business development support. CWC and UW are working collaboratively to develop new and strengthen existing degree programs to benefit the state-wide workforce. For example, the UW Haub School's new, emerging bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism degree will integrate CWC's Culinary/Hospitality and Outdoor Education associate's degrees.

Eastern Wyoming College recently completed the *Career and Technical Education Center* that houses an expanded welding and machine tool program, cosmetology, and new barbering program in addition to a health sciences program that provides career and technical training. The institution works with the Torrington community to meet the critical need in providing training to meet the demands of an elderly population. EWC will begin construction of an Agricultural

⁶ <https://www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/does-remedial-education-work-for-community-college-students>

Technology Education Center (ATEC) in the spring of 2018. The driving force behind this center is a living integrated educational plan that meets the needs of learners, enhances current programs, plans for growth, and targets industry. This building will provide expansion of agricultural and veterinary technology programs. EWC is working diligently to support outreach areas which include focus group facilitation with community members, high school students, and administrators. These focus groups have provided an avenue for a new program on the Douglas campus that will provide a gunsmithing program in addition to the nursing program.

Laramie County Community College continues to build upon the college's strong CTE program foundation. The Welding program has strong support from local business partners. This fall, Puma Steel and other regional steel and welding companies sponsored a welding competition for area high school students, with \$10,000 in scholarships for students to pursue welding at LCCC. The Wind Energy associate degree has received much interest from wind energy production and distribution companies that want to partner with LCCC. Three companies have expressed interest in partnering through equipment donations and scholarships, and through partnering with training to help LCCC as they produce highly skilled wind energy technicians. The transportation programs at LCCC continue to be strong options. The Diesel Technology AAS has new facilities in the Flex Tech Building and received seven new trucks from Navistar that enable the college to run two cohorts of students learning to be diesel technicians. The diesel, automotive, and auto body programs all have built the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification exams into their programs, to allow graduates to transition smoothly into industry. Several other CTE areas have incorporated certification exams into their programs such as Computer Information Systems (CIS). The students can take the CompTIA computer certification exams as part of the appropriate courses. The CIS program is developing a credit diploma for data center technicians. LCCC is working with the area data centers, such as Microsoft and Green House Data, to create technicians who will have the very specific computer networking skills needed in data centers. The health science programs at LCCC continue to have strong enrollment and outstanding success on the accreditation exams. These programs allow graduates to find careers in the continuing high demand fields of nursing, dental hygiene, radiography, sonography, and others. LCCC recently added a degree in technical agriculture that includes coursework in welding and diesel technology. These skills will be valuable for graduates who work on farms or ranches. Also, the skills support students that want the general agricultural and mechanical knowledge that can lead to working in a small agribusiness operation or in becoming an agriculture teacher. The college is currently revising some CTE agriculture programs to incorporate more entrepreneurial skills that will make them better prepared for careers.

Over the past decade Northern Wyoming Community College District has aggressively and successfully aligned its Career Technical Education and Health Science programs with industry needs. Active occupation-specific advisory committees have worked with faculty and administrators to identify skill needs and anticipate demand for future workers. The college has sought and obtained funding from local (both philanthropic and public), state and federal sources to build capacity with highly skilled faculty, new and renovated facilities, industry-aligned curriculum, and state-of-the-art equipment. The college alignment with regional employers including manufacturing firms L&H Industrial of Sheridan and Gillette and Vacutech in Sheridan; oil and gas, mining, and mining equipment companies; and clinics and hospitals ensures that graduates are prepared to enter the workforce with skills needed by future

employers. NWCCD has a robust credit-for-prior-learning (CPL) opportunity for students who enroll in college with work experience in the private sector or military service. The college has learned that the CPL process works best in the applied Career Technical Education programs and that students who have received any CPL credits are more likely to persist to completion of their educational goal. NWCCD engages students who are military veterans with directors and centers on both the Sheridan College and Gillette College campuses and the student veterans' stellar outcomes reflect this commitment to students entering higher education from the workforce.

Northwest College has a reputation as a premiere residential transfer college, offering Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees in a broad array of disciplines, including engineering. NWC STEM programs offer opportunities for undergraduate research through partnerships with the University of Wyoming. The agriculture program works closely with local producers to expand agriculture production and marketing, for example the introduction of hops cultivation to compliment the production of barley in the region, two key ingredients in brewing. NWC's music program is widely recognized for excellence in choral and jazz performance. The nursing program prepares practical and registered nurses that serve the needs of health care providers in the region and beyond. NWC offers AAS degrees and certificates in graphic design, welding, photography, drafting, music technology, business and agriculture. The college engages with local economic development efforts through participation in Powell Economic Partnership and Forward Cody. The Center for Training Development (CTD), with offices in Powell and Cody, provides customized training for industry and small business along with training to prepare workers for technical and service employment. CTD in Cody has recently developed new workforce training in allied health professions including medical assistant and emergency medical technician (EMT) certifications. CTD facilitates apprentice opportunities in electrical and machining and is working with several regional industries to provide training and certification in production processing.

Western Wyoming Community College continues its work to support local industry by preparing a skilled workforce. Every program meets with local industry to determine exactly the necessary skills. The college continues to grow welding, machining, electricity and industrial maintenance, and Commercial Driver's License programs. Western is building several programs in the public service arena in partnership with local governments. These include EMS/Paramedic, Fire Science, and Emergency Vehicle Repair. Western will share existing facilities for all of these programs with the cities and counties. Western also fully participates in the expansion of computer science from grade 7 throughout college and into the workplace. As the college moves forward, this program will continue to expand in courses for computer repair, programming, coding, network operations and security. These programs will expand in the face-to-face format as well as online to reach a wider audience.

For those who choose to continue their education, UW's expansion of the Bachelor's of Applied Science degree provides an alternate path to a four-year degree among students who received a technical Associate's degree at a community college. Students employed in industry will find its completely online delivery compatible with full-time work and will prepare them for organizational leadership. A bachelor of general studies degree is under consideration, to provide yet another avenue for completion. These efforts will work in tandem to serve a much greater share of students than only those who take a more traditional path to a four-year degree, and have strong potential to attract students from outside the state. These will enrich offerings available

statewide, including the Dental Hygiene program offering a 4-year degree at Sheridan College, and the variety of programs available at UW-Casper and the regional centers. Flexible degree programs such as these reflect UW's continuing commitment to serving adult and non-traditional students. Critically, UW is engaging in a review of its distance programs and intends to increase its depth and breadth of programmatic options for working adults. These efforts are achieving distinction nationally. The *Washington Monthly* ranked the University of Wyoming as one of the most innovative colleges in the nation for educating adult students in August 2017.⁷

5. *Build Pathways to Completion*

To ensure those who begin their education will complete it, UW and the community colleges will

- a) utilize data and national best practice to set aggressive student success goals; and
- b) increase fall-to-fall retention rates and the number of students who earn post-secondary credentials through *Complete College Wyoming*.
- c) Partner with ENDOW and others to establish programs and practices to retain college graduates and certificate completions in Wyoming.

Both experience and research⁸ shows that college completion results from a mutually-reinforcing mix of academic ability, financial capability, wellness, and a sense of belonging among students. We can use these principles to target the work we do to maximize educational and career outcomes and improve students' lives. Educational thought leaders like the Educational Advisory Board provide a wealth of research that provides the groundwork for initiatives that are actionable, proven, and scalable.

The University of Wyoming is actively engaged in increasing fall-to-fall retention of first time freshmen and transfer to 80% and growing its 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates. Similarly, the community colleges have set goals to improve student success and outcomes. Each college has committed to a goal of increasing the number of post-secondary credentials awarded by 5 percent per year through 2020. A focus on developmental advising utilizing newly-developed 4-year student success plans, using predictive analytics to deliver targeted support, and improving the first year and transfer year experiences are all key to this effort. Wyoming's community colleges are currently developing similar tactical goals to increase the success of their students, and are developing the *Complete College Wyoming* initiative to focus on key metrics⁹ like the transfer-out rate to track their successes.

Wyoming and non-resident students of all backgrounds will be actively recruited as described, and thoughtful attention will be paid to their success in the classroom. Wyoming's participation in *Complete College America* is already ensuring that students who begin their education are more likely than ever before to complete it, in alignment with national best practice tactics to

⁷ <http://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober-2017/the-twelve-most-innovative-colleges-for-adult-learners/>

⁸ https://s3.amazonaws.com/dive_static/paychek/Huron_Playbook_jun2017_Student_Success.pdf

⁹ <http://www.completecollegewyoming.org/metrics>

ensure student success. Key among the recommendations will be a renewed focus on ensuring students complete 15 credit hours per semester, keeping them on pace to attain their bachelor's degree in four years.

Although increasing participation in Wyoming's institutions of higher education is important, keeping more of the graduates in Wyoming after they complete is essential. Currently, an analysis completed by Economic Modelling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) estimates that more than 80 percent of community college graduates stay in Wyoming, and the University of Wyoming is partnering with Equifax, Inc. to determine its graduates' employment, salaries, and outmigration. However, UW and the community colleges can do better and are committed to establishing stronger systems and programs which focus on keeping graduates in Wyoming after they successfully complete college.

Timeline

Present

- a. Set a statewide goal for post-secondary educational attainment via a joint resolution with the Wyoming Community College Commission and the UW Board of Trustees.
 - a. Effective November 17, 2017, the goal is to increase the percent of the working population 25-64 years old that possess a valuable post-secondary credential to 60% by 2025, and to 75% by 2040.

Year 1

- a. Determine statewide enrollment goals and metrics to measure success, to include both the number of Wyoming and nonresident students served, the percent of high school graduates in the state pursuing higher education, the FAFSA federal financial aid application completion rate, and the rate of transfer.
- b. Partner with the Wyoming Department of Education to provide directory information for all high school students in the state to their regional community college and the University of Wyoming, form a statewide higher education marketing council, and co-produce a communication sequence to educate students and parents about higher education and financial aid.
- c. Research opportunities for development of a statewide college application, including the budgetary impacts, and make a recommendation for implementation. Pilot the implementation.
- d. Engage in institutional capacity evaluation, including student housing, and the types of programs, including degrees and certificates, necessary to meet future needs.

Year 2

- a. Implement and jointly promote the statewide college application and completion of the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*, or FAFSA.
- b. Deepen partnerships with high schools to encourage the development of postsecondary transition plans for all high school students and provide training for counselors and superintendents on relevant topics.
- c. Update and expand upon the communication sequence outlined in year one, developing a full marketing and media campaign.
- d. Explore and expand regional pricing strategies to attraction nonresident students to Wyoming for higher education.
- e. Establish programs and practices to keep Wyoming's college graduates in-state.

Year 3

- a. Research opportunities for need-based aid models, including the budgetary impacts, and make a recommendation for implementation.
- b. Develop a report including national benchmarking on the impact of *Complete College Wyoming* and other student success initiatives on progress towards improving retention and completion for traditional and nontraditional populations.
- c. Explore a shared student information system and opportunities for data partnership.
- d. Further develop the statewide communications and marketing plan to reach non-resident audiences.

Additionally, each college will affirm their commitment to these themes by developing institution-specific initiatives relevant to recruitment and retention of students. This will provide the framework to articulate the support and communication planning necessary for low-income, first generation, and at-risk students and the creation of meaningful services and programs for non-traditional and adult student populations in Wyoming.