



# Planning for the Future of Wyoming's Community Colleges

Wyoming Community College Strategic Plan

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**Amanda Richards  
Laurel Sipes  
Carol Studier  
Sandra Staklis  
Beverly Farr  
Laura Horn**

**MPR Associates, Inc.**



# Contents

	PAGE
Introduction.....	1
Planning in a Time of Economic Scarcity.....	1
Taking Wyoming Community Colleges from Good to Great .....	2
The Mission .....	3
The Strategic Plan Framework .....	3
The Details .....	5
Chapter 1. History and Governance.....	7
History.....	7
Governance.....	7
Chapter 2. Community College Profiles.....	11
Community College Profiles .....	12
Tuition and Fees at Wyoming Community Colleges.....	19
Community Colleges Benefit Individuals and the Public.....	20
A Performance Snapshot of Wyoming Community Colleges .....	21
Chapter 3. Population and Economic Trends in Wyoming.....	27
A Small and Aging Population .....	27
A Strong but Changing Economy .....	28
Chapter 4. A Strategic Plan for Wyoming’s Community Colleges.....	31
State Interests.....	31
Strategic Objectives.....	34
Strategic Objective 1. Student Access and Success .....	37
Strategic Objective 2. Quality Programs.....	52
Strategic Objective 3. Distance Learning.....	58
Strategic Objective 4. Alignment of Programs and Workforce Opportunities .....	64
Strategic Objective 5. Partnerships.....	69

Strategic Objective 6. Coordination and Collaboration.....72

Strategic Objective 7. Adequate Resources .....79

Strategic Objective 8. System of Continuous Improvement .....83

Chapter 5. Implementation.....97

References .....103

# Introduction

With the national spotlight on community colleges, Wyoming is poised to become a leader through its efforts to align the programs of its seven community colleges with defined state interests. As local economies become more globally focused and knowledge-based, community colleges have become a critical focus for postsecondary access. Recognizing the importance of these institutions, President Obama has appointed a community college chancellor as undersecretary of education and moved community colleges to the forefront of his administration's higher education policy.

Wyoming community colleges offer students a high-quality education, and both they and the state benefit. The community colleges serve multiple missions and constituents, from high school students seeking college-level courses to adults needing basic literacy skills. As noted in the Wyoming Community College Commission's (WCCC) *Annual Report—2008* "There really is no 'typical' community college student" (WCCC n.d.-d, p. 3). Community colleges can mean the difference between a dead-end job and skilled employment capable of supporting a family, or between an affordable college education and one ending in debt that takes years to pay off. Community colleges are an essential feature of a state's workforce development system.

With a system that provides multiple modes of learning—traditional classrooms, distance education, program partnerships with business and industry, attending more than one college to accelerate or enhance a program—and then evaluates what works, Wyoming stands to expand access to postsecondary education and truly elevate the education of its citizenry.

## Planning in a Time of Economic Scarcity

Recent Wyoming legislation, HEA 121, mandates the development of a strategic plan to create a statewide community college system to set priorities for state funding. The bill was conceived and written before the stock market collapse, however, when state surpluses were large and expectations high that state funding might increase to permit program expansion and capital construction. Unfortunately, the law is being implemented during proposed budget cuts, and state resources are limited.

It can be argued, however, that a time of economic scarcity increases the urgency to establish a comprehensive statewide community college system, one that introduces efficiencies and cost-saving measures and yet continues to preserve program excellence, serve all students effectively, and create the programs necessary to strengthen the state's economy.

## Taking Wyoming Community Colleges from Good to Great

This report offers a plan to establish a statewide community college system. It is ambitious but attainable. It underscores the importance of fostering communication between college leaders and the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC), the state's decision-making body. Although based on state interests, the plan incorporates the unique contributions of each college and recognizes the need to maintain its specific community focus.

We know that Wyoming's community colleges have been successful over the years, outperforming community colleges nationwide on a number of indicators, including graduation rates. When they complete their programs, Wyoming community college students are likely to find good jobs related to their field of study. We also know that Wyoming's economy has thrived on its extraction industries and enjoys the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. At the same time, Wyoming has not been immune to the recent economic downturn and remains vulnerable to the "boom and bust" cycle of energy needs. Limited resources now require a new approach to maintaining the state's high level of postsecondary education.

A statewide community college system is pivotal to this effort. This Wyoming Community College Strategic Plan provides the framework for developing such a system. It provides the foundation for operational planning in the form of policies that serve the state's interests, set goals, and define strategies for achieving the goals. The plan both differentiates individual colleges through their signature programs and integrates them by proposing common admissions and standard coursework. It calls for an efficient use of resources by eliminating unnecessary redundancies, while recommending incentives to the colleges for developing innovative new programs that serve the state's interests.

Critical to the plan's success is breaking down the barriers between the colleges and Wyoming Community College Commission. Therefore, the plan specifies clear criteria for program approval by the Commission and calls for adequate resources to fund those programs. Achieving an effective statewide community college system requires a long-term commitment from all constituents, including the Commission,

the colleges, the state, business and industry, and the public. With such commitment, an integrated system can elevate Wyoming community colleges from “Good to Great.”

## The Mission

The mission for the Wyoming system of community colleges represents the diverse services and opportunities 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.*

## The Strategic Plan Framework

A successful strategic plan is grounded in data and the meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in the process and its outcomes. This plan was conceived and rooted in data and information collected from the community college stakeholders and developed under the guidance of an Advisory Council representing multiple constituencies, including the colleges, legislators, the WCCC, business, and the public.

### ***State Interests and Strategic Objectives***

The plan is framed by five state interests and built on eight strategic objectives, each of which falls within one or more state interests. Exhibit 1 illustrates the link between state interests and objectives.

#### **State Interests**

- ***Educated citizenry:*** Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering 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.

### Strategic Objectives

1. Student access and success
2. Quality programs
3. Distance learning
4. Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities
5. Partnerships
6. Coordination and collaboration
7. Adequate resources
8. System of continuous improvement

### Exhibit 1. Strategic Objectives Support State Interests

<i>State Interests</i>	<i>Strategic Objectives</i>
Educated citizenry	Student access and success Quality programs Distance learning Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities
Diversified economy	Partnerships Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities
Workforce development	Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities Partnerships Student access and success
Efficient and effective systems	Coordination and collaboration Distance learning Quality programs Adequate resources
Accountability and improvement	Adequate resources System of continuous improvement

## The Details

The remainder of the report is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 describes the history and governance of the community colleges. It reviews the legislation and statutes leading to the current bill, HEA121, which mandates a strategic plan.

Chapter 2 profiles each of the seven community colleges and related outreach centers. Enrollment and completion data are analyzed, and there is a discussion of how community colleges benefit individuals and the public.

Chapter 3 examines economic and employment trends in Wyoming. It looks at future employment projections and identifies new, emerging industries that will require education and training from the community colleges.

Chapter 4 lays out the details of the strategic plan. Each Strategic Objective is discussed in terms of why it is important and how it will advance related state interests. The chapter includes recommended strategies and specific action steps for achieving the Strategic Objectives.

Chapter 5 outlines priorities for implementing the strategies and action steps detailed in the report.



# Chapter 1. History and Governance

## History

Wyoming's first community colleges were established shortly after World War II. Following passage of state legislation permitting the founding of community colleges in 1945, Casper College opened that same year. Three more colleges opened by 1948. In the following decade, three additional colleges opened their doors, with the newest, Laramie County Community College, opening in 1968. In the early years, the colleges focused on preparing students for transfer to a four-year college or university. Services expanded over time, and today each institution is a comprehensive community college, offering academic transfer, career and technical education (CTE), adult basic education, workforce training, and adult continuing education programs.

Each college has a home county district and, since the passage of the Secondary Education Omnibus Act in 1991, a service area encompassing from one to six counties. All seven community colleges have a main campus, and all but Casper College also maintain two or more outreach centers. Outreach centers generally include classroom space, faculty, and staff and provide both credit and noncredit instruction to more remote communities.

The Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) was established in 1951 as an advisory council of 14 members (Fechter 1997). Subsequent restructuring by the legislature, most recently in 1985, brought the Commission to its current composition of seven lay members and required representation from statutory appointment districts, which are different from college district and service areas. The seven commissioners are appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature for four-year terms, with a two-term limit. At least three but no more than four commissioners must reside in counties in which a community college is located, and no more than four can be from the same political party. The Commission has a staff of 14 employees to carry out its coordination and policy guidance work.

## Governance

Developing a system for Wyoming community colleges must take into account several features of the state: a small population dispersed over a large geographic area,

with considerable distances between communities, and well-established traditions of local control (Fechter 1997). The system must also integrate current college governance, which is shared by seven-member local boards of elected trustees that manage their districts, and the WCCC, which addresses issues relevant to the community college system as a whole. Since Wyoming's community colleges were established, there has been a gradual shift from exclusive reliance on local boards to a combination of local control and state oversight and responsibility for specific system-wide decisions and coordination efforts.

During the past three decades, two reports on the Commission and the community college system initiated changes in governance. In 1984, the Legislative Service Office conducted a review of the WCCC, and, in 1990, a private consulting firm conducted an independent management audit of the internal operation of the community colleges and the Commission (MGT of America 1990). Following the recommendations of these reports, the Legislature enacted statutory changes in 1985 and 1991 that increased the Commission's responsibilities and coordination role (Wyoming State Legislature's Management Audit Committee 1999).

A 1999 report, *Community College Governance*, analyzed long-standing issues regarding local and state control of the system. The report summarizes the decision-making authority held by local boards of trustees, including setting graduation requirements, conferring degrees and certificates, collecting tuition and fees, and prescribing and enforcing rules for their own governance. Boards also determine funding priorities, manage funds and facilities, and raise additional funds by issuing revenue bonds for construction and levying additional mills, with voter approval (Wyoming State Legislature's Management Audit Committee 1999).

### ***Community College Statutes***

The 1991 **Secondary Education Omnibus Act** defined service areas for six of the community colleges, with the intention of increasing access in rural areas. These service areas include counties outside the seven counties in which a community college is located. The colleges provide off-campus instruction to these counties, primarily through outreach centers and increasingly through distance education courses. Out-of-district counties are not represented on college boards of trustees and are not assessed mill levies to support community college operations.

The Act also funded a statewide computer network to create a management information system for the colleges and make it possible to compare data among schools. The Act further mandated the Commission to coordinate the creation of a

common course-numbering system for courses offered by the University of Wyoming and the community colleges.

### **House Enrolled Act 121 (formerly HB 114)**

In March 2009, the Wyoming Legislature passed House Enrolled Act 121, which invested the WCCC with responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a statewide strategic plan for the community college system (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). The Act specifies that decisions made by the Commission regarding new programs, termination of programs, and priorities for capital construction must be in accordance with the state interests defined by the plan. The Commission's annual reports are to indicate progress toward achieving strategic plan priorities and report on performance indicators specified by the strategic plan. The WCCC is required to review, update, and modify the strategic plan biennially.

The Act also placed new limits on special-purpose funding and required the WCCC to conduct an assessment of community college buildings and space requirements and develop a comprehensive plan to address long-term building needs.

### **Current Statutes**

Under current statutes (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009), the WCCC has authority to make decisions affecting several aspects of community college operations:

- **Instruction.** Approve and terminate instructional programs and provide oversight for program reviews carried out by the individual colleges.
- **Finances.** Prepare and approve an annual system-wide budget for submission to the governor and legislature, administer the funding formula, disburse state aid, and set tuition rates (with fees set by individual colleges).
- **Coordination.** Develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan specifying the state's interests. Devise and implement the common course-numbering system and manage legislated fiscal support for the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium.
- **Data and Accountability.** Establish and maintain a system-wide management information system. Establish reporting guidelines for projecting enrollment growth and developing plans for long-range district building needs. Establish and maintain a statewide community college building database and assessment of community college building needs. Prepare reports for state agencies, the governor, and the legislature.
- **Expansion.** Set priorities and recommend capital construction projects annually and approve the creation of new college districts.

### **Additional Agreements**

**The Wyoming Community College Articulation Agreement** was adopted in 2001 by the University of Wyoming and the community colleges. The agreement permits community college graduates to meet the university's lower-division general education requirements, without a course-by-course review, by completing the common general education core (a minimum of 30 credits) and an additional math course (University of Wyoming 2001). The transfer of credits to fulfill specific program of study requirements is determined on a course-by-course basis by the individual university departments, using the Wyoming Higher Education Transfer Guide. There is no limit on the number of credits transferred.

**The Wyoming Community College Commission Policy on Consultation**, adopted by the colleges and the WCCC in 2008, outlines procedures for college administrators to advise the Commission on the development of legislative requests, commission rules, and policy and practices. The stated purposes of the policy is to enhance the colleges' effectiveness, advise the WCCC in its statutory roles, improve communication and understanding between the Commission and the college districts, and create a structure for collaborative leadership to foster a sense of unity within the community college system (WCCC 2008c).

To meet these goals, the policy establishes four consultation councils (Academic Affairs Council, Student Services, Administrative Services, and Chief Information Officers) made up of community college officers and WCCC staff members. The four councils report to the executive council, consisting of the community college presidents and the executive director of the Commission. Two of the consultation committees, Academic Affairs and Student Services, are advised by a total of nine standing committees comprised of community college and WCCC staff. The standing committees are ABE/GED, admissions, financial aid, institutional research, library, marketing, registration, workforce training, and WyDEC (Wyoming Distance Education Consortium).

## Chapter 2. Community College Profiles

The community colleges collectively enroll the majority of undergraduates in Wyoming, accounting for over two-thirds of all undergraduate credit enrollments. In 2007–08, Wyoming’s community colleges served 24,108 part- and full-time credit students. About 9,500 undergraduates attended the University of Wyoming in Laramie, and two private institutions enroll a small number of students.

The largest college, Laramie County Community College, enrolled 5,701 (3,730 full-time equivalent or FTE<sup>1</sup>) students in 2007–08, and the smallest, Eastern Wyoming College, enrolled 1,663 students (1,041 FTE). Enrollments increased by just under 10 percent (FTE) and 12 percent (headcount) across all of the Wyoming community colleges from 1997–2007. Exhibit 2 includes the 10-year percent change in credit FTE enrollments in Wyoming community colleges. Laramie County Community College experienced the highest increase, growing by about 35 percent. FTE enrollments at four other colleges increase by about 4 to 9 percent, and decreased slightly at two colleges. During the same period, however, Northern Wyoming Community College District and Western Wyoming Community College experienced the highest increases in headcount enrollments, with increases of about 21 and 28 percent, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Headcount refers to the total number of individual part-time and full-time students enrolled. One full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment is equivalent to 12 credit hours per term.

**Exhibit 2. Enrollment in Wyoming Community Colleges, 2007–08\***

<b>Community College</b>	<b>1997–98 Annual enrollment (credit FTE)</b>	<b>2007–08 Annual enrollment (credit FTE)</b>	<b>10-year percent change in enrollment (credit FTE)</b>	<b>Percent female enrollment (credit headcount)</b>	<b>Percent full-time attendance (credit FTE)</b>	<b>Percent enrolled in academic/occupational programs**</b>
Casper College	3,327	3,455	+3.8%	60%	66%	39%/23%
Central Wyoming College	1,332	1,441	+9.0%	62%	61%	36%/24%
Eastern Wyoming College	987	1,041	+5.5%	62%	67%	24%/16%
Laramie County Community College	2,759	3,730	+35.2%	59%	62%	34%/23%
Northwest College	1,812	1,777	-2.0%	63%	83%	70%/26%
Northern Wyoming Community College District	1,958	1,953	-.03%	46%	62%	23%/38%
Western Wyoming Community College	1,947	2,054	+5.5%	45%	60%	33%/12%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>15,450</b>	<b>14,113</b>	<b>+9.5%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>35%/23%</b>

\*Enrollment counts and percentages include on-campus, distance education, auditing, compressed video, and telecourse students.  
 \*\*Percentages do not total 100 because undecided students are not included.  
 SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission. (2008). *Wyoming Community College System 2007–2008 Annual Enrollment Report*. Cheyenne, WY: Author.

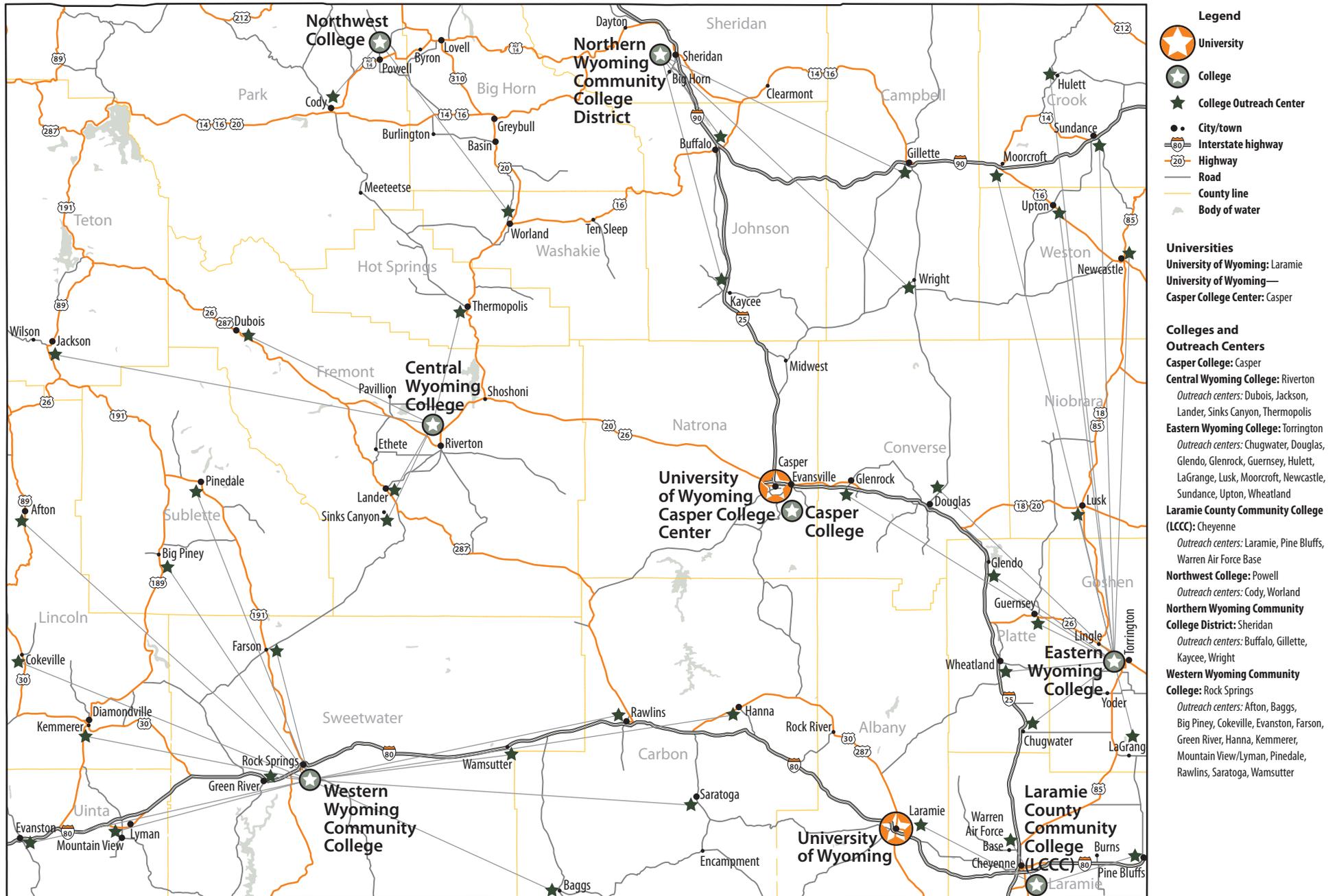
Women are the majority of students at the community colleges, with the exceptions of Northern Wyoming Community College District and Western Wyoming Community College. In terms of enrollment in academic and occupational programs, Northwest College has the highest proportion of students enrolled in academic programs, about 70 percent of enrollments, as well as the highest proportion of students attending full-time (83 percent). Of all the colleges, Northern Wyoming Community College District has the highest proportion of students in occupational program (38 percent) and 23 percent in academic programs.

## Community College Profiles

Each of Wyoming’s community colleges provides comprehensive services, including academic degree and transfer programs, career and technical education, adult basic education programs (including GED and English as a Second Language), short-term workforce training, and continuing education. While every college offers elements of all these program areas, the institutions also deliver unique programs and services to their individual communities. Geography, economy, population, and educational attainment in local regions affect how the colleges operate and where they choose to

target their particular services. The following section provides a short overview of each college and highlights a few of the features that make each one unique. Refer to Exhibit 3 for a map of Wyoming's community colleges and outreach centers.

# Exhibit 3. Wyoming's Community Colleges and Outreach Centers



### ***Casper College (founded 1945)***

Casper College's mission focuses on student success and providing educational opportunities to improve the quality of life, sustainable community building, and citizenship. Its current goals focus on, among other areas, improving retention, graduation, and student success rates; recruiting, retaining, and developing highly qualified personnel; increasing diversity; maintaining a safe environment; maintaining and improving college facilities and equipment; enhancing the use of current pedagogies and technologies; encouraging excellence in advising and support services; strengthening the role of the college as the cultural center of the region and as a resource for social, civic, and economic improvement (Casper College n.d.).

Casper College has a strong vision for its institutional planning and approved a Campus Master Plan in 2006 that guides fundraising and construction to support emerging programming needs (Casper College n.d.). Its sophisticated performing arts centers serve as a hub for the broader community, offering well-attended high-quality music, drama, dance, and other performing arts productions. The college's Tate Geological Museum serves the whole state through its facilities, resources, and outreach. The Casper College Western History Center maintains a collection of materials on Wyoming and the West, with a particular focus on Casper and Natrona County.<sup>2</sup>

About 6.5 percent of service area residents take classes for credit, compared with a national average of about 4 percent (Casper College n.d.). Many college instructors hold Ph.D.s, have extensive experience in their field, and dedicate their time to this one campus rather than serving as adjunct professors.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Central Wyoming College (founded 1966)***

Central Wyoming College (CWC) serves a diverse population at its main Riverton campus and five outreach centers. The college's service area covers more than 15,000 square miles. Nearly 14 percent of the students are Native American, living on or near the Wind River Reservation that surrounds CWC (WCCC 2008d). In the fall of 2010, the college will open its Intertribal Education and Community Center, which will coordinate services offered to the two Native American tribes located near the college and educate the community about tribal heritage and customs. The

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<sup>2</sup> From information provided in campus interviews and focus groups during a site visit to Casper College (April 14, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> From information provided in campus interviews and focus groups during a site visit to Casper College (April 14, 2009).

Intertribal Center is a partnership among CWC, many local and state stakeholders, and the University of Wyoming. The Center will house some CWC academic programs, outreach space for the University of Wyoming, and space for students and the community to come together (University of Wyoming Foundation 2008).

CWC's Strategic Plan focuses on key issues facing the college that are "timely and urgent and on which the college must make decisions about a particular direction the college must take" (p. 2). The Strategic Plan is founded on CWC's mission: "to enhance the quality of life through innovation and excellence in education." CWC identified four strategic priorities for its 2008–09 plan, including learning/collegiate engagement, growth/enrollment management, facilities, and community engagement (Central Wyoming College 2008).

### ***Eastern Wyoming College (founded 1948)***

"Choose your path" is the invitation issued by Eastern Wyoming College to its prospective students (Eastern Wyoming College n.d.). That path may lead, for example, to a veterinary technology program or an honors program in interdisciplinary studies. The college also offers programs in cosmetology and welding leading to associate in applied science degrees and industry certificates. Unique in the state, the welding program boasts a Mobile Welding Lab that can provide instruction for a company anywhere in the state and increase the productivity and skills of workers in the welding and joining field. The college's strong program in criminal justice responds to the needs of three correctional facilities in the area. Three of Eastern's programs offer online degrees, and because of its large service area (six counties) and the distances involved, the college also supports many distance learning courses.

The mission of Eastern Wyoming College—to be a "...a student-centered, comprehensive community college that responds to the educational, cultural, social, and economic needs of its communities with quality, affordable educational opportunities for dynamic lifelong learning" is reflected in its range of offerings and commitment to a friendly, supportive, small-school atmosphere that allows students to thrive and build self-confidence (Eastern Wyoming College 2008b). The college's efforts at continuous improvement are evident in the strategic planning process initiated in January 2008. Focus group meetings involved students, employees, administrators, community members, and Board of Trustees and Foundation members in opportunities to "dream and discover." Through this process, the college identified five strategic directions: (1) preparation for changing and dynamic times; (2) promotion of quality, accessible learning experiences aligned with current and future opportunities; (3) investment in technology; (4) enhancement of quality of life

for those in the region; and (5) extension of global reach (Eastern Wyoming College 2008b).

### ***Laramie County Community College (founded 1968)***

Laramie County Community College (LCCC) was founded in 1968 “to help fill the need for academic, technical and community service/continuing education in the county” (Laramie County Community College 2008, p.1). Today, LCCC services are offered at its main Cheyenne campus and two outreach campuses, which serve more than 5,000 students annually and offer more than 90 educational programs. The main campus is located near both the Colorado and Nebraska borders and attracts students from throughout the state and region. LCCC is governed by a dedicated seven-member board, with one member who has served as a trustee since the college’s inception.

LCCC has a thriving workforce training system, serving many local business and industries. The college’s new wind energy program is one of only a few such programs in the nation and is a recognized leader in wind energy technology and teaching.

According to its mission, “Laramie County Community College is a dynamic learning center that promotes social and economic prosperity for the individual and the community” (Laramie County Community College 2007). At the time of this publication, LCCC is in the process of developing its 2009–2012 Strategic Plan, which is founded on the college’s mission as well as the core values identified by the college community as a whole. Those core values include educational excellence, integrity, respect, and community (Laramie County Community College 2007).

### ***Northern Wyoming Community College District (founded 1948)***

In addition to academic and vocational programs, Sheridan College, the main campus of the Northern Wyoming Community District (NWCCD), is known for its arts and cultural programs. The campus hosts the Big West Arts Festival each summer, and a Big West Cultural Learning Center is planned for the future. Sheridan College is also home to the Wyoming Culinary Institute, which includes a popular restaurant. The district also has established transfer agreements for distance learning with several universities, allowing students to earn master’s and even doctoral degrees through the college.

NWCCD has the largest outreach center in the state in Gillette, Gillette College, which has expanded rapidly in the last decade to meet the needs of fast-growing Campbell County. Community and local business support have been vital

components of the college's growth. The main Gillette college building opened in 2003, and a Technical Education Center and new student housing are currently under construction. Another outreach center is located in Johnson County.

NWCCD is guided by six strategies based on the unique strengths of the college and the region. These strategies emphasize a commitment to increase diversity and contribute to the cultural life of the region; bring baccalaureate opportunities to the region through transfer programs; involve faculty as institutional leaders; provide workforce development for local industry and businesses; encourage student engagement and support learners to set and reach personal goals; and promote continuous quality improvement (Northern Wyoming Community College District n.d.).

### ***Northwest College (founded 1946)***

Northwest College, located in the city of Powell in the northwest corner of Wyoming, was originally established as a branch of the University of Wyoming in 1946. In 1950, the college became an independent institution. The college now serves nearly 2,000 students annually through its main campus and four outreach centers.

The college's mission states: "Through exceptional, dynamic living and learning environments, Northwest College dedicates itself to individual student achievement, diversity, global citizenship, and community vitality" (Northwest College 2009). The college's vision reflects a similar commitment to a vibrant learning community and student achievement: "Through a superior teaching, learning, and living environment, Northwest College will be a dynamic and distinguished educational leader that shapes a positive future for students and the many communities it serves" (Northwest College 2009). Northwest College's strategic plan currently identifies several strategic priorities: student access, student achievement, institutional vitality, communication and image, partnerships, and support.

While strongly emphasizing the comprehensive nature of its offerings, Northwest is known for several exceptional programs, including photography, music, biology, communications, journalism, and equine studies. Through its anthropology department and other initiatives, the college has developed a strong international student exchange program, allowing Northwest students to study abroad and foreign students to come to Powell.

### ***Western Wyoming Community College (founded 1959)***

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC), located in the high desert of southwest Wyoming, has the largest service area, encompassing just under 30,000 square miles, of all the community colleges. The college supports more than a dozen outreach centers and offers an extensive distance education program. In addition to strong academic and transfer programs, the college is well known for its state-of-the-art technology and industry programs. Many of these programs were developed with the support of local mining and gas and oil companies, and they include a training well site and diesel engine repair shop located on campus.

Other program highlights include a popular musical theatre program that produces several productions each year and archeological and geological research programs with research projects in the surrounding area. The campus is known for its natural history museum and fossil displays, which attract visitors from the local schools and community.

WWCC is currently revising its strategic plan. The college has established five guiding principles linked to a set of goals and objectives for its work (Western Wyoming Community College 2008). These principles are:

- Learning is our purpose.
- Students are our focus.
- Employees are our most important resource.
- The community is our partner.
- Adapting to change defines our future.
- Ethical standards guide our actions.

## **Tuition and Fees at Wyoming Community Colleges**

For the 2006–07 academic year, the most recent year for which comparison data are available, full-time tuition and fees averaged \$1,836 at Wyoming community colleges and \$2,272 nationally (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education 2006). In 2008–09, tuition at all of the colleges was \$780 per semester for residents and \$2,340 for nonresidents for full-time attendance (12 to 20 credit hours), or \$65 for Wyoming residents and \$195 for nonresidents per credit-hour. Although tuition costs are set by the WCCC and are the same at all colleges, fees are set by the colleges and vary (exhibit 4). Eastern Wyoming College does not charge any fees. Laramie County Community College has the highest fees, charging \$324 per semester for full-time students and \$27 per credit-hour. Fees for residents and

nonresidents are identical, with the exception of Western Wyoming Community College, which has higher fees for nonresidents.

**Exhibit 4. Tuition and Fees at Wyoming Community Colleges, 2009-10**

College	Fees				Tuition + Fees			
	Credit hour		Full-time per semester		Credit hour		Full-time per semester	
	WY resi- dents	Non- resi- dents	WY resi- dents	Non- resi- dents	WY resi- dents	Non- resi- dents	WY resi- dents	Non- resi- dents
Casper College	\$8	\$8	\$96	\$96	\$73	\$203	\$876	\$2,436
Central Wyoming College	\$21	\$21	\$252	\$252	\$86	\$216	\$1,032	\$2,592
Eastern Wyoming College	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65	\$195	\$780	\$2,340
Laramie County Community College	\$27	\$27	\$324	\$324	\$92	\$222	\$1,104	\$2,664
Northwest College*	\$21	\$21	\$294	\$294	\$89	\$216	\$1,110	\$2,634
Northern Wyoming Community College (Johnson County)	\$14	\$14	\$168	\$168	\$79	\$209	\$948	\$2,508
Northern Wyoming Community College (Sheridan and Campbell Counties)	\$22	\$22	\$264	\$264	\$87	\$217	\$1,044	\$2,604
Western Wyoming Community College	\$19	\$25	\$217	\$289	\$84	\$220	\$997	\$2,629

\* Data are for the 2009-10 school year, and reflect a tuition rate of \$816 per semester for full-time attendance, and \$68 per credit hours.

NOTE: Tuition rates for nonresidents did not change between 2008-09 and 2009-10.

SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Websites: Retrieved May 31, 2009, from

<http://www.commission.wcc.edu/colleges.asp>

[http://www.caspercollege.edu/business\\_office/tuition\\_fees\\_refunds\\_withdrawal\\_info.html](http://www.caspercollege.edu/business_office/tuition_fees_refunds_withdrawal_info.html)

<http://www.cwc.edu/Student-Services/Financial-Aid/Tuition-and-Costs.htm>

<http://www.ewc.wy.edu/future/tuition.cfm>

<http://www.lccc.wy.edu/Index.aspx?page=820>

<http://www.northwestcollege.edu/admissions/expenses/>

<http://www.sheridan.edu/offices/admissions/cost.asp>

<http://www.wycc.edu/registrationandrecords/costs.htm>

## Community Colleges Benefit Individuals and the Public

Higher education leads to significant benefits for those who invest the time and resources to pursue it. Studies have demonstrated wage increases of 20 to 30 percent for those holding associate's degrees compared with those with a high school diploma. Both men and women and all racial/ethnic groups see higher earnings as a result of postsecondary education (Boswell and Wilson 2004).

An economic impact study done for Casper College found that a person with an associate's degree had an average annual income 38 percent higher than if he or she did not attend college. Even those holding a one-year certificate earn, on average, 17 percent more annually than do high school graduates (Robison and Christophersen 2008). A study done for Oklahoma's 14 community college districts found that the more education completed, the higher the earnings. Compared with high school graduates, those with a one-year certificate earned \$3,485 more per year, and those with a two-year associate's degree earned \$4,441 more per year (Robison and Christophersen 2003). Similarly, a study for Iowa's community colleges found that, compared with high school graduates, those holding a one-year certificate earned \$5,300 more per year, and those with a two-year associate's degree earned \$7,100 more per year (Siegelman and Otto 2003). Those with college degrees also are more likely to receive employer-provided health insurance and pension benefits and to be in better health (Baum and Ma 2007).

These gains for individuals also benefit the state as a whole. Those with higher levels of education are less likely to rely on public assistance programs or to live in poverty, and they have lower smoking rates and healthier lifestyles in general (Baum and Ma 2007). The state saves money on social services when fewer people need them. Oregon saves \$39 million (Robison and Christophersen 2006) and Washington saves \$168 million (Robison and Christophersen 2003) in costs for welfare, unemployment, crime, and healthcare for each year that college-educated employees are in the workforce. Oregon taxpayers see a return of 19 percent on their annual investments in community colleges (Robison and Christophersen 2006), and Washington taxpayers, a 19.6 percent return (Robison and Christophersen 2003). The economic impact study completed for Casper College found that taxpayers receive a 9 percent rate of return on their annual investment and that the college contributed \$24 million to the county's economy (Robison and Christophersen 2008).

Beyond these economic benefits, the state gains in other ways. Individuals with more education have higher levels of civic participation, such as voting, volunteering, or giving blood. They are more likely to be open to the opinions of others. Communities benefit from the significant number of jobs offered by the community colleges, as well as their numerous cultural and educational events.

## A Performance Snapshot of Wyoming Community Colleges

Wyoming community colleges offer students a high-quality education, and both they and the state reap the associated rewards. According to a 2006–07 annual

performance report by the WCCC (2008b), Wyoming community college transfer students and graduates responding to a survey were satisfied with their experiences at the colleges. Eighty-five percent of transfer students and 89 percent of graduates indicated that they had met their educational goals. Ninety-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that their colleges prepared them well for study at a four-year institution, and 88 percent of graduates felt they were well prepared for full-time work in their chosen career. More than 95 percent of respondents reported satisfaction with the accessibility of instructors, class size, challenging coursework, and college facilities. From 80–90 percent were mostly satisfied with the availability, scheduling, and variety of courses, computer labs, and their overall academic experience.

Perhaps more importantly, Wyoming is doing well on common success indicators for community colleges, such as rates of enrollment, persistence, transfer, and completion. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during the fall 2005 semester, 4.6 percent of the state’s population age 14 or older enrolled in credit courses at the community colleges, compared with the national average of 2.6 percent. For student cohorts starting in 2001 through 2006, more than half of first-time, full-time students starting in the fall of one year were still enrolled the next fall. These persistence rates, which ranged from 53–57 percent, reflect the fact that some students arrive at the colleges intending to stay only one semester to update work skills or take enrichment courses. The national average rate is slightly lower. For the 2003–04 cohort, Wyoming’s persistence rate was 54 percent, compared with the national average of 51 percent.<sup>4</sup> Average scores in Wyoming were slightly above the national average in writing, mathematics, reading, critical thinking, and scientific reasoning skills on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency tests,<sup>5</sup> demonstrating the state’s success in teaching general skills to students.

Rates for those completing an associate’s degree within three years increased in past years and compare favorably to national averages. Wyoming rates increased from 24 percent to 32 percent from spring 2000 through spring 2006. These data are based on students in their first semester of college after high school graduation or obtaining a GED who enrolled in programs offering a degree or certificate and who had completed 12 credit hours or more. Some students intend to transfer to four-year

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<sup>4</sup> National data calculated by MPR Associates are drawn from the NCES 2006 Beginning Postsecondary Students Study data.

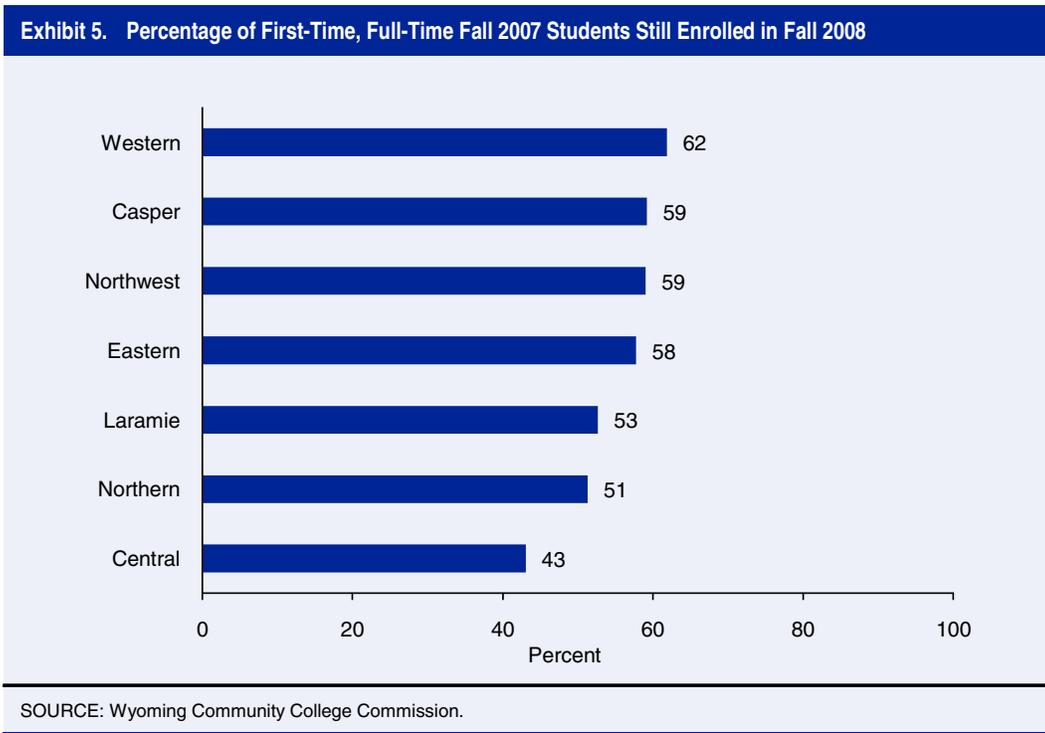
<sup>5</sup> The Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency is typically administered at the end of the sophomore year to assess *academic* achievement in general education.

institutions before receiving a degree, and it has been suggested that some indicate a false intention to receive a degree so that they can qualify for financial aid.

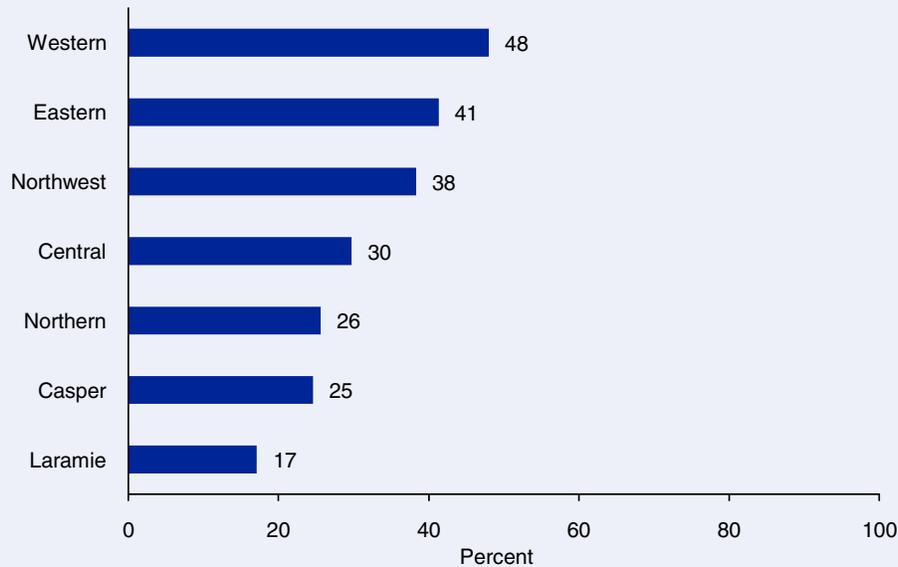
Comparing the 2003–04 Wyoming cohort of students with the national average, 32 percent and 23 percent, respectively, of first-time, full-time community college students with intentions to attain a degree had done so three years later.<sup>6</sup>

Wyoming’s own data show that persistence rates, by college, for first-time, full-time students from fall 2007 to fall 2008 ranged from 43 to 62 percent (exhibit 5).

According to data collected by the WCCC, degree and certificate completion rates for first-time, full-time students within three years of enrollment ranged from 17 to 48 percent (exhibit 6).



<sup>6</sup> National data calculated by MPR Associates are drawn from the NCES 2006 Beginning Postsecondary Students Study data.

**Exhibit 6. Percentage of First-Time, Full-Time Degree- or Certificate-Seeking Students Who Have Graduated Within Three Years: 2007–08**

SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission.

Although completion rates look promising, the number of students transferring to the University of Wyoming from the community colleges decreased from 808 to 678 from 2002–03 to 2006–07 (WCCC 2008b), even though enrollment increased 11 percent during that time (WCCC n.d.-c).

Although rates of persistence and completion may appear low, the community college student population is quite diverse in age and income, with many holding a job or raising a family while attending school. Levels of academic preparedness also vary, presenting challenges for some students attempting to complete community college programs. And, finally, not all students attending community colleges intend to continue or receive degrees. Many come for personal enrichment, to gain specific skills, or to improve their employment prospects.

### The Education Pipeline

Researchers and educators often examine state data in terms of an education “pipeline”—tracking how many 9th-grade students eventually graduate from high school, enter college directly, and proceed to obtain a degree within a certain period of time. In Wyoming, for every 100 9th-graders, 75 graduate from high school. Of the 43 directly entering college, 27 enter a public two-year college. By the time they start their second year of college, 19 of those students are still enrolled, and, after three years, 16 have graduated. While Wyoming does better than the national average on all of these indicators, it does not do as well as some other western states, such as Nebraska and South Dakota.

**Exhibit 7. Pipeline of Students Entering 9th Grade and Graduating from Community College, Comparing Wyoming with the United States and Other Western States**

	For every 100 9th-graders...	Number who graduate from high school four years later	Number who directly enter college	Number who enter a two-year college	Number of freshman at two-year college returning their sophomore year	Number who graduate from two-year colleges after three years
<b>United States</b>	<b>100</b>	68.6	42.3	15.3	8.2	4.5
<b>Wyoming</b>	<b>100</b>	74.6	43.2	26.8	18.6	15.8
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>100</b>	70.4	44.3	11.4	5.8	4.4
<b>Idaho</b>	<b>100</b>	78.7	36.0	7.2	3.8	2.2
<b>Montana</b>	<b>100</b>	79.3	46.1	11.1	5.5	3.2
<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>100</b>	82.2	53.1	15.8	8.5	5.2
<b>South Dakota</b>	<b>100</b>	82.0	58.9	15.4	10.4	9.6
<b>Utah</b>	<b>100</b>	78.9	37.2	10.7	5.7	4.4
(sources/ calculations)		CCD 2005-06	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006

NOTE: CCD indicates these data are National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Common Core of Data, and IPEDS indicates these data are from NCES's 2006 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Residency and Migration, Fall Enrollment, and Graduation Rate Surveys.

SOURCE: MPR Associates calculations, using National Center for Higher Education Management System Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis Pipeline data.

Students completing Wyoming community college programs appear to do well in both work and further education. Those who transfer to the University of Wyoming from the community colleges do as well as those who transferred from other institutions or started at the University. According to 2004–05 System Graduate Surveys, within six months to one year after graduating from community college with a degree or certificate, 83 percent of graduates were employed either full or part time. Almost 90 percent said their jobs were related to their majors. Employers rated graduates' work skills 8.4 and work habits 8.5 on a scale of 1 to 10, with the highest indicating "very satisfied." Of those taking exams for certification in healthcare, cosmetology, veterinary services, and horsemanship, certification pass rates ranged from 83–100 percent from 2003–04 through 2006–07 (WCCC 2008b).

Another report found that one year after graduation, among 2002–03 graduates employed after leaving community college, 85 percent were working in Wyoming, indicating that the state was benefiting from its investment in these students. Graduates who were working had jobs in all industry sectors, with most working in healthcare (21 percent), retail trade (13 percent), educational services (12 percent), and leisure and hospitality (9 percent). Five percent held jobs in natural resources and mining, one of the state's most robust industries. Graduates working in healthcare were earning the highest average hourly wages (Wyoming Department of Employment 2006).

# Chapter 3. Population and Economic Trends in Wyoming

As students choose their community college programs and as the colleges decide which programs to offer, the state's population trends and economic needs are a significant factor. How will population trends affect the goods and services needed in the state? Which industries are currently expanding or being developed to meet state needs? Which industries will need more workers in the coming years? Where will graduates find promising jobs and careers once they have finished their college programs? Which programs should colleges offer to prepare both their students and industry for those changes?

## A Small and Aging Population

With 515,004 residents in 2006, the state's population is smaller than many small cities, such as Colorado Springs. Wyoming's population is projected to increase by .9 percent or approximately 4,500 per year. Since 2001, more people have moved to Wyoming than out of it as the state's economy has grown (Liu 2007).

The state's population, however, is rapidly aging, with a substantial segment of its skilled workforce set to retire soon (exhibit 8). Wyoming's population is likely to be one of the oldest populations in the country in the future for various reasons. It has one of the highest proportions of early baby boomers in the United States, as well as many young adults (ages 25–39) who leave the state to experience living elsewhere or for employment opportunities. Compared with other states, Wyoming has a small immigrant population. In other states, immigrants are a growing young adult population, since they are typically workers or students coming to the United States without their parents. As for younger populations, the Generation X population (ages 27–43) is relatively small, as many left as young adults in the 1980s and 1990s. K–12 enrollment was 16 percent smaller in 2005 than in 1994 (Liu 2007).

The state's aging population likely will require different goods and services than currently offered—particularly healthcare services. This also means that the state will see a diminishing labor supply (Liu 2007).

**Exhibit 8. Current Estimates and Projections for Population by Age for Wyoming and the United States, 2006 (Estimates), 2011 (Projections), and 2016 (Projections)**

Age Range	Percentage of population represented by each age group					
	2006 Estimates		2011 (projections)		2016 (projections)	
	Wyoming	U.S.	Wyoming	U.S.	Wyoming	U.S.
0–17	23.8	24.7	22.2	24.0	21.8	23.9
18–24	10.4	9.7	8.5	9.8	7.4	9.1
25–64	53.6	53.1	55.0	53.0	53.4	52.1
65+	12.3	12.5	14.3	13.2	17.5	14.8

SOURCE: Retrieved May 31, 2009, from [http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/FactBook/tables/tbl\\_1.pdf](http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/FactBook/tables/tbl_1.pdf).

## A Strong but Changing Economy

Wyoming has enjoyed a strong economy over the past decade. From 2005 to 2007, growth was the strongest it had been in more than a decade (Wen 2009). The state had a booming mineral extractions industry throughout the last decade, and associated businesses, such as construction, also have thrived. Thousands of businesses have opened in past years.

Even in the national economic downturn, Wyoming is generally well situated compared with other states, with the lowest unemployment rate of all 50 states—4.8 percent in January 2009 (Bullard 2009b). No state, however, is immune to economic fluctuations. Wyoming's unemployment rose by approximately 1 percent from January 2008 to January 2009, affecting every county (Cowan 2009), and the state's job growth rate declined from 2006 to 2009 (Bullard 2009b).

Across the country, economic changes are affecting many areas—with large and decades-old companies restructuring or dissolving in various sectors. Continuing to diversify Wyoming's economy will help protect against unanticipated changes or the hazards of boom-and-bust cycles. As of March 2009, Wyoming employed 289,600 people (not including agriculture). Six industries employed 73 percent of the total: government, leisure and hospitality, retail trade, natural resources and mining, education and health services, and construction (Wyoming Department of Employment 2009b).

Wyoming's community colleges have offered hundreds of degrees and certificates in those areas (WCCC n.d.-a), but keeping pace with new industries and technologies takes constant monitoring, since many factors affect whether or not certain industries will grow. For example, in 2006 and 2007, approximately 2,300 new Wyoming

firms opened each year, the largest proportion of which was related to construction for oil and gas pipelines. In 2007, however, new firms related to mining decreased after years of steady growth. Both jobs and wages in mining declined—all potentially related to the slowdown in gas and oil drilling resulting from lack of space in the pipelines, environmental restrictions, and permit issues (Bullard 2009a). Price changes for oil and gas and the development of new energy technologies also may affect the mining industry.

Long-term employment projections (exhibit 9) predict at least 3 percent growth from 2006–16 in professional and business services, construction, and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. With Wyoming’s aging population, employment in healthcare fields also is predicted to increase significantly in the future. By 2015, the number of people age 65 and older in the state is projected to be more than double that of those ages 18–24 (Wyoming Department of Employment, Research and Planning 2009a). And a well-documented nursing shortage continues. The net growth in demand for registered nurses is projected to be 29.2 percent (1,278 jobs) from 2006 to 2016. Jobs for nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants, positions requiring postsecondary vocational training, are also projected to increase by 22 percent during that period.

Though each region of the state currently focuses on different industries, such as mining, agriculture, or tourism, all may see changes affecting future jobs. For example, the new supercomputer facility at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Cheyenne may draw other new businesses or talent. Changes in how natural resources are used also may present new opportunities. The potential for a new regional center focused on wind energy in Laramie, or a coal gasification plant in central Wyoming, may bring new jobs and expertise. As the state, workforce development offices, and community colleges monitor and anticipate these developments, their responses to changes can benefit both students and industry.

**Exhibit 9. Wyoming Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections, 2006–16**

<b>Industry title</b>	<b>Actual employment 2006</b>	<b>Projected employment 2016</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Rate of change</b>
Natural Resources & Mining	28,737	35,794	7,057	2.2%
Construction	24,011	32,433	8,422	3.1%
Manufacturing	10,126	11,042	916	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	8,292	10,366	2,074	2.3%
Retail Trade	30,999	34,545	3,546	1.1%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	11,174	14,988	3,814	3.0%
Information	4,711	5,021	310	0.6%
Financial Activities	11,192	13,788	2,596	2.1%
Professional & Business Services	17,449	24,837	7,388	3.6%
Educational Services	25,079	28,926	3,847	1.4%
Health Care & Social Assistance	28,971	36,800	7,829	2.4%
Arts & Entertainment	3,917	4,808	891	2.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	30,043	35,560	5,517	1.7%
Other Services	8,556	10,288	1,732	1.9%
Government (Including Postal Service)	23,603	25,256	1,653	0.7%
<b>Total — All Industries</b>	<b>266,860</b>	<b>324,452</b>	<b>57,592</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

SOURCE: Adapted from Bullard, D., and Leonard, D.W. (2008, April) *Wyoming Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections 2006–2016*. Retrieved November 25, 2008, from [http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/t\\_ind\\_rollups\\_06\\_16.pdf](http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/t_ind_rollups_06_16.pdf)

# Chapter 4. A Strategic Plan for Wyoming's Community Colleges

This strategic plan has two purposes: it provides a structure for decision making and investment within the community college system, and it recommends short- and long-term initiatives intended to improve Wyoming's community college system. The report also outlines priorities for the recommendations included here, providing a structure for the WCCC, the colleges, and their partners to implement recommendations over time, as resources allow.

## State Interests

The plan identifies five primary state interests that will drive investment in community college programs and services (exhibit 10). These interests focus on what colleges can do to promote state goals, what structures and supports are needed to help Wyoming community colleges improve their services, and, most importantly, what Wyoming residents need to achieve their potential as productive, educated citizens.

The state interests were developed at the direction of the Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming (2009). The Legislature charged the WCCC with “establishing a statewide college system” that aligns with the state's interests, ensures access to educational programs, and responds to the needs of students, employers, and the state's workforce (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009, Section 21-18-202). Section 4 of the legislation specifies that the state's interests must be “identified and incorporated” in the statewide strategic plan (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009).

Researchers synthesized information obtained through a review of relevant reports and literature, interviews with stakeholders, and recommendations from the Advisory Council. These state interests are statewide priorities that can be directly affected by the education and training services offered through the community colleges. Each state interest outlines what the community college system intends to do, as well as how, in a global way, the system will address that intent.

**Exhibit 10. State Interests**



The state interests address the multiple roles community colleges play in Wyoming: educators, economic drivers, community builders, and responsible stewards of public funds.

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

Along with other state educational agencies, the seven community colleges contribute to increasing the educational attainment of Wyoming residents. In 2007, more than 90 percent of state residents over 25 years of age had earned a high school diploma and nearly 58 percent had some college or earned an associate's degree. Those statistics are higher than the national proportions of 84 percent holding a high school diploma and 54 percent with some college or an associate's degree. Wyoming does not fare as well, however, with respect to those holding a bachelor's or higher degree: only 23 percent of adults age 25 and

older hold a bachelor's or higher degree, compared with 27 percent nationally (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

Wyoming community colleges can assist the state in achieving higher rates of educational attainment by maintaining their strong adult basic education programs, which help lower skill adults acquire the numeracy and literacy skills needed in their lives and work; their workforce training programs, which help current workers gain specific skills needed for their jobs; and their academic and career technical education programs, which prepare students for further education and the workforce.

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

Community colleges can play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining new industries and business in their local communities and the state. Community colleges support local workforce training efforts and provide new employees access to further education and cultural events, even in very rural areas of the state.

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

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to local and statewide industries and employers when new opportunities arise. Each college has a system in place to provide short-term training for specific skill sets, as well as to introduce new certificate and degree programs to train students for new occupational and career opportunities.

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

Wyoming's colleges have operated very autonomously since their inception. Changes in the economy and advances in technology, however, are providing new incentives and opportunities for coordinating common administrative functions.

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

In recent years, Wyoming has made a strong financial commitment to the operational support of its community colleges. In return, legislators are

increasingly interested in understanding how the funds are being used, whether the greater investment has paid off in better student outcomes, and what they can expect from their investment in the future.

## Strategic Objectives

Each state interest is supported by one or more “strategic objectives.” The strategic objectives are goals the community college system will pursue in upcoming years and are designed to serve as the decision-making framework for public investment in community college education. The state interests provide guidance, but strategic objectives are specific goals and strategies the state can employ to improve the community college system and make decisions regarding issues such as program approval and capital construction. Exhibit 11 displays the multiple connections between state interests and strategic objectives. Exhibit 12 presents the strategies this report recommends to achieve each strategic objective.

**Exhibit 11. Strategic Objectives Support State Interests**

<i>State Interests</i>	<i>Strategic Objectives</i>
Educated citizenry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student access and success</li> <li>Quality programs</li> <li>Distance learning</li> <li>Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities</li> </ul>
Diversified economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships</li> <li>Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities</li> </ul>
Workforce development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities</li> <li>Partnerships</li> <li>Student access and success</li> </ul>
Efficient and effective systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordination and collaboration</li> <li>Distance learning</li> <li>Quality programs</li> <li>Adequate resources</li> </ul>
Accountability and improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate resources</li> <li>System of continuous improvement</li> </ul>

**Exhibit 12. Relationship Among State Interests and Strategic Objectives**

## State Interests and Strategic Objectives



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

## **Student Access and Success: Ensure student access to education and training programs and full support in achieving their educational and professional goals.**

As part of the effort to push Wyoming's community colleges from good to great, and in light of the aging of the population, the system should improve outreach and support to those traditionally underrepresented among the state's college-going population. Additionally, the community colleges must work as a system to improve articulation among the different education sectors and to break down barriers to students' success in achieving their academic and career goals.

### **Strategy 1.1. Increase need-based state aid to students.**

Wyoming's Hathaway Scholarship program offers recent high school graduates merit-based scholarships to continue their education. As summarized in exhibit 13, students with the requisite grades and test scores are eligible for state support. However, this program does not recognize the additional needs of students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or return to school later in life.

**Exhibit 13. Hathaway Merit Scholarships**

Career	Opportunity	Performance	Honors
<p><b>Students earning:</b> A minimum high school GPA of 2.5 or a minimum ACT score of 17 or a cumulative WorkKeys score of 12</p> <p><b>May receive:</b> Up to \$800/semester for up to 4 full-time semesters at a Wyoming community college. Students earning a certificate with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.25 or a degree may qualify for an additional 4 semesters of study at a community college.</p>	<p><b>Students earning:</b> A minimum high school GPA of 2.5 or a minimum ACT score of 19</p> <p><b>May receive:</b> Up to \$800/semester for up to 8 full-time semesters of study. The initial 4 semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or UW, but the last 4 semesters must be at UW.</p>	<p><b>Students earning:</b> A minimum high school GPA of 3.0 or a minimum ACT score of 21</p> <p><b>May receive:</b> Up to \$1,200/semester for up to 8 full-time semesters of study. The initial 4 semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or UW, but the last 4 semesters must be at UW.</p>	<p><b>Students earning:</b> A minimum high school GPA of 3.5 or a minimum ACT score of 25</p> <p><b>May receive:</b> Up to \$1,600/semester for up to 8 full-time semesters of study. The initial 4 semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or UW, but the last 4 semesters must be at UW.</p>

SOURCE: Wyoming Department of Education.

Data from NCES’s 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) reveal that Wyoming offers state grants to its undergraduate students at rates comparable to the average of all other states. When analyzed further, however, the data reveal that Wyoming offers need-based state grants at a much lower rate than the rest of the country and merit-only grants at a much higher rate (exhibit 14).

**Exhibit 14. State Grants, Wyoming Compared with the Rest of the Nation, 2008**

State of legal residence	Total state grants (%)	State need-based grants (%)	State merit-only grants (%)
Wyoming	16.2	1.8	15.6
All other states	16.5	11.3	4.4

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2008.

According to the *Measuring Up* report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2006), the cost of attending Wyoming's two- and four-year colleges for students from low- and middle-income families represents roughly one-third of their annual family income. At the time of that study, these families earned an average of \$21,262 annually. Given the relatively low investment Wyoming makes in need-based aid and the relatively high cost of attending postsecondary institutions in the state, a serious gap in public support may exist. The extent of this gap warrants further study, and, depending on the outcome of such a review, the state should take appropriate steps to improve student access to and success in its community colleges through financial assistance.

Such a study of student need should include the need-based Hathaway scholarship. This scholarship is intended to augment the merit scholarship by "providing additional assistance for students with unmet financial need," with determination of need made by individual financial aid offices at the community colleges and university (Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship Program n.d.). Unfortunately, scant data are available on the use of the need-based scholarship. An analysis of the current use of the Hathaway need-based scholarship, as well as an evaluation of eligibility for this aid, should be part of any study of need-based aid in Wyoming.

### **Action Steps**

- Assess eligibility for and use of the need-based component of the Hathaway Scholarship at each college.
- Assess the need for need-based aid among older, nontraditional students, regardless of full-time/part-time enrollment status, and target state aid to those students.
- Introduce a need-based state grant available to all Wyoming residents who attend a community college or the University of Wyoming and who are not getting aid from the Hathaway Scholarship or other sources.

## Strategy 1.2. Increase the participation of women in programs leading to employment in occupations meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.<sup>7</sup>

The wage disparity between men and women in Wyoming is the largest of any state in the country. According to the Wyoming Council for Women's Issues, the primary causes of the disparity include education, chosen occupations, and family (Alexander et al. 2003). It is in the state's interest to reduce this disparity, and the state's community colleges are vital to achieving such a goal. A multifaceted approach, including sparking girls' interest in science, math, and technology at early ages and attracting and training women in fields traditionally dominated by men, will help bring Wyoming's male and female workers closer to pay equity.

In 2003, researchers from the University of Wyoming published a ground-breaking report outlining the wage disparity between the sexes in Wyoming (Alexander et al. 2003; National Women's Law Center 2009). At the time, Wyoming's wage gap stood at 62.6 percent, meaning women earned, on average, 63 cents for every dollar earned by men in the state. This inequity has not improved in subsequent years. By comparison, the national average at the time of that report's publication was 77 percent and has also remained constant.

One response to this inequity has been to emphasize postsecondary education and training for Wyoming women. Specific recommendations in the University's report include encouraging women to pursue postsecondary education in marketable, nontraditional fields; motivating girls to pursue science and math in elementary and secondary grades; and supporting improved career planning for girls and women (Alexander et al. 2003). This strategic plan is consistent with those recommendations. The action steps recommended here address the problem of gender-based wage inequity in two ways: first, recruiting girls and women into courses of study that lead to nontraditional, sustainable-wage occupations, and second, beginning the process of identifying and addressing any root causes of inequity that may be addressed within the colleges.

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<sup>7</sup> Developed in 2005 by Dr. Diana Pearce for the Office of the Governor, Wyoming's Self-Sufficiency Standard "measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic needs – without public or private assistance" (Pearce 2005). This measure was developed in response to the inability of the federal poverty measure to capture the wide variation in the composition of modern households and their common expenses.

Given that women outnumber men among those enrolled in higher education in Wyoming, some question why more women are not participating in the high-wage occupations that require a bachelor's degree. The literature suggests that choice of a field of study plays an important role in explaining this phenomenon (Alexander et al. 2003; *Programs and Practices That Work* 2007). Men in Wyoming tend to work in high-wage fields such as mining, oil, construction, and transportation, while women often pursue careers in nursing and teaching, two occupations not nearly as well compensated. Even when compared against their peers in other states, nurses and teachers in Wyoming are poorly compensated, ranking 49th and 42nd, respectively. Wyoming elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions must encourage young women to consider some oft-overlooked fields, such as the sciences, math, and technology. Further, some suggest that "brain drain," the outmigration of educated citizens from the state, accounts for some part of the wage inequity, as women with degrees leave the state for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere (Caiazza and Shaw 2004; Alexander et al. 2003).

A review of promising practices for boosting female students' access to nontraditional career and technical education programs yielded some useful approaches that may work in Wyoming to foster greater participation by women in nontraditional career fields. At the level of the individual student, providing elementary and secondary students with hands-on opportunities to participate in the work of nontraditional occupations may spark girls' interest in subjects they typically do not pursue. Introducing girls to female role models working in nontraditional occupations would connect girls with professionals who can provide support and guidance. At the level of the educational institution and the broader community, creating an advisory board of area businesses that already hire or would like to hire nontraditional graduates would help link students and schools to tangible career opportunities in nontraditional fields. Business leaders may also get involved by inviting students not traditionally represented in the field to visit workplaces, job shadow, or intern to gain experience in a different professional arena (*Programs and Practices That Work* 2007).

This strategic plan recommends that the community colleges develop an institutional commitment to gender equity, beginning with an evaluation of gender-based pay inequity among employees of the community colleges. Measuring gender-based pay inequity, if it exists within the community colleges, is only a first step. This plan recommends that the colleges undertake a more comprehensive examination to determine what they may do differently, among students and staff, to mitigate any gender-based inequity. A recent report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education on the state of Ohio brought together several useful methods for measuring the root causes of inequity within schools, including surveys of

instructional providers and administrators, checklists for teachers and administrators to shed light on possible gender bias, and online tools to assist institutions in self-studies (Programs and Practices That Work 2007).

### **Action Steps**

- Introduce middle and high school outreach activities that expose young women to science, math, and technology early.
- Recruit female community college students, particularly those who are displaced homemakers or single parents, into nontraditional career fields through enhanced career counseling and marketing.
- Continually seek pay equity for women employed by the community colleges.

## **Strategy 1.3. Enable students to register easily at any community college in the state.**

The creation of a common entry point for students to register at any community college and the University of Wyoming would be a boon for the state's students and would likely reduce operating costs for the state. Because it is not uncommon for students to enroll at more than one postsecondary institution in Wyoming over the course of their academic careers, learning to navigate one registration Web tool rather than several would simplify the process. A recent report published by the University of Wyoming (UW) Outreach Center at Casper (Maggard 2008) explored the extent to which postsecondary students in the state “double dip” (simultaneously take courses at two or more institutions) and “swirl” (move back and forth between institutions). The author found that between the 2001–02 and 2005–06 academic years, 58 percent of degree-seeking and 56 percent of non-degree-seeking students at the University had swirled or double-dipped. The same report also found that, during the 2005–06 academic year, 39 percent of first-year UW students were double-dipping. Given how common it is for students to attend multiple institutions, whether simultaneously or in succession, a single online portal for all seven community colleges and the University would seem to provide students with access to the information and functionality they need to successfully navigate these different institutions. A common portal could also allow students to scan college offerings quickly and easily to determine which courses or programs offered at specific institutions interest them.

While creating such a portal may not be undertaken immediately, given fiscal constraints, some first steps could be taken now. The shell of the future common portal could be created immediately, including links to each college's Website, a

common application accepted by all seven institutions, and a list of each college's signature programs, with descriptions and links to additional information. This platform would serve students immediately as a single source for information about all seven colleges, as well as serving as the basis for a more sophisticated Web tool in the future.

To facilitate students' coursetaking freely throughout the community college system, colleges must complete the work of implementing common thresholds for the COMPASS<sup>8</sup> placement assessment. A newly published report by Jobs for the Future (Collins 2009) highlights the burgeoning trend of systemwide implementation of common placement scores and policies. The author of that report found that the process of setting common placement test cut scores had unexpected benefits beyond simply achieving consistency, including fostering fruitful collaborative discussions among K–12, two-year, and four-year postsecondary institutions around academic preparedness for the transition to college. Wyoming's community colleges have taken some steps to reconcile the cut scores used to place students in remedial reading, writing, and mathematics courses. But inconsistencies remain.

Exhibits 15–20 show the guidelines each college uses to place students in writing, reading, and math courses, based on their scores on the COMPASS assessment. For instance, a student who scores between zero and 19 on the COMPASS writing assessment at Central is placed in Adult Basic Education (ABE). While at Casper, a student who scores between zero and 42 is placed in English 0600.

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<sup>8</sup> The COMPASS assessments are a set of widely-used, computer-adaptive placement tests published by ACT that allow colleges to assess incoming students mathematics, reading and writing skills. All seven community colleges in Wyoming use this assessment.

**Exhibit 15. Writing COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

WRITING	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	Northwest	NWCCD	Western
ABE		0-19					
Engl 0600	0-42				0-46	0-58	
Engl 0610	43-74	20-46			47-74	59-74	
Engl 0620		47-74	0-19				0-38
Engl 0630			20-30	0-56			0-38
Engl 0640			31-74				
Engl 0950							0-38
Engl 0955							39-74
Engl 700/Other				57-74			
No Reading Improvement Required	75-100	75-100	75-100	75-100	75-100	75-100	75-100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

**Exhibit 16. Reading COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

READING	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	Northwest	NWCCD	Western
ABE		0-49			0-34		
Basic Reading I / Engl 0510	0-51	50-60	0-50	0-58	35-49	0-58	0-40
Basic Reading II / Engl 0520	52-74	61-70	51-67	59-74	50-75	59-74	41-70
No Reading Improvement Required	75-100	71-100	68-100	75-100	76-100	75-100	71-100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

Exhibits 15 and 16 show that cut scores for placement in college-level writing courses are not consistent across all colleges. Cut scores for placement in college-level reading courses are similar, though not completely consistent. The colleges should reconcile these scores across their campuses. When one looks to the other cut scores, beyond those that separate remedial and nonremedial students, one sees a great deal more variation.

**Exhibit 17. Pre-Algebra COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

<b>MATH: Pre-Algebra</b>	<b>Casper</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>LCCC</b>	<b>Northwest</b>	<b>NWCCD</b>	<b>Western</b>
ABE		0-22					
Math/DVST 0860			0-22				
Math 0500		23-44					
Math/DVST 0900	0-44		23-44	0-44	0-44		0-31
DVST 0510						0-44	
Tech 1000							32-44
Math 0924	30-44						
Math/DVST 0920, 0600, 1500, 1515	45-100	45-100	45-100	45-100	45-100	45-100	32-100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

**Exhibit 18. Algebra COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

<b>MATH: Algebra</b>	<b>Casper</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>LCCC</b>	<b>Northwest</b>	<b>NWCCD</b>	<b>Western</b>
Math 0600, 0920	0-39	0-39	0-39	0-39	0-39	0-39	0-39
Math 0934	28-39						
Math 1500		0-39				40-65	
Math 1515			0-65				
Math 0930, 0700, 1100, 1510	40-65	40-65	40-65	40-65	40-65	40-65	40-65
Math 1000	40-65	40-65	40-100			40-65	40-65
Math 1050					66-100		66-100
Math 1400	66-100	66-100	66-100	66-100	66-100	66-100	66-100
Math 1450	75-100		66-100		66-100	66-100	

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

**Exhibit 19. College Algebra COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

<b>MATH: College Algebra</b>	<b>Casper</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>LCCC</b>	<b>Northwest</b>	<b>NWCCD</b>	<b>Western</b>
Math 1000			0-64				
Math 1400, 1050	0-64	0-64	65-100	0-64		0-64	0-64
Math 1450	32-64		65-100			0-64	
Math 1405, 2350	65-100	65-100		65-100		65-100	65-100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

**Exhibit 20. Trigonometry COMPASS assessment cut scores for Wyoming community colleges**

<b>MATH: Trigonometry</b>	<b>Casper</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Eastern</b>	<b>LCCC</b>	<b>Northwest</b>	<b>Sheridan</b>	<b>Western</b>
Math 1405	0-60	0-60	0-60	0-60	0-60	0-60	0-60
Math 2350	0-60	0-60	0-60		0-60		0-60
Math 2200	61-100	61-100	61-100	61-100	61-100	61-100	61-100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

Among math courses, there are small, but nontrivial, inconsistencies. For instance, Western's pre-algebra cut score for placement in college-level courses is 32, while the rest of the colleges use 45. For college algebra, Eastern and Casper appear to place students differently based on COMPASS scores, as well.

Again, looking beyond the cut scores that determine whether students are placed in college-level or remedial courses to the scores that determine which remedial courses are appropriate, one sees a great deal more variation across campuses in all three subject areas. In those cases when students transfer from one community college to another, one can imagine how these differing placement scores might cause problems for students. For this reason, the colleges should reconcile student placement scores for remedial placement, to the extent practicable.

**Action Steps**

- Provide a common online enrollment portal for all community colleges.

- Adopt common placement thresholds for the reading, writing, and mathematics COMPASS assessments across all seven community colleges.

## **Strategy 1.4. Improve statewide articulation of courses among high schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.**

Easing the transition from one educational institution to another can help provide Wyoming citizens with the greatest possible access to higher education. Allowing high school students to take college-level courses, developing career and technical education pathways for students pursuing specific career interests after high school, and building articulation agreements among all community colleges and the University of Wyoming are crucial steps in expanding access and ultimately improving educational and professional attainment.

Several initial steps toward expanding cross-sector articulation should be undertaken right away. First, Wyoming’s strategic plan for career and technical education (CTE) includes a section devoted to articulation. That document recommends developing statewide articulation agreements between secondary career pathways and postsecondary programs of study (Hoachlander, Klein, and Studier 2007). This recommendation is still timely, and acting on it would be a huge step forward for the community colleges.

Second, while it would be ideal for all community college programs to articulate with relevant programs at the University of Wyoming, a good way to build on what already exists would be focusing on the development of statewide articulation agreements for those programs likely to lead to jobs in fields offering compensation meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.<sup>9</sup>

Some Wyoming high school students have had the opportunity to take college-level classes through concurrent enrollment agreements with the community colleges. Expanding access to concurrent enrollment opportunities, especially for students who traditionally do not seek postsecondary education, should be the next step. To this end, this plan recommends determining whether there are students who are

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<sup>9</sup> Developed in 2005 by Dr. Diana Pearce for the Office of the Governor, Wyoming’s Self-Sufficiency Standard “measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic needs – without public or private assistance” (Pearce 2005). This measure was developed in response to the inability of the federal poverty measure to capture the wide variation in the composition of modern households and their common expenses.

academically prepared for college-level work who are not participating in concurrent enrollment, addressing the barriers these students face, and encouraging them to participate.

### **Action Steps**

- Focus articulation between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming on programs leading to occupations with pay that meets the Self-Sufficiency Standard.
- Align the work of the community colleges with the state's strategic plan for career and technical education.
- Expand concurrent enrollment by encouraging participation among high school students ready for college-level work.

## **Strategy 1.5. Increase outreach to special populations.**

Besides providing more need-based financial support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, community colleges should make it a priority to reach out to students from underserved populations and encourage their educational success. Adult basic education programs—including English as a second language (ESL) and general educational development (GED) programs—are critical to the success of these populations.

Evidence suggests that low-skill adults who participate in ABE, GED, and ESL programs rarely reach the point of enrolling in college-level courses. For instance, a study of roughly 35,000 community college students in Washington revealed that only 30 percent of ABE/GED students and 13 percent of ESL students moved on to college-level coursetaking within five years (Prince and Jenkins 2005). A host of barriers and nonacademic factors contribute to these low rates of achievement. But researchers and practitioners have suggested some promising practices to ameliorate some of the difficult situations facing low-skill adult learners. These include integrating language instruction into CTE and adult literacy curricula; weaving workforce skills into literacy education; breaking instruction into curricular modules to allow many entry and exit points; and offering an accelerated path through developmental material for those who excel. Additional support, such as academic and career counseling, transportation, childcare, and mental and physical healthcare can help create the conditions under which these students may achieve (Bragg et al. 2007; Prince and Jenkins 2005; Jenkins n.d.).

Wyoming community colleges already offer programs for low-skill adult learners. But given the challenges facing these students and their low chances of even beginning a

college-level course of study, the state should explore adoption of some of these promising practices. Ultimately, the goal is to give these learners many chances to participate in postsecondary education and employment that offers living wages. In addition, students who succeed in moving from developmental education to college-level work should be given clear direction about how they can continue their education at the community colleges. The courses that comprise developmental education programs at the community colleges should be linked to the 16 career clusters<sup>10</sup> adopted by the state.

### **Action Steps**

- Provide greater support to adult basic education instruction in community colleges to promote success for students from underserved communities.
- Connect adult basic education programs to career pathways opportunities.

## **Strategy 1.6. Enhance wrap-around services offered by the colleges to support student success.**

In combination with more need-based financial aid and support for adult basic education programs, enhanced wrap-around services would benefit all students, especially those from underserved communities. These services are designed to address some of the barriers to students' academic success and create conditions under which students can succeed academically.

Wrap-around services include many forms of support, some more directly related to academics than others. In the academic realm, a variety of counseling and advising services can help support students. These include academic guidance to help students plan their path to educational and career goals, academic supports such as online and in-person tutoring, and financial assistance with course materials (Center for Community College Student Engagement 2009; Karp, O'Gara, and Hughes 2008; Mendoza 2008). A prominent example of excellent community college support services comes from Valencia College in Florida. The LifeMap program gives students a step-by-step tool to plan their life, academic, and career goals, supported by in-person guidance from college faculty and staff. LifeMap is used at every step of the student's college career, from transitioning into the institution, to planning each

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<sup>10</sup> Wyoming has adopted the 16 career clusters identified by the U.S. Department of Education as an organizing tool for career and technical education programs. For more information about these career clusters, please see the following resource: <http://www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.cfm>

semester's courses, to graduating and planning future pursuits, either in higher education or employment (Valencia Community College 2009).

To be sure, Wyoming's community colleges provide many of the services offered by LifeMap. What makes this example so valuable and worthy of consideration by Wyoming colleges, however, is how thoroughly support is integrated into a student's life for the duration of his or her time at college. As Norton Grubb, a nationally recognized expert in community college research, reported recently, services such as guidance and counseling, especially for disadvantaged students, are often "underfunded, underused, and sometimes embattled" (Grubb 2006). A recent publication for the Community College Research Center underscores this observation, explaining that the use of support services often depends on students' awareness of their existence and skill in navigating the system to find the help they need (Karp, O'Gara, and Hughes 2008). Since many students come to postsecondary education with a wide variety of challenges, a clear, well-publicized, accessible, step-by-step system for academic planning and support can help ensure that they get the assistance they need in charting their course to graduation and beyond.

No less important are the nonacademic services colleges can provide to foster student success, including personal counseling, such as mental health and crisis intervention services, and access to and financial support for childcare services, housing, and transportation. Programs such as the National College Transition Network's Capital IDEA in Austin, Texas demonstrate the value of these services (Mendoza 2008). This program helps disadvantaged people whose income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty benchmark to gain the life and professional skills they need to enroll in community college and ultimately secure high-wage jobs. IDEA provides enrollees with regular, one-on-one career counseling, financial support for course materials, tuition, personal expenses, and childcare, as needed. The program also offers transportation to those who need it. IDEA has developed solid partnerships with other human services providers, businesses, community organizations, and others in the community, to supplement its own offerings.

Although limited resources may constrain what Wyoming can offer in the way of support services, it is often the nonacademic challenges, such as parenting young children or holding down one or more jobs, that hinder students and keep them from achieving their academic and professional goals. And as the literature reflects, student services in community colleges may be especially vulnerable to cuts during tight fiscal times, largely because the impact of these services can be difficult to measure (Purnell et al. 2004). But there appears to be wide agreement in the field that colleges must consider making these support services for their students a priority to encourage their success.

### ***Action Steps***

- Enable all community college students to develop a personal pathway allowing them to maximize use of college resources in pursuit of their goals.
- Increase childcare capacity for students with families.
- Increase housing for students with families or those who live too far away to commute.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

### Quality Programs: Ensure that all colleges offer quality, relevant programs that meet state and local needs.

Community colleges are ideally situated to adapt to the changing economic, demographic, social, and technological circumstances in local communities and states. While no single community college can offer enough programs to meet every resident's need or interest, employers, the state, and the colleges must set priorities that promote state and local education and economic development goals. In support of this goal, the colleges and the WCCC must collaborate to identify and implement programs to ensure that state and local investment pays off in substantive returns to the public.

#### Strategy 2.1. Ensure that colleges can adapt quickly to respond to local workforce and community needs.

Comprehensive community colleges have a broad mission: to serve thousands of residents; promote economic development through partnerships with business and industry; train and retrain current and future workers; and meet the continuing education needs of workers in many occupations. Comprehensive community colleges also battle illiteracy through adult basic education and English as a Second Language programs and offer a second chance to dropouts through General Educational Development programs. Ultimately, comprehensive community colleges teach people, young and old, how to contribute to their communities as responsible and ethical citizens (Dejardin 1992).

The strength of Wyoming community colleges comes from their comprehensive nature. Every college in the state offers academic transfer, career and technical education, adult education, workforce development, and adult continuing education courses and programs. This strategic plan does not diminish the importance or strength of any of these areas. On the contrary, this plan recognizes that Wyoming benefits enormously from the comprehensive educational programs offered by

community colleges. However, not every program can or should be offered at every college—although each *program area* must be available to meet the community college region’s needs.

The colleges’ local boards of trustees are elected by community members with a stake in the success and progress of the colleges and the residents they serve. These trustees are involved in their communities through their professional careers and personal commitments, and they can identify and assess changing local trends quickly based on those connections. A significant loss of local control—meaning losing the ability to propose and eliminate programs based on local economic and education trends—would render the colleges less responsive to their communities’ needs.

This plan seeks to preserve local control while providing community college boards with a framework for and information about aligning their locally developed programs with state interests.

### **Action Steps**

- Maintain academic, career and technical, developmental, adult continuing, and workforce education programs at all colleges to support education and skill development to meet local business, community, and economic needs.
- Support local college administrators and boards in identifying local needs and appropriate programs through periodic analyses, in collaboration with the Department of Employment, of labor market trends at the state and regional levels.
- Implement periodic reviews of college strategic and master plans to ensure they align with the statewide strategic plan.

## **Strategy 2.2. Support signature programs at each college.**

The Wyoming legislature has indicated an interest in reducing its investment in programs that are duplicated unnecessarily across the state. While many programs, such as some healthcare programs and adult basic education programs, are needed at almost every community college, it is not feasible or necessary to offer other programs everywhere, because of high cost, the geography and natural resources of the region, the expertise of faculty, or the demands of local and statewide labor markets. The state cannot afford to duplicate programs unnecessarily, and colleges do not benefit by spending state funds on duplicative programs when resources are becoming more and more limited.

Each community college has identified its “signature programs” in an effort to address this legislative concern. Signature programs are those that are important to the state, are not available in all community colleges, and require substantial leadership from the college offering the program to ensure its accessibility to students outside the local region and its responsiveness to an identified state need.

A wind energy technology program, for example, offered by Laramie County Community College (LCCC), was identified as a signature program at the time of this plan’s publication. The program is relevant to the state’s interest in diversifying the economy—a new source of energy to complement existing energy industries—and students from different parts of the state might be interested in pursuing a certificate or degree in wind energy technology. For several reasons, however, it is neither feasible nor necessary to have the full program offered at all colleges: (1) not all regions have the strong winds required to turn the turbines; (2) the required equipment costs are extremely high; and (3) there is a limited number of faculty with appropriate expertise statewide and nationally. LCCC is in a position to take on a leadership role in ensuring that the program addresses the state’s interest in economic diversification, as well as its growing interest in green energy technologies, and collaborating with other colleges to ensure the community college system is doing everything possible to support this program.

A college offering a signature program will take on this leadership role and several accompanying responsibilities. First, the college will collaborate with other colleges to offer portions of the program on their campuses through shared curriculum or online learning. This will allow students interested in the program to start their studies in their local community and move to complete their credential at a later time. Second, if circumstances change, and this program were needed and feasible in other colleges, the college offering the signature program would serve as the designated resource for curriculum, faculty development, and the acquisition of expertise and equipment.

Wyoming already has a system that creates signature programs organically: Laramie County Community College is a state and national leader in wind energy technology; Eastern Wyoming College is a state-recognized expert in welding instruction, with a vehicle that travels the state to offer welding instruction; and Northwest College has extensive expertise in visual arts and communication, which serves the state’s tourism industry; and every other community college has carved out a unique program niche as well. The Commission can support this system by conducting careful reviews of proposed new programs to ensure that they do not conflict with existing signature programs. If more than one program is needed, the Commission will be responsible for ensuring that the college hosting the signature

program is available for consultation and expertise. Exhibit 21 displays the three signature programs for each of the seven Wyoming community colleges.

**Exhibit 21. Signature Programs of Each Wyoming Community College: 2009**

<p>Casper College</p>	
<p>Central Wyoming College</p>	<p><b>Outdoor Education, Leadership, and Recreation/Environmental Science and Leadership</b> attracts both in-state and out-of-state students interested in studying outdoor education and leadership. CWC partners with the National Outdoor Leadership School and the Wilderness Medicine Institute to provide learning and recruitment opportunities. The Wind River Mountains provide a spectacular expedition environment for adventure education and the Sinks Canyon Center, a CWC facility at the gateway to Sinks Canyon, gives students a unique and practical laboratory experience. The program is especially attractive to environmentalists and naturalists.</p> <p><b>Environment, Health, and Safety Program</b> serves the needs of current fossil fuels energy as well as renewable energy. While other colleges focus on energy production, the focus of this program is on the environment, health, and safety associated with both renewable and non-renewable energy production. The program has two program tracks: Health and Safety Technician and Environmental Technician. CWC was the recipient of a \$1.4 million Community-Based Job Training Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and the program is the result of a Wyoming Department of Labor study, statewide focus groups, and local and regional energy interests and needs, which identified this “niche” program of interest throughout the state and region, applicable to both renewable and non-renewable energy production.</p> <p><b>Radio and TV Broadcasting/Electronic Media Production</b> contributes to workforce development and leverages statewide investment in Public Broadcasting System (PBS) for a more effective and efficient use of resources. CWC Broadcasting Program has a unique partnership with Wyoming PBS with full access to TV Studio and “on air” experience for CWC broadcasting students. The station produces Public Service Announcements for Wyoming Fire Marshal, Fremont County Superintendents, and the Arapaho Culture Program, and CWC has 24/7 student-run radio station KCWC FM 88.1.</p>
<p>Eastern Wyoming College</p>	<p><b>Welding</b> attracts student participation and industry attention due to the integrity of the program and quality of instruction. EWC provides national certifications, operates a mobile lab, partners with business and the Department of Corrections, and explores new technologies.</p> <p><b>Veterinary Technology</b> students benefit from excellent instruction from veterinarians and highly qualified medical personnel. Facilities for small and large animal care are modern and focused on a future requiring all current methods and technologies. The large animal facility is unique in a multi-state region.</p>

	<p><b>Criminal Justice</b> is available on campus and also online, and the program works closely with the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy through Eastern's Douglas campus. It has close ties with the Wyoming Department of Corrections and its three prisons located in the Eastern Wyoming College service area in Newcastle, Lusk, and Torrington.</p>
Laramie County Community College	
Northern Wyoming Community College District	<p><b>Industrial Electricity</b> focuses on theory of motors and generators.</p> <p>Horticulture</p> <p>Culinary/Hospitality</p>
Northwest College	<p>The <b>Photographic Communication</b> is competitive nationally: faculty have earned national and international awards for their work, and graduates have successfully landed positions across the country. The program is available onsite only, although students come from across Wyoming and throughout the region. Students can pursue an A.A.S. in Photographic Communication, Certificate in Basic Digital Imaging, Certificate in Basic Photographic Imaging, and Certificate in Photographic and Digital Preservation Specialist.</p> <p>The <b>Music/Music Technology</b> offers regionally recognized and award-winning musical groups in vocal and instrumental jazz, along with numerous other musical groups, within a broad array of academic programs. The growing Music Technology Program gives students hands-on experience with professional-level equipment and skills; a new sound and recording studios will be available in fall 2010. Strong sound production and sound management opportunities exist in collaboration with students and faculty in television, radio, and movie production programs. The program is available onsite only, although students come from across Wyoming and throughout the region. Students can pursue an A.A., A.S., or A.A.S. in Music and an A.A.S. in Music Technology.</p> <p>The <b>Biology/Natural Resource Biology</b> offers exceptional field-based learning opportunities with regional agencies and companies, as well as an excellent record of student preparation for academic transfer and entry into careers in environmental biology, forestry, resource management, wildlife management, range management, and agroecology. Additionally, it is the lead NWC program on a \$276,000 National Science Foundation grant that provides scholarship support, mentoring program, and other enhanced educational opportunities. The program is available onsite only, although students come from across Wyoming and throughout the region. Students can pursue an A.S. in Agroecology, A.S. in Biology, and an A.S. in Natural Resource Biology as well as numerous pre-health sciences degrees ( e.g., Pre-Medicine and Pre-Pharmacy).</p>
Western Wyoming Community College	<p>Oil and Gas Production Technology</p> <p>Instrumentation and Industrial Maintenance</p> <p>Exercise Science</p>

### ***Action Steps***

- Maintain a statewide list of signature programs at each college and update it biennially.
- Provide links, through shared curriculum or online learning, between signature programs and other community colleges to offer initial academic and basic courses to students, so they can start their studies locally and then transfer to the college hosting the signature program to complete their studies.
- Employ stringent and consistent local and state standards for program proposal, approval, and elimination to reduce the unnecessary duplication of resource-intensive CTE programs.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

### **Distance Learning: Expand the role of distance learning in serving rural and hard-to-reach populations and providing cost-saving access and educational services for students and colleges.**

Distance learning at Wyoming community colleges has grown dramatically in recent years. In spring 2009, the WyClass Website of the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium listed 1,200 courses available through distance learning, more than four times that of fall 2003, when 284 courses were listed (Wyoming Community College Distance Education Task Force 2004). The rapid growth of distance learning in Wyoming mirrors national trends. A recent survey of over 2,500 postsecondary distance learning programs indicates that the recent economic downturn and anticipated rises in fuel costs are likely to increase the demand for distance learning in the future (Allen and Seaman 2008). Though distance learning at Wyoming's community colleges has grown in the past few years, the need for such programs is likely to increase.

#### **Strategy 3.1. Provide support to strengthen a statewide system for distance learning.**

Wyoming community colleges have rapidly developed an extensive menu of distance education courses. Distance learning specialists at the colleges have also taken steps to coordinate their efforts and learn about effective strategies and best practices from one another. With increased coordination among the colleges' distance learning programs, opportunities to share materials and expertise will grow. North Carolina, for example, maintains a virtual learning community that allows faculty to view and

download materials to assist in the development of distance learning courses and exchange information (North Carolina Community College System 2009). New Mexico recently created a single Web portal for e-learning at all levels of education throughout the state and adopted a common platform for all distance courses. The integrated system has the potential to reduce technological costs and increase collaboration across education institutions and sectors (IDEAL-NM 2008–2009).

Currently, individual colleges manage registration and payment for distance education courses. Students identified the current system, which requires a student to register and pay at each college separately, as a barrier to taking distance education courses at other campuses. Faculty and administrators also expressed concern that the current funding formula, as applied to distance education, fuels competition among the colleges for students rather than encouraging collaboration. Respondents suggested experimenting with incentives for collaboration, such as colleges' sharing the FTE earned through distance learning if a student from one college district enrolls in a distance learning course in another district.

The Wyoming Distance Education Consortium (WyDEC) coordinates the colleges' distance education programs. WyDEC facilitates the sharing of strategies for distance learning and best practices among the colleges. As distance learning opportunities expand, WyDEC can play a valuable role in maintaining high standards of quality and developing statewide digital resources, such as an archive of online course materials for instructors. The Consortium Website lists not only the distance learning courses offered at all community college and the University of Wyoming, but also provides information on student support services and degree programs. Consistent support for the Consortium will encourage colleges to share expertise and resources and develop consistent course prerequisites and requirements allowing courses to be shared across campuses.

Recognizing the importance of distance learning in providing high-quality education to Wyoming citizens, the Governor appointed a Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-Based Communications in 2008. On behalf of the task force, the University of Wyoming issued a request for qualifications/request for proposal (RFQ/RFP) addressing distance education in the state (Governor's Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-Based Communications 2009).<sup>11</sup> In March 2009, Wainhouse Research was selected to conduct a needs

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<sup>11</sup> The Task Force also issued a second RFQ/RFP addressing the technical aspects of creating a statewide video conferencing and IP-based communication system (Governor's Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP Communications 2009).

assessment and inventory of distance education that includes K–12 education, the community colleges, the University of Wyoming, government training, and professional and lifelong learning. The data will inform an examination of the historical authorization procedure for existing distance education activities across the state, funding sources, issues that have shaped distance education activities, and the governance of existing distance education activities. The final report, due in July 2009, will offer a set of recommendations issued by the Task Force addressing cost-effective statewide solutions for distance education (Governor’s Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-Based Communications 2009).

The following action items are designed to build on the existing foundation in distance education by encouraging further program development, cross-college cooperation, and student access.

### **Action Steps**

- Increase fiscal support for WyDEC’s coordination of distance education statewide, including the WyClass Website.
- Develop a common registration system for distance education courses.
- Explore the adoption of a common payment system for distance learning courses.
- Develop and implement a distance education funding formula that encourages colleges to share resources and students.

## **Strategy 3.2. Expand distance learning opportunities.**

During 2007–08, distance learning accounted for 31 percent of credit full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment across all community colleges and from 15 to 43 percent of credit FTE at individual institutions (exhibit 22). More than 5,000 students enrolled in community college distance education courses statewide in the fall and spring semesters of 2007–08. Distance learning courses are most heavily enrolled during the summer months, when they account for about 36 percent of community college enrollments overall and about half of the students enrolled at Casper, Central Wyoming, Laramie County, and Northwest Community Colleges. During MPR’s site visits to the community colleges, researchers learned that many college students take distance education courses while working and living at home during the summer.

**Exhibit 22. Distance Learning Credit Enrollments at Wyoming Community Colleges: 2007-08**

College	2007-08		Summer 2007				Fall 2007				Spring 2008			
	Dis- tance educa- tion FTE*	% Total FTE	Head- count	% Total head- count	FTE	% Total FTE	Head- count	% Total head- count	FTE	% Total FTE	Head- count	% Total head- count	FTE	% Total FTE
<b>Casper College</b>	1135.5	32.9%	577	47.6%	226.4	50.1%	1183	27.2%	447.2	13.2%	1199	30.4%	461.9	15.1%
<b>Central Wyoming College</b>	601.4	41.7%	278	55.5%	107.0	48.6%	564	27.8%	236.3	16.5%	627	35.2%	258.1	21.1%
<b>Eastern Wyoming College</b>	171.6	16.5%	34	11.3%	10.2	18.7%	166	10.7%	67.7	6.4%	237	16.2%	93.8	9.6%
<b>Laramie County Community College</b>	1305.9	35.0%	710	45.3%	232.8	38.4%	1496	30.6%	508.6	14.9%	1386	28.0%	564.6	16.4%
<b>Northwest College</b>	404.9	22.8%	161	45.0%	49.3	40.8%	469	26.8%	153.0	8.5%	588	34.0%	202.6	12.4%
<b>Northern Wyoming Community College District</b>	296.3	15.2%	85	10.3%	31.3	18.5%	287	8.7%	126.3	6.2%	292	8.5%	138.7	8.2%
<b>Western Wyoming Community College</b>	887.0	43.2%	303	24.2%	105.0	43.1%	906	26.9%	390.0	19.9%	913	24.8%	392.0	20.6%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>4802.6</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>2148</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>762.0</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>5071</b>	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>1929.1</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>5242</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>2111.7</b>	<b>15.2%</b>

\* Annualized headcount data is not available.

SOURCE: Distance education enrollment data: Wyoming Community College Commission; Total enrollment data: Wyoming Community College Commission. (2008). *Wyoming Community College System 2007-08 Annual Enrollment Report*. Cheyenne, WY: Wyoming Community College Commission.

Distance learning reaches students in remote rural areas as well as those whose work or family obligations make attending courses on campus difficult. Interviews with distance education administrators and students revealed that students choose distance education courses when they live far from a college or outreach center or have work or family obligations that make attending an on-campus class difficult. Many students, however, also combine distance and on-campus learning. At Central Wyoming College, for example, an estimated three-quarters of students enrolled in online classes in 2007–08 also took classes on campus.<sup>12</sup> Students combine distance and on-campus classes because they want more flexibility in their schedules or because a class is not currently offered on campus. Distance learning also expands the dual credit courses available to high school students. The many types of students served by distance education indicate its importance in sustaining and increasing access to postsecondary education in Wyoming.

To serve these students better, several colleges are developing distance learning degree programs. In the future, degree programs offered wholly or in part through distance learning potentially could combine courses from several colleges, building on each college's strengths, reducing program duplication, and increasing student access. Increasing distance learning opportunities can open access to students not currently served by the colleges as well as expand programs for those currently enrolled.

One challenge the colleges face in expanding distance learning is finding faculty qualified and willing to teach distance learning courses. Professional development, emphasizing the differences between distance and classroom teaching, may increase faculty confidence and promote a willingness to participate. Dedicated technical support for course design and delivery also frees faculty to focus on course content and student learning.

Student support services, including prospective student tutorials, online or telephone tutoring, and technical support, are essential components of strong distance learning programs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education 2006b). National research indicates that, although the gap has narrowed in recent years, completion rates for distance learning courses at community colleges lags behind the rates for traditional courses (Institutional Technology Council 2009). Monitoring student progress and providing students with the support they need while engaged in distance learning may improve student success.

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<sup>12</sup> Email communication, Matt Herr, Outreach Office, Central Wyoming College, May 3, 2009.

### ***Action Steps***

- Increase the number of programs offered through distance learning.
- Offer professional development in distance learning to current faculty and staff, as well as faculty recruited to teach distance courses.
- Enhance student support services for distance learning beyond the minimum required for program accreditation.
- Expand the common course numbering system and content standards and include CTE courses to enable students to take distance learning courses from any campus they choose.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

### **Alignment of Programs and Workforce Opportunities: Ensure that career and technical education programs align with workforce development and labor market opportunities.**

As new industries emerge in Wyoming, bringing with them new occupations and employment opportunities, the community college system must be ready with programs to meet changing education and training needs. The community colleges also can contribute to the economic stability of Wyoming residents by prioritizing programs that lead to higher wages and enable workers to meet their individual Self-Sufficiency Wage Standard.

#### **Strategy 4.1. Target programs to industries projected to have the greatest number of job openings now and over the next 10 years and that will assist residents to reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard.**

New and growing industries will provide employment opportunities at many levels, from low-wage and low-skill jobs to those requiring advanced skills and offering higher pay. While the state needs a labor pool to meet demand in many industries, community colleges should consider focusing education and training programs on occupations with the greatest potential for helping people reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard and those that are in high demand within a region and the state.

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## ***The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming***

In 2005, Governor Freudenthal's office released a report titled *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming* (Pearce 2005). The report details the process of creating and implementing the Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard, which "measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic needs—without public or private assistance" (Pearce 2005, p. 1). Wyoming found that the federal poverty level was an inadequate measure of what a family needs to sustain itself and decided to create an index that more closely represents the point "where economic independence begins" for individuals and families (Pearce 2005, p. 3). The Self-Sufficiency Standard identifies an income amount required to meet the needs of a person or family in their own marketplace without assistance from public or private subsidies (Pearce 2005). The measure accounts for the cost of employment, such as transportation, taxes, and childcare; differences in costs due to location; the age of children in a family; and the effect of taxes and tax credits to create a customized index applicable to any Wyoming resident or family (Pearce 2005).

The methodology used to create Wyoming's Self-Sufficiency Standard has been used in more than 30 other states. This allows for comparisons of similar states and regions; Exhibit 23 shows a comparison of the Self-Sufficiency Standard in Cheyenne and other comparably-sized cities in 2004. At that time, a single adult in Cheyenne needed an hourly wage of \$6.47 to meet basic needs, the third lowest of the cities selected. For the other three family types in Cheyenne, the Self-Sufficiency Standards are the second lowest. However, these still require a single adult to earn more than \$10 an hour to support one or more children.

**Exhibit 23. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Cheyenne, WY Compared with Other U.S. Places, 2004\***

Single Adult		Single Adult, Preschooler		Single Adult, Preschooler, Schoolage		Two Adults, Preschooler, Schoolage**	
Green Bay, WI	\$6.36	Lafayette, LA	\$9.28	Lafayette, LA	\$11.78	Lafayette, LA	\$7.48
Lafayette, LA	\$6.40	Cheyenne, WY	\$10.15	Cheyenne, WY	\$12.26	Cheyenne, WY	\$7.86
Cheyenne, WY	\$6.47	Rapid City, SD	\$11.16	Enid, OK	\$13.60	Rapid City, SD	\$8.46
Rapid City, SD	\$6.59	Enid, OK	\$11.18	Rapid City, SD	\$13.81	Enid, OK	\$8.96
Enid, OK	\$6.68	Grand Junction, CO	\$12.02	Carson City, NV	\$14.62	Grand Junction, CO	\$9.05
Great Falls, MT	\$7.11	Green Bay, WI	\$12.48	Grand Junction, CO	\$14.96	Carson City, NV	\$9.08
Pittsfield, MA	\$7.15	Great Falls, MT	\$12.82	Great Falls, MT	\$15.67	Green Bay, WI	\$9.34
Grand Junction, CO	\$7.24	Carson City, NV	\$12.83	Missoula, MT	\$15.71	Bellingham, WA	\$9.70
Missoula, MT	\$7.49	Missoula, MT	\$13.03	Green Bay, WI	\$16.07	Great Falls, MT	\$9.73
Bellingham, WA	\$7.81	Bellingham, WA	\$14.23	Bellingham, WA	\$16.51	Missoula, MT	\$9.73
Carson City, NV	\$7.91	Pittsfield, MA	\$14.85	Pittsfield, MA	\$17.39	Pittsfield, MA	\$10.19
Fort Collins, CO	\$8.33	Fort Collins, CO	\$15.16	Fort Collins, CO	\$17.92	Fort Collins, CO	\$10.41
Flagstaff, AZ	\$9.60	Flagstaff, AZ	\$15.91	Flagstaff, AZ	\$18.65	Flagstaff, AZ	\$11.02

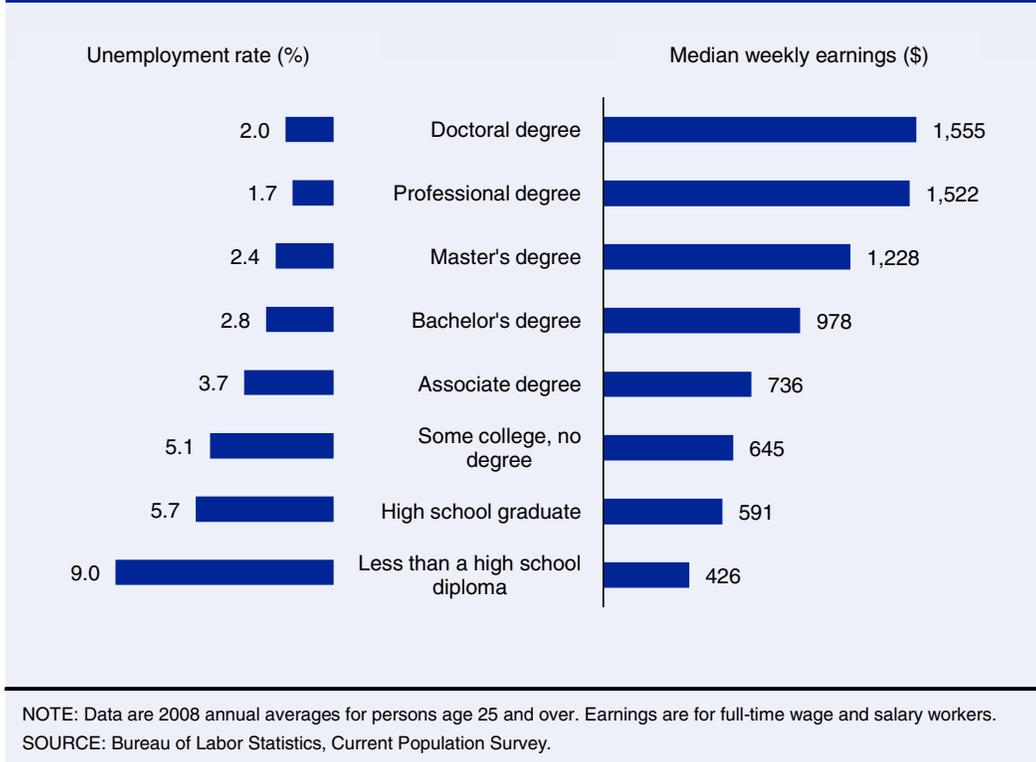
\*All wages are updated to September 2004 using the Consumer Price Index.

\*\*Per adult.

SOURCE: Pearce, D. (2005). *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming*. The State of Wyoming, Office of the Governor. Retrieved June 12, 2009, from <http://governor.wy.gov/Media.aspx?MediaId=165>.

Self-sufficiency requires a number of individual, community, and governmental pillars of support. Individuals can have an impact on increasing their income, and education can have a substantial impact on the level of wages earned (exhibit 24). Students who are prepared for employment in occupations that are growing and offering greater opportunities in Wyoming or the region are more likely to see a long-term positive effect on their incomes. By targeting programs to growing occupations that will offer self-sufficiency wages to employees, Wyoming community colleges can help more Wyoming residents reach their personal Self-Sufficiency Standard.

**Exhibit 24. Education Pays: Unemployment Rate and Median Weekly Earnings in 2008**



### Action Steps

- Partner with the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, and Wyoming Business Council to identify emerging industries they have targeted for development and leverage available federal and state resources to support workforce development, education, and training initiatives. Hold a biennial meeting of the Commission, colleges, and industry stakeholders to determine how the system will address emerging industries and workforce trends.
- Tailor a biennial report of Wyoming economic and labor market trends to community college regions. The WCCC can collaborate with the Department of Employment to build upon existing data resources and publications to develop a report targeted for use by community colleges.
- Pilot one to three P-16 career pathways focused on one or more of the identified industries. Ensure all partners are involved in the planning and implementation, including K-12, the University of Wyoming, the WCCC, and workforce and economic development agencies and organizations.

- Fund noncredit workforce training programs through a grant program to support rapid response to workforce development opportunities.

## **Strategy 4.2. Place programs at appropriate locations throughout the state to ensure that Wyoming can meet the labor market demands for targeted occupations.**

A statewide approach to meeting workforce demands will necessitate a statewide method for identifying how many programs are needed and where those programs should be located. The collaborative work undertaken with workforce and economic development partners as part of Strategy 4.1 will help colleges determine the level of state and regional labor market demand. Colleges already work hand-in-hand with their Advisory Committees to specify the skills required for employees to be successful in industries and occupations. A next step will require colleges to obtain information from industry experts to inform the WCCC about where programs are likely to be most successful around the state. The WCCC will need this information, along with other resources, to make decisions about locating programs in communities around the state.

### ***Action Steps***

- Solicit recommendations from Advisory Committees, economic and workforce development agencies, and industry representatives to help determine where programs would be most successful within the state.
- Use the program approval criteria described in Strategic Objective 6 to make decisions about the number and location of new programs for targeted occupations.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

### **Partnerships: Support economic development through partnerships with local and statewide business and industry, government and education agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.**

Wyoming has a strong tradition of public-private partnerships. According to the 2007 *Annual Partnerships Report*, community colleges have established myriad “mutually beneficial partnerships” with business, government, other education sectors, and among the colleges themselves that promote positive educational and community outcomes across the state (WCCC 2008a). This ability to form effective partnerships is one of Wyoming’s strengths, and the state should continue to expand and support partnership activities.

Partnerships between community colleges and local business and industry are particularly strong. Employers look to their local community colleges as the primary resource for education and training, as a cultural center that helps retain talented employees, and as an economic asset that can attract and serve new businesses.

#### **Strategy 5.1. Expand current partnerships with business and industry.**

Wyoming policymakers have expressed great interest in diversifying the state’s economic interests. Greater economic diversity is believed to soften the resulting economic blow if one major industry takes a downturn (Federal Reserve Bank of New York 2002). According to Mark Harris of the Wyoming Department of Employment, economic diversification could be beneficial to the state, provided growth happens in industries that “offer higher wages” (Harris 2002).

Community colleges play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining new industries and business to their local communities and the state. Interviews with business representatives across the state reinforced the importance of community colleges in supporting local training and providing new employees with access to further education and cultural events, even in the very rural areas of the state.

Industry representatives have been very generous with their time, serving on local college Advisory Councils to identify appropriate curricula and skill outcomes for students in college programs. This type of activity has been highly beneficial, but has occurred primarily at a local level. This plan recommends expanding those activities, both in breadth at the local level—covering more college programs—and in depth at the state level—incorporating statewide Advisory Committees into the system’s planning strategies. This plan focuses primarily on opportunities for expanding partnerships with workforce and economic development partners.

### ***Action Steps***

- Document use of local and statewide Advisory Committees for career and technical education and workforce training programs.
- Develop a plan for using Advisory Committees for multiple purposes in community college regions and across the state.
- Actively partner with the Department of Workforce Services, the Workforce Development Council, and the Department of Employment to reinforce the community colleges’ role as a primary resource for workforce training.

## **Strategy 5.2. Identify and develop new ways to share data and information with other state agencies and organizations.**

Several states have taken steps to integrate the data collected within different state agencies to improve the services the state provides to its residents. Many of these efforts focus on improving workforce development systems through shared performance measures and a common repository for information. The best example of such a system is Florida, where the state is able to follow the progress of residents who receive services through many different agencies, including K–12, community colleges and universities, workforce, health and human services, and employment. Florida, along with five other states—Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Texas, and Washington—developed a “blueprint” that recommends performance measures and an information system that would support consistency in performance measures within the state and for federal workforce programs (Wilson 2005).

While Wyoming has work to do to ensure comprehensive data systems exist for its individual partners first, eventually a system that would allow data to be shared across agencies could prove a valuable tool for providing effective and efficient services to residents.

### ***Action Steps***

- Explore the possibility of shared data and information systems among public sector agencies, including the Departments of Employment, Workforce Services, Education, Health, and the WCCC and the University of Wyoming.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

### Coordination and Collaboration: Improve system efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced communication and coordination.

Wyoming funds 50 percent or more of community college programs, depending on the college. Under the current system, individual colleges propose program and capital construction needs to the WCCC, which then weighs and compares funding needs across colleges. To target state funding more effectively, this strategic plan calls for close collaboration among the colleges in determining funding priorities and supplying data-based evidence for how the priorities serve state interests. In turn, criteria used by the WCCC to set funding priorities must be made transparent and adhered to closely. For the decision-making process to succeed, trust, understanding, and respect between the colleges and the WCCC are essential.

Working as a system presents a number of opportunities for Wyoming's community colleges to function more efficiently and effectively. To these ends, improving communication and collaboration between those at the local and state levels and seeking to centralize some system operations will be necessary.

#### **Strategy 6.1. Promote shared policy development and decision making and improve collaboration among the Wyoming Community College Commission Commissioners, staff, and the colleges.**

Close collaboration between the WCCC and the community colleges is fundamental to serving the state's students and the state's interests. Since the WCCC is responsible for decisions about a wide range of policy issues affecting each college, the Commission should develop a way for representatives of the colleges' senior staff to interact with Commissioners and provide information and recommendations as part of the policy-making process. The WCCC document titled *Wyoming Community College Commission Policy on Consultation* (2008c), adopted in 2008,

should be the basis for organizing how the colleges can share information and opinions with the Commission. The councils outlined therein will meet to share information about specific policy areas, debate policy options, and make informed recommendations to the broader Commission.

One area requiring collaboration between the WCCC and the colleges will be procedures and criteria for new program approval. Below is a list of criteria the Commission may start using to assess the merit of new program proposals. Ideally, over the first year or two of use, the Commission and colleges will work together to refine this list.

- State Interests
  - The proposal includes a statement about how the new program serves the state's interests.
- Definition of a Program
  - New programs will adhere to NCES's National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) definition for a credit program: the program includes at least three months or 300 clock hours of instruction and can be applied toward a certification or academic degree (Wei et al. 2009).
- Labor Needs
  - There is evidence of support from the community (e.g., letters of interest).
  - Potential employers in related fields exist in the region and state.
  - Labor market data support the claim of future need for workers who participate in the new program's course of study, and evidence suggesting that need is great enough to support those participants.
  - If similar programs exist at the state's other postsecondary institutions, the proposed program addresses unmet need in the locality and/or state.
  - Projected earnings for participants in the program exceed the median county wage.
  - The program will contribute to retraining workers already in the working world.
- Curriculum Development
  - There is evidence of thorough curricular development, including documentation of curriculum layout, syllabi, courses, etc.
  - If similar programs exist at other colleges, evidence of cross-campus collaboration in the design of the new program exists.

- Evidence of how the new program will integrate with other existing programs is documented.
- Resource Needs
  - The demands of the new program for physical space, equipment, and other material support are well documented.
  - A plan for how the college will provide funding for the sustainability of the program is included.
- Faculty Support
  - The need for new, additional faculty is well documented and a plan for recruitment is included.
  - Support among the faculty in the department and division for the new program is strong, and that support is documented. If the proposed program comes from a nonacademic department, a faculty sponsor from a related academic department has endorsed the proposal.
- Recruitment Strategies
  - Evidence for strong demand for the new program among current and/or prospective students exists.
  - A plan for recruiting students to participate in the new program is included.
- Pathways
  - Evidence for how the new program connects or could connect to one of the state's adopted 16 Pathways at the K–12 and University level is included, if relevant.

These criteria should be considered a starting point for the Commission's review of new proposals. Ideally, college leaders and the WCCC members will continue the development and refinement of the list jointly. Some of these criteria may weigh more heavily in the decision-making process than others, and the Commission should determine which deserve the greatest weight.

The WCCC is also responsible for approving new capital construction at the community colleges. The following criteria can serve as a starting point, with the work of refining the criteria to be jointly undertaken by college leaders and WCCC members.

- State Interests
  - The proposal includes a statement about how the new project serves the state's interests.

- Existing Facilities
  - The proposal includes data about the current capacity and usage of existing facilities.
  - If the proposal seeks funding for new construction, there is evidence for why existing facilities at the site are insufficient for the intended purpose.
  - If the proposal seeks funding for new housing, there is evidence that the need cannot be reasonably met in the community.
- Community Support
  - There is evidence of existing or potential community support through historical bond approval and/or sufficient local resources to support the proposed project.
  - The community has passed a bond to support the proposed facility construction.
- Safety
  - If a proposal seeks funds for renovation to address a safety concern, it includes documentation outlining the nature and extent of the safety issue.
- Signature Programs
  - If the proposed project will serve to accommodate students participating in a signature program, there is evidence of demand for that program and documentation for how the project will serve the needs of the signature program.

Once the program approval and capital construction criteria have been fully developed, the WCCC should create a system for feedback, so that colleges whose programs have been approved can receive constructive guidance for improving future proposals.

Finally, because no decision-making process is without flaw, the WCCC should implement a system for the colleges to file complaints about funding decisions they believe were made in error. Although the particulars of such a system must be tailored to the needs of Wyoming's community colleges, the process should include:

- A transparent process map for how the WCCC will handle complaints, developed jointly by the colleges, WCCC staff, and Commissioners.
- An easy interface for filing complaints, including an online submission tool.
- A panel of experts from the colleges and the Commission, who are geographically representative of the state, which meets regularly to review

complaints. This panel should include a designee who agrees to conduct an initial review of complaints for relevance and grounds and adhere to a hearing procedure that allows those filing the complaint to present their grievance and substantiating evidence.

- Decision rules for how the panel will determine whether or not a funding decision has been made appropriately, and whether or not the WCCC must revisit the decision (United Nations Human Rights Council n.d.; Office of Civil Rights 2008; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees 2007).

### **Action Steps**

- Use the Consultation Agreement as defined.
- Use the strategic plan criteria for new program approval based on state interests.
- Use the strategic plan criteria for capital construction approval based on state interests.
- Address underlying conflicts that arise in funding recommendations through a well-defined dispute resolution process.

## **Strategy 6.2. Implement processes to improve system efficiency and reduce unnecessary redundancy.**

The WCCC is well positioned to view the seven colleges as a whole and use that vantage point to make decisions to improve the efficiency of the system. One approach to improving efficiency is to centralize at the system level some of the operations currently managed at each campus, for example, the payroll system. Other postsecondary education systems and government entities have been consolidating this function in recent years. The colleges' operational heads also have considered this idea recently. Some arguments for and against such a policy change follow.

The University System of Georgia is an example of a postsecondary system that has shifted toward centralized payroll in the last two years. The Board of Regents adopted a "shared services strategy" for this consolidation, bringing payroll responsibilities together at a shared services center overseen by representatives from the member schools rather than the system leadership. Expected benefits of this centralization included:

- Streamline data entry work by an estimated 40 percent.
- Lower risk of error by building in redundancy in sensitive function areas.

- Upgrade the system using the latest technology.
- Simplify financial reporting.
- Standardize policies and procedures to reduce variability and errors.
- Implement best practices.

Those involved in this payroll centralization plan in Georgia also worked to allay fears about the process, indicating that individual campuses should maintain their own banking and finance systems and that it would not be necessary to centralize all campus accounts into one bank account (University System of Georgia 2008; Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia 2008). Other systems, including the University of Wisconsin System, State University of New York System, and University of Maryland System, have undertaken payroll consolidation recently.

The idea of centralizing payroll raises several concerns that the WCCC would need to address before serious consideration of payroll centralization could proceed. A discussion among the operational heads of Wyoming's community colleges about this idea yielded a list of issues to consider. Many wondered whether the savings associated with reducing on-campus staff would be overshadowed by the cost of creating and maintaining a central office. Others questioned how much on-campus staffing could be reduced, as they expected data entry, quality checking, and reporting to continue at each site. Concerns about a loss of flexibility and responsiveness at the local level were also common. In addition, some worried that consolidating and reconciling different structures, such as benefits, would be very difficult across all sites.

For the purposes of this strategic plan, payroll is simply an example of an administrative function that the WCCC should investigate for potential centralization. While many entities, educational and otherwise, are moving toward consolidating payroll, ultimately, the question of which operations would yield the greatest savings for Wyoming upon consolidation deserves more careful study.

Another opportunity for the community colleges to centralize an operational function may reside in the financial aid offices. The Connecticut Community Colleges recently devised an innovative approach to saving money through centralization while maintaining, or even improving, site-level service to students. Rather than centralizing the financial aid offices systemwide, the system leadership in Connecticut created a small system-level office that would take on some of the more routine tasks that had been conducted at each site, such as verifying student information, facilitating audits, and staying up to date with changing regulations and policies. The individual sites maintained their financial aid offices, and site-level staff had more time to do the work that must be done at the individual level: helping

students through the application process, advising students of their options, and reaching out to students in the high schools (Supiano 2009). This type of centralization also warrants further exploration by Wyoming's community colleges.

Reducing redundant course offerings among the colleges would introduce further efficiencies. While providing every student with access to the academic and technical programs they need is a primary goal of the college system, it is in the state's interest to use resources efficiently. Most will agree that every college in the state need not offer every program. The collaborative leadership groups, as outlined in the existing Consultation Agreement, provide the appropriate forum for examining this issue.

### ***Action Steps***

- Identify and pursue opportunities to automate and centralize selected college operational functions.
- Minimize system redundancy through careful program siting.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

### **Adequate Resources: Provide adequate resources, given available funds, distributed in a way that promotes quality and positive student outcomes.**

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2009), Wyoming is one of only three states not facing a budget shortfall in 2009. Nevertheless, Wyoming's economy has contracted, leaving fewer resources available to fund public programs. While no public organization can or should expect to be immune to changes in economic conditions, education is one of a few state investments that provides both short- and long-term payoffs. Community colleges, along with K–12 and the university, should be seen as a solution to economic challenges. Wyoming community colleges must partner with state policymakers to ensure that students and colleges are adequately supported and funds invested wisely.

#### **Strategy 7.1. Ensure that the colleges have and maintain adequate facilities aligned with the statewide strategic plan.**

Community colleges require adequate, safe, and appropriate facilities for their courses and programs, including classroom-based academic and resource-intensive career and technical education classes. Facilities must be maintained and updated to reflect current technologies for teaching and learning. Wyoming also offers student housing at each college, reflecting the state's rural nature. When students move to another town to pursue further education, they need safe and reliable housing close to campus.

The state recently took a step toward becoming a partner in community college capital construction. Legislation passed in March 2009 directs the WCCC to “identify community college building needs, develop a prioritized list of community college capital construction projects and forward recommendations for community college capital construction projects to the state building commission” (Sixtieth

Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). In addition, the WCCC already has responsibility for submitting major maintenance requests to the legislature each year. While the economy has tightened since this change to capital construction funding was proposed, it is essential that Wyoming have a process for requesting and prioritizing capital construction projects in anticipation of greater state funding in the future.

Colleges also must have sufficient lead time to plan for future building needs. Currently, statute requires the WCCC to prioritize capital construction projects annually, although it takes longer than a year to identify new facility needs, craft building plans, and develop a funding proposal. If projects are prioritized each year, a college that was prioritized highly one year, and has invested the time and resources to initiate a bond campaign and move forward with building preparations may be moved to the bottom of the list the subsequent year. This report recommends a two-year window for prioritizing capital construction projects, which will also require a change to community college statute.

In addition to facilities, colleges must have adequate equipment to support the programs they offer. Equipment must be in safe working order and reflect current technologies so that students are well-prepared for the workforce.

### **Action Steps**

- Use the capital construction prioritization process outlined in Strategy 6.1.
- Prioritize projects once each biennium so that colleges have time to plan for the future.
- Include capital construction funding for student housing in the state capital construction prioritization process.
- Change state statute to allow biennial prioritization of community college capital construction projects.
- Identify funding each biennium for upgrades to equipment needed for college CTE programs that meet state needs and strategic objectives.

## **Strategy 7.2. Employ sustainable and comprehensive funding mechanisms that recognize the multiple functions and roles of community colleges.**

Education is the engine of Wyoming's economic development. Elementary and secondary education, community colleges, and the university enable residents to become productive members of the community and the workforce. Community

colleges must be especially agile and responsive to the needs of business and industry as well as to educational trends, such as increasing or declining enrollments.

Nationally, community colleges are experiencing an explosion in enrollment. Much of the change is attributed to the downturn in the economy and the high unemployment rates. Several colleges in Wyoming report they have seen higher enrollments in the last year, which has resulted in the colleges needing to stretch existing resources to support the additional students. Funds dedicated to supporting enrollment growth, including additional faculty, more course sections, and increased use of college support services, will allow colleges to continue serving Wyoming residents who want to acquire new skills.

Wyoming community colleges are investing significant resources in new programs to meet emerging workforce and industry needs each year. This report calls for the Legislature's help in setting aside special purpose funding<sup>13</sup> to support innovative programs that are closely aligned with the state interests and strategic objectives outlined in this plan.

Like many states, Wyoming's community college funding formula focuses primarily on funding past full-time equivalent enrollment. This approach highlights the importance of wide access in the mission of community colleges. However, student success is an equally important mission, and is ignored by a formula that distributes funding solely on past enrollments. Incorporating elements that recognize student outcomes and program quality in the formula will allow funding to more closely follow the priorities that are so important to the colleges and the system as a whole. This report does not recommend this change be made immediately—recent calls for modifications to the formula have not yet been implemented. In addition, comprehensive and reliable student-level data regarding progress and success are not available at this time, and without that data, it would be difficult to identify appropriate metrics and targets for funding. Strategic Objective 8 goes into additional detail about the need for such data.

### **Action Steps**

- Provide funds to address the costs of enrollment growth on a biennial basis.

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<sup>13</sup> Under Chapter 211, *Community College Amendments* (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009), "The commission may by exception budget, request additional state funding to be designated as special purpose funding, accounted for and distributed separately from distributions under the funding allocation model."

- Help the colleges get and maintain resources through special-purpose funding for innovative college programs aligned with the statewide strategic plan. Assist in identifying the start-up costs of developing and implementing new programs.
- In the future, introduce additional elements to the state community college funding formula that emphasize student success and program quality. Access is currently the priority reflected in the funding formula's focus on FTE enrollment in credit programs.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8

### System of Continuous Improvement: Emphasize accountability and student success.

Federal and local funds for community colleges have always been accompanied by expectations for performance, accountability, and proof of return on investment. Federal requirements have been more formal, requiring colleges to comply with reporting requirements and specific data requests, through programs like the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act legislation and the Workforce Investment Act Title II adult education program (Julian and Smith 2007). Local accountability is often more informal, demonstrated by trustee board elections, editorials in local papers, and the passage of bond measures. In recent years, colleges have received the message that they must find new and more transparent ways to demonstrate their impact on students and communities and their response to local, state, and national needs for education and workforce training (Julian and Smith 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2006a; Walleri 1997). This section discusses the role of accountability and how it can be expanded to promote program improvement and student success.

#### Strategy 8.1. Build a statewide longitudinal data system for community colleges.

Setting goals to enhance educational outcomes such as increasing skills for adult basic education students; promoting higher rates of graduation, licensure, and certification; improving employment placement rates; and enhancing services to vulnerable and underserved populations will not be fruitful until they are informed by consistent, reliable longitudinal community college data (Data Quality Campaign 2006). Many states use NCES's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for outcomes data for their students. IPEDS is not an adequate tool, however, for community colleges. Its outcomes are derived from data about first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen in public two-year colleges, which represent

roughly one-third of community college students and are primarily recent high school graduates. Wyoming's comprehensive community colleges serve many students who are part time, returning to postsecondary education after a long absence, or seeking to improve their occupational and educational skills. Without a state-level longitudinal data system, Wyoming lacks reliable information for understanding the challenges and successes of adult basic education, part-time, and workforce training students. Without a longitudinal database, the state has limited understanding of how all students move in and out of the community college system and if they achieve their educational goals over time.

Wyoming has recognized the need for shared and consistent data collection and reporting and has taken some steps toward a more comprehensive community college data system. Each college now uses Datatel® to store its campus financial, student, and course information, although each college's database set-up is slightly different. The WCCC also has some access to those databases to obtain limited information when needed. Simply sharing a common database platform, however, is not the same as an integrated, longitudinal state data system that can be used for research and to evaluate and improve student and institutional outcomes.

With its system-wide vantage point, the WCCC is well positioned to provide guidance and recommendations to improve efficiency. As much as possible, program and funding decisions should be rooted in current data that are comparable across the colleges. This plan, therefore, recommends developing a statewide, longitudinal community college data system. A common system for transmitting equivalent data from each site, managed and maintained by experts on the WCCC staff, would go far to ensuring that comparable data are assembled from each campus. Such a system also would support accountability reporting to policymakers and the public. Installing a statewide longitudinal data system, housed at the WCCC, would not be without cost, and this plan recommends an initial cost assessment of such a system to ensure it will be designed, implemented, and maintained as efficiently as possible.

MPR also recommends the state explore the possibility of a cross-sector longitudinal data warehouse, one that houses information from students in K–12, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming. Such a system allows the state to understand how students move from one education sector to another, where resources can be targeted to support the highest needs, and where students are encountering barriers to their progress and success.

### Action Steps

- Determine the cost of a management information system (MIS) that could house unit-level data for all community college students, including credit and noncredit students. Complete this assessment by June 2010.
- Install an MIS at the WCCC that can house and maintain a state community college longitudinal dataset.
- Ensure that WCCC staff have the database and research expertise to maintain and use data effectively and to distribute funding based on results to improve student and institutional outcomes.
- Require colleges to submit unit-level enrollment, student, course, and financial data each term and annually to populate the longitudinal database.
- In the future, create a state longitudinal data system that links K–12, community colleges, and the university.

## Strategy 8.2. Develop an accountability system that allows the WCCC and the colleges to demonstrate return on the state's investment.

Accountability is the concept most frequently invoked when postsecondary providers talk about demonstrating their efficacy, particularly following the 2006 U.S. Department of Education report titled *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. Accountability measures designed to meet the information needs of the public are essential in helping colleges and community college systems tell their story clearly.

Some community college systems, including Wyoming's, are encountering new or increased state expectations for proof of performance, and this is proving challenging for some college personnel. Although Wyoming's colleges were formed in response to local demand, using local funds and maintained with local support, the proportion of state funding and support has grown in recent years, accounting for more and more of the system's funding in recent biennia. In the 1999–2000 academic year, state funds for community colleges totaled just over \$93.2 million, but by 2007–08, state support had more than doubled to \$189.6 million (WCCC n.d.-b). As a result, state policymakers, who must be responsible stewards of public funds, are asking for more detailed evidence regarding the return on the state's investment in community colleges.

Chapter 211, Section 21-18-202, of Wyoming statute mandates that the WCCC:

develop performance benchmarks, outcome measures and other performance indicators which serve as the basis for annual reporting to the legislature and the governor...including but not limited to:

- (A) Student goal attainment and retention;
- (B) Student persistence;
- (C) Degree and certificate completion rates;
- (D) Placement rate of graduates in the workforce;
- (E) Licensure and certification pass rates;
- (F) Demonstration of critical literacy skills;
- (G) Success in subsequent, related coursework; and
- (H) Number and rate of students who transfer (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009).

The legislation also directs the WCCC to “attach performance indicators to funding to achieve established results” (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). Neither of these directives can be effectively implemented without a statewide, unit-level, longitudinal data system, as outlined in Strategy 8.1. Currently, data being reported for these indicators are calculated at the college level, and there is no evidence that data are comparable across institutions. In addition, student persistence and goal attainment can only be captured within a single college, although undoubtedly some students are transferring among Wyoming community colleges and to the University of Wyoming (Maggard 2008). Without a way to follow the progress of individual students and student cohorts over time, the state has only the most general measures of student persistence and attainment in higher education.

## *Wyoming Community College Persistence, Completion, and Student Characteristics Data*

During the development of this strategic plan, the WCCC and colleges acknowledged the importance and benefits of accountability measures and a statewide longitudinal database, particularly in support of the full and effective implementation of this plan. In response, the colleges collected and reported to MPR aggregated data regarding persistence, completion, and several student characteristics (see exhibits 25 through 32). The data were, however, only for students who enrolled for the first time at a community college as full-time students, meaning that all part-time and noncredit students are excluded from this particular analysis of student outcomes. In addition, the use of aggregate data does not allow researchers to explore the factors that contribute to positive or negative student outcomes, including institutional factors—size of college, tuition and fee levels, and expenditures per student—as well as individual factors—full-time working while enrolled, support of a family, parenting, and income (Bailey et al. 2005).

Exhibit 25 displays the number of first-time, full-time students enrolled in Wyoming community colleges in fall 2003. Casper College had the highest number, with 693 students.

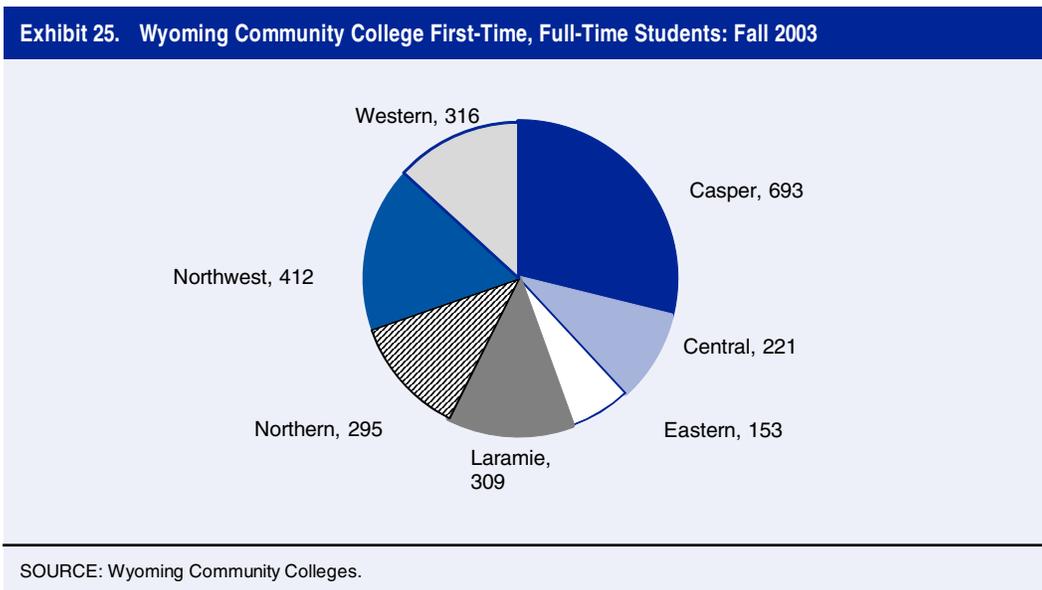
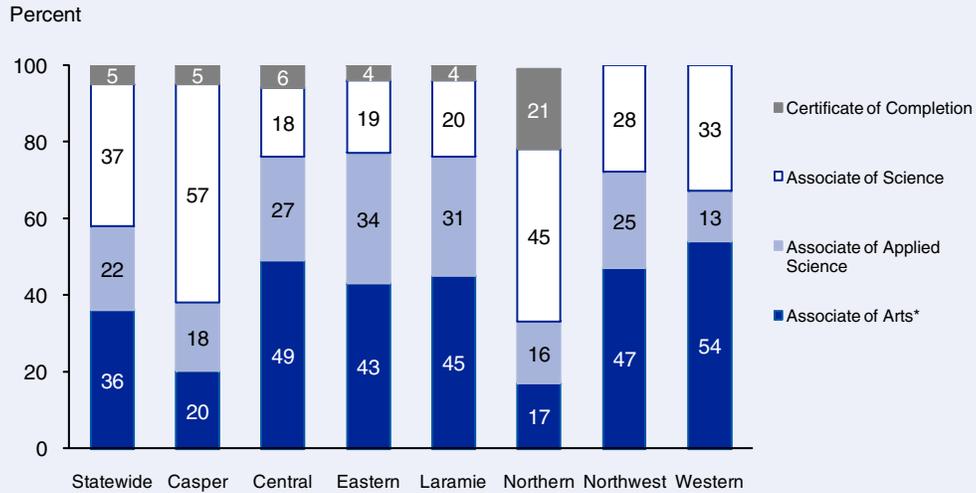


Exhibit 26 displays the academic area in which first-time, full-time students enrolled in fall 2003. With the exception of Northern Wyoming Community College District, certificates of completion represented less than 10 percent of declared enrollments in 2003. Each

college has a slightly different mix of program enrollments, reflecting the different interests of their students and the mix of programs offered by the colleges.

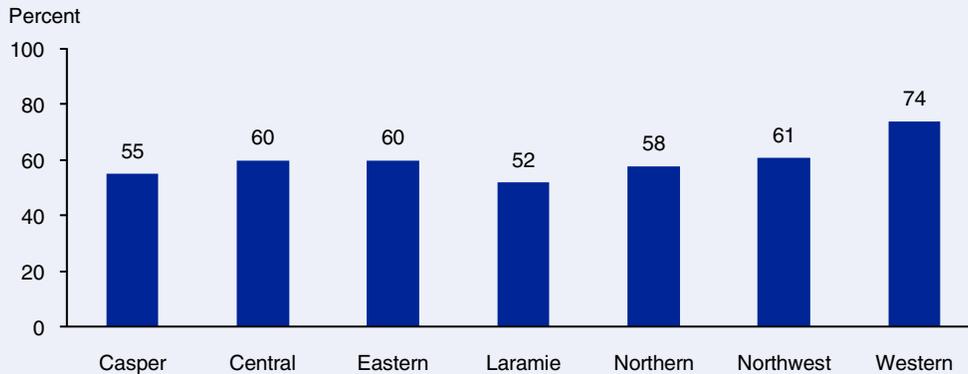
**Exhibit 26. Academic Program of First-Time, Full-Time Students at Time of Enrollment: Fall 2003**



\* Associate of Arts includes Associate of Fine Arts; Associate of Science includes Associate of Business.  
SOURCE: Wyoming Community Colleges.

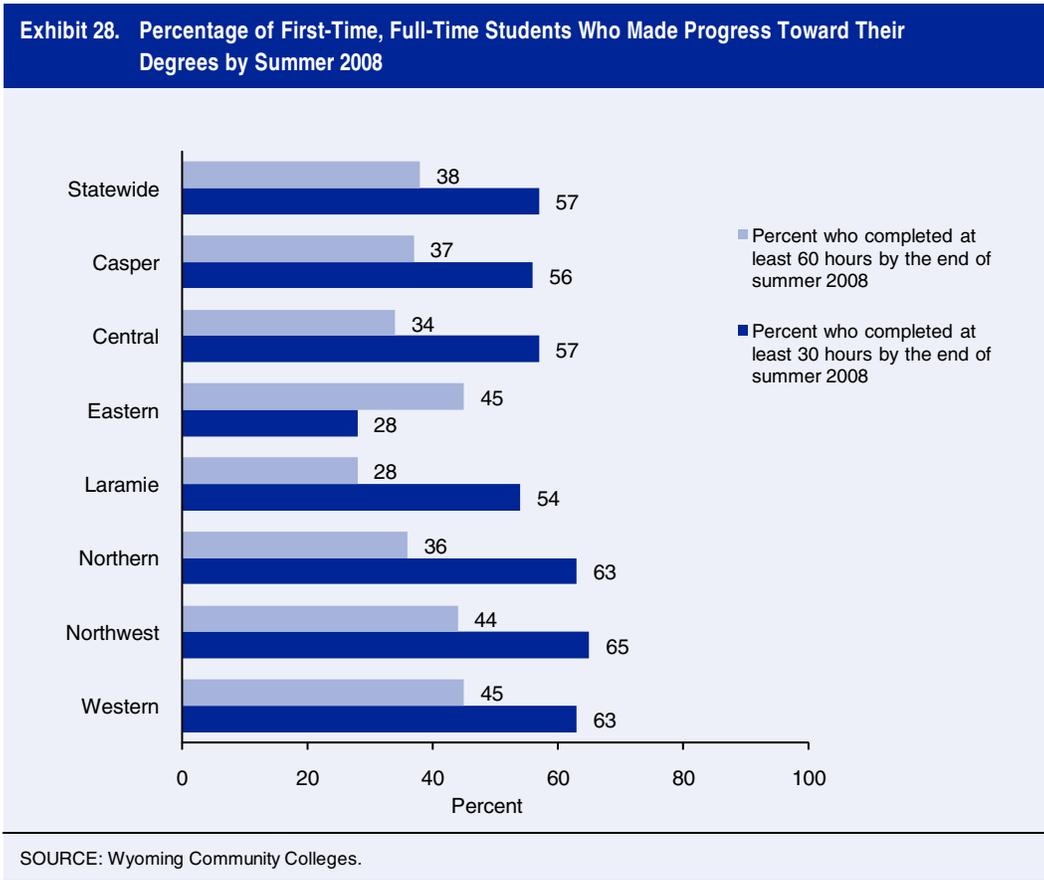
Among fall 2003 first-time, full-time enrolled students, more than half at each college had either graduated or reenrolled by fall 2004 (exhibit 27). Western Wyoming Community College had the highest percentage of reenrollments and graduates with 74 percent.

**Exhibit 27. Fall to Fall Persistence: Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Enrolled Students Who Graduated by End of Summer 2004 or Were Still Enrolled in Fall 2004**



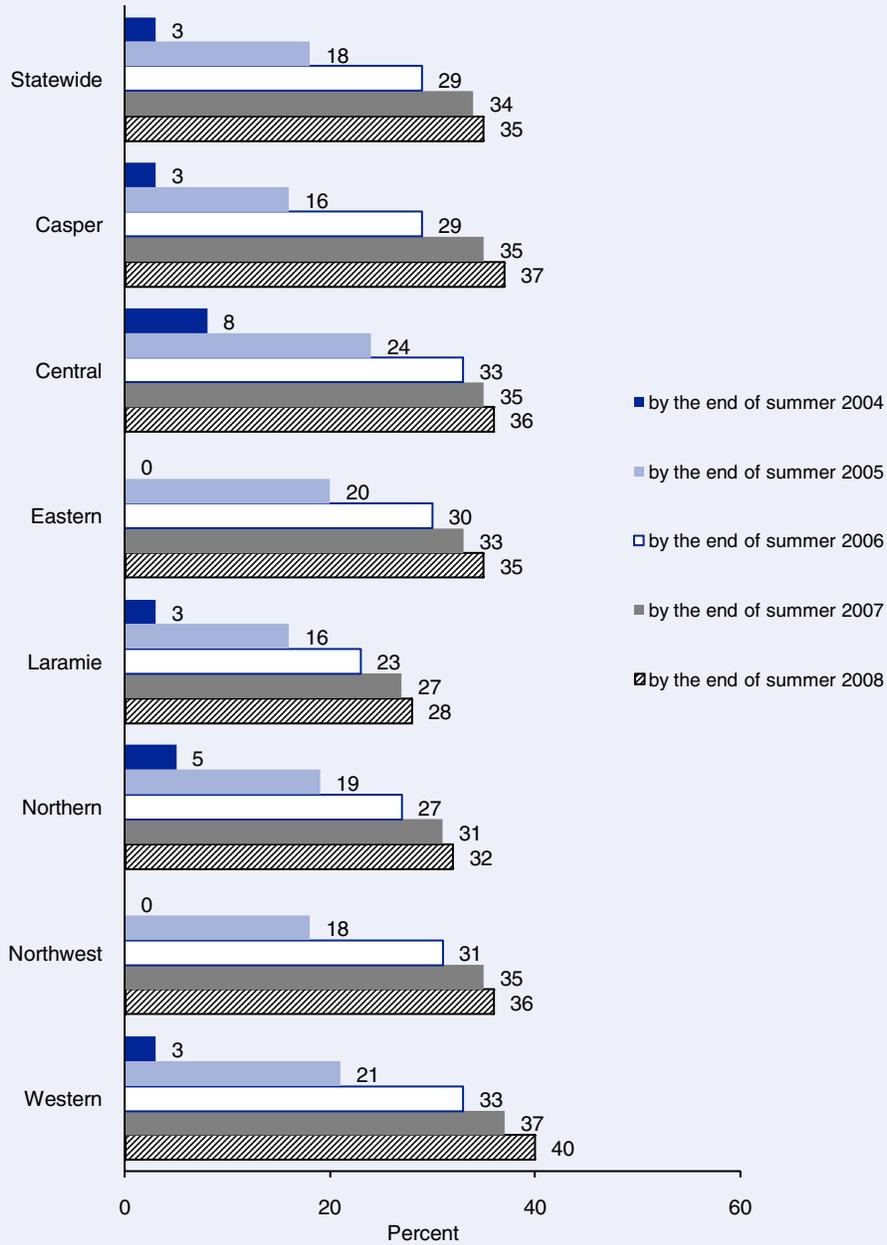
SOURCE: Wyoming Community Colleges.

Fall 2003 first-time, full-time students made substantial progress toward completing their stated goals by the end of 2008 (exhibit 28). More than 50 percent of students at six of the seven colleges had earned at least 30 hours of instruction by the end of 2008. Statewide, nearly 40 percent of students had completed 60 or more hours by the end of 2008.



According to the data provided by the Wyoming community colleges, very few students earn a degree or certificate in the year they first enroll (exhibit 29). In most colleges, less than 5 percent of students earned a degree or certificate their first year. There was, however, a large gain in the number of degrees and certificates earned once another year has passed. By the end of 2005, more than 15 percent of students at every college had earned a degree or certificate. And by the end of 2008, more than 35 percent of students statewide had earned a degree or certificate. These data show the trend toward students taking longer than a year or two to complete a certificate or degree.

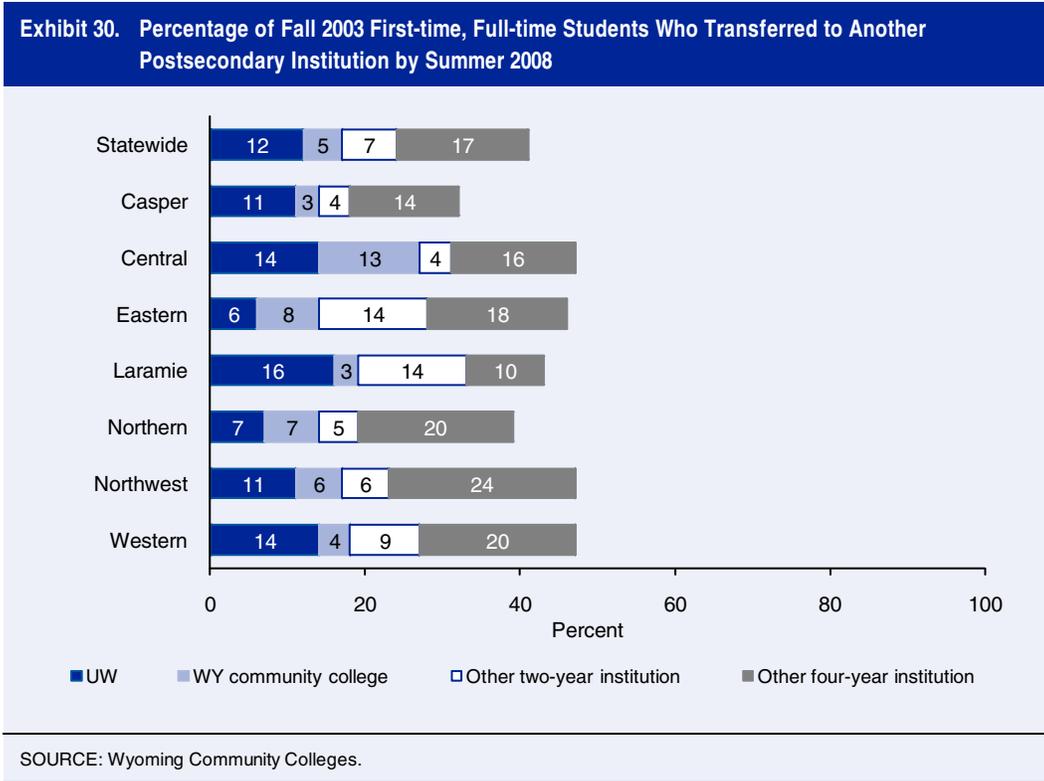
**Exhibit 29. Percentage of First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Completed a Degree or Certificate Within Four Years**



NOTE: Percentages are cumulative (i.e., total percentage of completions in summer 2008 includes the completions from each prior year.)

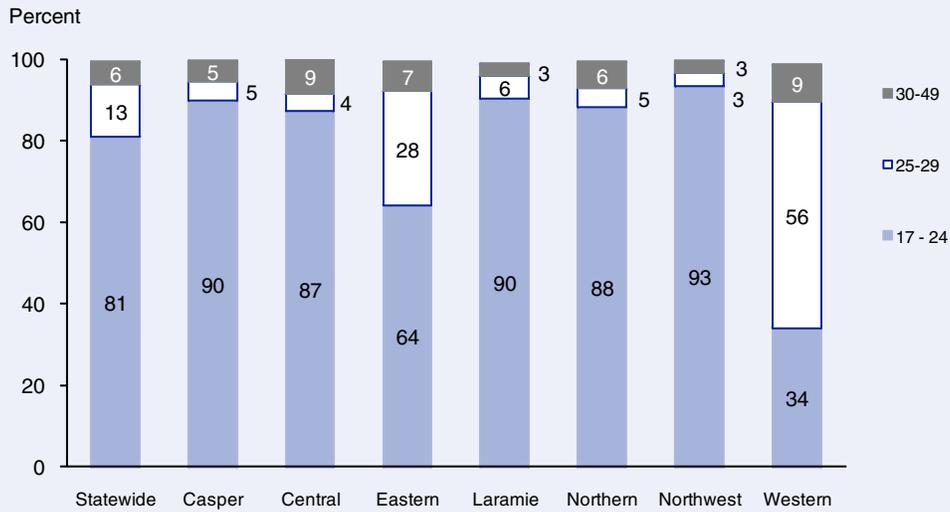
SOURCE: Wyoming Community Colleges.

Exhibit 30 indicates that the largest proportion of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students who transferred to another postsecondary institution went to a four-year institution other than the University of Wyoming. A very small proportion, less than 5 percent statewide, transferred to another Wyoming community college. Central Wyoming College had the highest proportion of intra-system transfers with 13 percent. More than 40 percent of fall 2003 students transferred to another institution to continue their education by the end of summer 2008.



The vast majority of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students were between the ages of 17 and 24 (exhibit 31). Notable exceptions were Eastern and Western, where only 64 percent and 34 percent of students, respectively, were 17 to 24 years of age. Western is the only college where more than half (56 percent) of students were between 25 and 29 years of age.

**Exhibit 31. Age of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Community College Students**

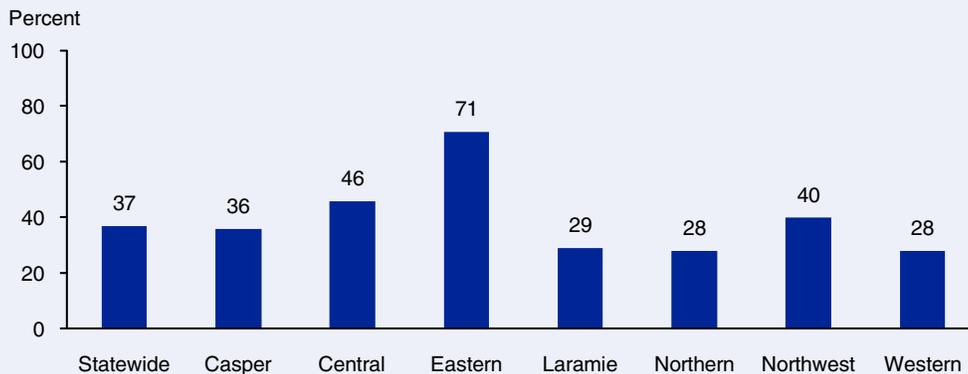


NOTE: Students of unknown age, age less than 17 years, and age greater than 50 years are not represented on this graph. Students of unknown age and age less than 17 years represented less than one-half of one percent of total first-time, full-time students at every college. Students 50 years of age and older represented one percent or less of first-time, full-time enrollment at each college.

SOURCE: Wyoming Community Colleges.

More than a third of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students were awarded a Pell grant to assist their education (exhibit 32). Pell grants are awarded to very needy students, indicating that Wyoming community colleges are serving many students who need substantial financial assistance in order to attend community college and pursue their educational goals.

**Exhibit 32. Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Were Awarded a Pell Grant**



SOURCE: Wyoming Community Colleges.

Several states have developed systems for collecting and reporting accountability and student outcomes data. Some examples of existing accountability and reporting systems include the following:

- Minnesota’s “Accountability Dashboard” is an interactive Web-based system that allows policymakers, administrators, and the public to view progress on selected accountability measures at any point in time. Results can be viewed through many different lenses, including at the system level and for each individual institution. Viewers can consult the dashboard for an overview of progress or delve deeper to look at numbers and trends for individual indicators. For more information, see <http://www.mnscu.edu/board/accountability/index.html>.
- Florida produces an annual “Fact Book” focused primarily on statistical information about its community colleges, including enrollment, completion data, employee and financial information, and library usage (Florida Department of Education 2009). For more information, see <http://www.fldoehub.org/CCTCMIS/c/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Colorado provides an annual “Sourcebook” that includes institutional statistics, funding data, performance results, and profiles of signature programs (Colorado Community College System 2008). For more information, see <http://www.cccs.edu/Communications/sourcebook.html>.

### **Action Steps**

- Identify additional indicators that demonstrate the state’s return on its investment, including employer satisfaction with graduates.
- Develop an annual report detailing statistical information and accountability results statewide and by college and make it available to policymakers and the public.

## **Strategy 8.3. Use data to promote student success and program improvement.**

While accountability gets substantial attention, it is only one part of a comprehensive approach to improvement. A comprehensive system takes into account not only what policymakers and the public need to know, but also what colleges and universities must learn so that they can improve educational programs and student outcomes. This is where “actionable” data come in—information that can be used to understand trends and patterns and then to encourage appropriate changes.

A system of continuous improvement that is focused on promoting student success and program improvement has three linked elements:

1. Accountability—to students, policymakers, internal and external stakeholders, and the public;
2. Evaluation—of programs and services to ensure that the state, colleges, and workforce partners are continually engaged in monitoring their initiatives, decisions, and plans; and
3. Program Improvement—ensuring that data are used actively, at state and local levels, to promote student success and improve the services available to students and communities.

A multi-tier approach to performance management gives states the flexibility to design high-level accountability measures to report succinct information to policymakers and the public, as well as to develop other performance indicators to answer very specific questions.

The most effective measures of student success and program improvement are developed through a collaborative effort, involving educators, administrators, industry, and government to identify what is important and how it should be measured. This plan identifies preliminary types of measures to consider in developing such a system to begin refining and implementing a system that represents a more complete range of Wyoming's interests and priorities.<sup>14</sup> Wyoming has work to do to identify “what counts as success, who is counted, and for how long” (Jaschik 2008).

### ***Establishing Wyoming's View of Student Success***

The community college system will need to define its view of student success. Relying on the federal formula for graduation rates—first-time, full-time students who graduate within three years—provides only a partial view of the successes students experience from a community college education. Three initial questions include:

1. Which students are included when looking at success? Is it only first-time, full-time? What about adult basic education students, part-timers, and short-term workforce training students?

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<sup>14</sup> As noted in Strategy 8.1, this approach can only be fully implemented when a statewide, unit-level, longitudinal data system is in place.

2. What is counted as a success? Transfer to another institution; completion of a credential, including those earned through external licensing and certification agencies; earning grades that indicate students are progressing toward completion of a goal; skill gains for adult education students; employment; employer satisfaction?
3. How long does it take students—not just first-time, full-time students—to succeed?

### ***Identifying Measures***

Once the state has decided what it wants to count as a success, who will be counted, and how long they will follow students to identify success, it will then begin identifying measures that tell a story of student success, and failure, within colleges and across the state.

1. Persistence—analyzing whether students continue along their educational path from one term to the next and one year to the next.
2. Progress—determining if students meet milestones that indicate they are progressing along their educational path. Milestones could include grades, completing ESL, or fulfilling developmental education requirements. The Community College Research Center defines milestones as “measurable educational achievements that include both conventional terminal completions, such as earning a credential or transferring to a baccalaureate program, and intermediate outcomes, such as completing developmental education or adult basic education requirements” (Leinbach and Jenkins 2008).
3. Momentum—what makes a difference in whether students achieve milestones? The Community College Research Center has identified “momentum points,” which are “measurable educational attainments that are empirically correlated with the completion of a milestone” (Leinbach and Jenkins 2008). Specific momentum points will be specific to Wyoming and its colleges, although some examples might be particular courses (such as introductory or gate-keeper math and English classes), a certain number of credits earned by a specific point in time, or completing a series of courses (Calcagno et al. 2007).
4. Transfer—do students transfer to other postsecondary institutions in Wyoming or in other states? And do students generally obtain a degree or certificate before transfer to a four-year university?
5. Placement—are students employed after leaving the institution? Are their wages higher than they were prior to college enrollment? Are employers satisfied with the skills and knowledge of former students?

***Action Steps***

- Identify performance measures and structures that promote ongoing program and quality improvement at the state and local levels.
- Respond to findings, whether negative or positive.

## Chapter 5. Implementation

This strategic plan addresses multiple aspects of community college operations, and each action step is important as Wyoming works to move its community college system from “good to great.” Economic circumstances and time constraints, however, will not allow the system to take on everything in the first two years. Therefore, this chapter consolidates the strategic objectives, strategies, and action steps into an implementation outline by grouping the action steps into three “tiers” and assigns a priority rating of one through three. Tier One action steps are essential and should be undertaken during the 2010–12 biennium. Tier Two action steps generally depend on the implementation of Tier One actions and should become high priorities once Tier One steps are underway or completed. Tier Three action steps are those requiring substantial lead time and resources or that depend on Tier One and Tier Two activities.

In categorizing the action steps into the three-tier structure, researchers consulted with community college representatives to identify their priorities for implementation. When MPR’s initial priority was lower than that of the colleges, researchers raised the priority of the action item at least one tier.

Exhibit 33 presents the summary of the strategic objectives, strategies, and action steps, and offers recommended implementation priorities for each.

# Exhibit 33. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

Strategy	Action Step	Responsible Organization(s)	Priority 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
<b>1. Student Access and Success—Ensure student access to education and training programs and full support in achieving their educational and professional goals.</b>			
1.1. Increase need-based state aid to students.	a. Assess eligibility for and use of the need-based component of the Hathaway Scholarship at each college.	Colleges WCCC	1
	b. Assess the need for need-based aid among older, nontraditional students, regardless of full-time/part-time enrollment status, and target state aid to those students.	Colleges WCCC	2
	c. Introduce a need-based state grant available to all Wyoming residents who attend a community college or the University of Wyoming and who are not getting aid from the Hathaway Scholarship or other sources.	Legislature	1
1.2. Increase the participation of women in programs leading to employment in occupations meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.	a. Introduce middle and high school outreach activities that expose young women to science, math, and technology early.	Colleges WCCC	3
	b. Recruit female community college students, particularly those who are displaced homemakers or single parents, into nontraditional career fields through enhanced career counseling and marketing.	Colleges	2
	c. Continually seek pay equity for women employed by the community colleges.	Colleges WCCC	2
1.3. Enable students to register easily at any community college in the state.	a. Provide a common online enrollment portal for all community colleges.	WCCC	1
	b. Adopt common placement thresholds for the reading, writing, and mathematics COMPASS assessments across all seven community colleges	WCCC Colleges	1
1.4. Improve statewide articulation of courses among high schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.	a. Focus articulation between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming on programs leading to occupations with pay that meets the Self-Sufficiency Standard.	WCCC UW Colleges	1
	b. Align the work of the community colleges with the state's strategic plan for career and technical education.	Colleges	2
	c. Expand concurrent enrollment by encouraging participation among high school students ready for college-level work.	Colleges WCCC	1
1.5. Increase outreach to special populations.	a. Provide greater support to adult basic education instruction in community colleges to promote success for students from underserved communities.	Colleges WCCC	3
	b. Connect adult basic education programs to career pathways opportunities.	Colleges WCCC	3
1.6. Enhance wrap-around services offered by the colleges to support student success.	a. Enable all community college students to develop a personal pathway allowing them to maximize use of college resources in pursuit of their goals.	WCCC Colleges	2
	b. Increase childcare capacity for students with families.	Colleges	3
	c. Increase housing for students with families or those who live too far away to commute.	Colleges Legislature	3
<b>2. Quality Programs—Ensure that all colleges offer quality, relevant programs that meet state and local needs.</b>			
2.1. Ensure that colleges can adapt quickly to respond to local workforce and community needs.	a. Maintain academic, career and technical, developmental, adult continuing, and workforce education programs at all colleges to support education and skill development to meet local business, community, and economic needs.	Colleges	1
	b. Support local college administrators and boards in identifying local needs and appropriate programs through periodic analyses, in collaboration with the Department of Employment, of labor market trends at the state and regional levels.	WCCC	1
	c. Implement periodic reviews of college strategic and master plans to ensure they align with the statewide strategic plan.	Colleges	1
2.2. Support signature programs at each college.	a. Maintain a statewide list of signature programs at each college and update it biennially.	WCCC	1
	b. Provide links, through shared curriculum or online learning, between signature programs and other community colleges to offer initial academic and basic courses to students, so they can start their studies locally and then transfer to the college hosting the signature program to complete their studies.	Colleges WCCC	2
	c. Employ stringent and consistent local and state standards for program proposal, approval, and elimination to reduce the unnecessary duplication of resource-intensive CTE programs.	WCCC	1

# Exhibit 33. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

Continued

Strategy	Action Step	Responsible Organization(s)	Priority 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
<b>3. Distance Learning</b> —Expand the role of distance learning in serving rural and hard-to-reach populations and providing cost-saving access and educational services for students and colleges.			
3.1. Provide support to strengthen a statewide system for distance learning.	a. Increase fiscal support for WyDEC's coordination of distance education statewide, including the WyClass Website.	Legislature WCCC UW	1
	b. Develop a common registration system for distance education courses.	WCCC UW	1
	c. Explore the adoption of a common payment system for distance learning courses.	WCCC	2
	d. Develop and implement a distance education funding formula that encourages colleges to share resources and students.	WCCC	2
3.2. Expand distance learning opportunities.	a. Increase the number of programs offered through distance learning.	Colleges WCCC	3
	b. Offer professional development in distance learning to current faculty and staff, as well as faculty recruited to teach distance courses.	Colleges WCCC	2
	c. Enhance student support services for distance learning beyond the minimum required for program accreditation.	Colleges WCCC	2
	d. Expand the common course numbering system and content standards and include CTE courses to enable students to take distance learning courses from any campus they choose.	WCCC UW Colleges	2

## 4. Alignment of Programs and Workforce Opportunities

—Ensure that career and technical education programs align with workforce development and labor market opportunities.

4.1. Target programs to industries projected to have the greatest number of job openings now and over the next 10 years and that will assist residents to reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard.	a. Partner with the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, and Wyoming Business Council to identify emerging industries they have targeted for development and leverage available federal and state resources to support workforce development, education, and training initiatives. Hold a biennial meeting of the Commission, colleges, and industry stakeholders to determine how the system will address emerging industries and workforce trends.	WCCC	1
	b. Tailor a biennial report of Wyoming economic and labor market trends to community college regions. The WCCC can collaborate with the Department of Employment to build upon existing data resources and publications to develop a report targeted for use by community colleges.	WCCC	1
	c. Pilot one to three P-16 career pathways focused on one or more of the identified industries. Ensure all partners are involved in the planning and implementation, including K-12, the University of Wyoming, the WCCC, and workforce and economic development agencies and organizations.	WCCC UW Colleges DWS	2
	d. Fund noncredit workforce training programs through a grant program to support rapid response to workforce development opportunities.	Legislature	2
4.2. Place programs at appropriate locations throughout the state to ensure that Wyoming can meet the labor market demands for targeted occupations.	a. Solicit recommendations from Advisory Committees, economic and workforce agencies, and industry representatives to help determine where programs would be most successful within the state.	WCCC Colleges	1
	b. Use the program approval criteria described in Strategic Objective 6 to make decisions about the number and location of new programs for targeted occupations.	WCCC	2

### Responsible Organizations Key

Business Council	Wyoming Business Council
Colleges	All community colleges in Wyoming
Dept of Ed.	Wyoming Department of Education
Dept of Emp.	Wyoming Department of Employment
Dept of Health	Wyoming Department of Health
DWS	Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
Legislature	Wyoming State Legislature
UW	University of Wyoming
WCCC	Wyoming Community College Commission
WDC	Workforce Development Council

# Exhibit 33. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

Continued

Strategy	Action Step	Responsible Organization(s)	Priority 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
<b>5. Partnerships</b> —Support economic development through partnerships with local and statewide business and industry, government and education agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.			
5.1. Expand current partnerships with business and industry.	a. Document use of local and statewide Advisory Committees for career and technical education and workforce training programs.	WCCC Colleges	2
	b. Develop a plan for using Advisory Committees for multiple purposes in community college regions and across the state.	WCCC Colleges	2
	c. Actively partner with the Department of Workforce Services, the Workforce Development Council, and the Department of Employment to reinforce the community colleges' role as a primary resource for workforce training.	WCCC Colleges DWS WDC Dept of Emp. Business Council	1
5.2. Identify and develop new ways to share data and information with other state agencies and organizations.	a. Explore the possibility of shared data and information systems among public sector agencies, including the Departments of Employment, Workforce Services, Education, and Health, and the WCCC and the University of Wyoming.	Dept of Emp. DWS Dept of Ed. Dept of Health WCCC UW	3
<b>6. Coordination and Collaboration</b> —Improve system efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced communication and coordination.			
6.1. Promote shared policy development and decision making and improve collaboration among the Wyoming Community College Commission Commissioners, staff, and the colleges.	a. Use the Consultation Agreement as defined.	WCCC Colleges	1
	b. Use the strategic plan criteria for new program approval based on state interests.	WCCC	1
	c. Use the strategic plan criteria for capital construction approval based on state interests.	WCCC	1
	d. Address underlying conflicts that arise in funding recommendations through a well-defined dispute resolution process.	WCCC	1
6.2. Implement processes to improve system efficiency and reduce unnecessary redundancy.	a. Identify and pursue opportunities to automate and centralize selected college operational functions.	WCCC Colleges	
	b. Minimize unnecessary system redundancy through careful program siting.	WCCC Colleges	2

## The Mission

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 Interests

*Educated citizenry:* Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering 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.

# Exhibit 33. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

Continued

Strategy	Action Step	Responsible Organization(s)	Priority 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
<b>7. Adequate Resources</b> —Provide adequate resources, given available funds, distributed in a way that promotes quality and positive student outcomes.			
7.1. Ensure that the colleges have and maintain adequate facilities aligned with the statewide strategic plan.	a. Use the capital construction prioritization process outlined in Strategy 6.1.	WCCC	1
	b. Prioritize projects once each biennium so that colleges have time to plan for the future.	WCCC	2
	c. Include capital construction funding for student housing in the state capital construction prioritization process.	WCCC	3
	d. Change state statute to allow biennial prioritization of community college capital construction projects.	Legislature	1
	e. Identify funding each biennium for upgrades to equipment needed for college CTE programs that meet state needs and strategic objectives.	Legislature	2
7.2. Employ sustainable and comprehensive funding mechanisms that recognize the multiple functions and roles of community colleges.	a. Provide funds to address the costs of enrollment growth on a biennial basis.	Legislature	2
	b. Help the colleges get and maintain resources through special-purpose funding for innovative college programs aligned with the statewide strategic plan. Assist in identifying the start-up costs of developing and implementing new programs.	Legislature WCCC	2
	c. In the future, introduce additional elements to the state community college funding formula that emphasize student success and program quality. Access is currently the priority reflected in the funding formula's focus on FTE enrollment in credit programs.	WCCC	3

## 8. System of Continuous Improvement—Emphasize accountability and student success.

8.1. Build a statewide longitudinal data system for community colleges.	a. Determine the cost of a management information system (MIS) that could house unit-level data for all community college students, including credit and noncredit students. Complete this assessment by June 2010.	WCCC	1
	b. Install an MIS at the WCCC that can house and maintain a state community college longitudinal dataset.	WCCC	1
	c. Ensure that WCCC staff have the database and research expertise to maintain and use data effectively and to distribute funding based on results to improve student and institutional outcomes.	WCCC	1
	d. Require colleges to submit unit-level enrollment, student, course, and financial data each term and annually to populate the longitudinal database.	WCCC Colleges	2
	e. In the future, create a state longitudinal data system that links K-12, community colleges, and the university.	WCCC Dept of Ed. UW	3
8.2. Develop an accountability system that allows the WCCC and the colleges to demonstrate return on the state's investment.	a. Identify additional indicators that demonstrate the state's return on its investment, including employer satisfaction with graduates.	WCCC Colleges	1
	b. Develop an annual report detailing statistical information and accountability results statewide and by college and make it available to policymakers and the public.	WCCC	1
8.3. Use data to promote student success and program improvement.	a. Identify performance measures and structures that promote ongoing program and quality improvement at the state and local levels.	WCCC Colleges Dept of Emp. Dept of Ed. UW	1
	b. Respond to findings, whether negative or positive.	WCCC Colleges	1

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Dept of Emp.	Wyoming Department of Employment
Dept of Health	Wyoming Department of Health
DWS	Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
Legislature	Wyoming State Legislature
UW	University of Wyoming
WCCC	Wyoming Community College Commission
WDC	Workforce Development Council



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