

Sine die...finally.

This year ended up being one of the most bizarre legislative sessions in recent history. The budget session of the 64th Legislature adjourned almost a week later than planned after days of fierce negotiations between the two houses, conference committees, and leadership kept them from adjourning on time. As was the case at the beginning of the session, the most significant issues at the end proved to be K12 funding, capital construction, and the looming budget crisis. Even in the final hours, K12 financing and capital construction were undecided until very delicate agreements could be negotiated and agreed upon by both sides (and the Governor). In the end, K12 was cut by \$27M, and the state funded capital construction projects, however, policy makers did not do much to lessen the \$800M structural budget gap. That will be a job for future legislators and a new governor.

While budget issues carried most of the weight this session, others garnered plenty of attention – including two gun bills. One bill will allow people to carry concealed weapons into churches and houses of worship. The other clarified Wyoming’s “stand your ground” statutes. The legislation was meant to strengthen and clarify Wyoming’s self-defense laws, something advocates say is necessary to empower law-abiding state residents to protect themselves. WACCT will continue to watch the gun bills as we head into the next year – we can likely expect another run at allowing guns in schools in the next general session of 2019.

The Management Council will not meet until April 15th this year to determine interim assignments for the committees. The colleges might expect to see issues such as school safety, statewide mill levies, ETS services, and common college transcripts, among others.

THE BUDGET BILL –

The bill appropriates \$2.9B from the General Fund and authorizes 7,377 full-time positions and 304 part-time positions.

Of interest to the Community Colleges:

- \$6.6M from the School Foundation Program Reserve Account for the **Excellence in Higher Education Endowment Reserve Account**. There is no expectation of future state transfers, appropriations or other contributions to this appropriation (noted in the bill). Further, UW and the Community Colleges "shall take all necessary steps to align expenditures to accommodate irregular realized investment earnings from the endowment fund."
- Borrowing authority authorizing the State Treasurer to borrow from the LSRA (rainy day fund) amounts necessary to meet the month-to-month cash flow requirements of the **Hathaway Scholarship Program**.
- Specified contribution amounts for **state health insurance** as outlined on page 53 (Section 304)
- **Major maintenance** dollars of \$110M:
 - 42.03% to state construction department for state facilities
 - 37.51% to UW, excluding student housing
 - 20.46% to the Community College districts
 - No later than September 1, 2019, the State Construction Department shall submit to the State Building Commission a recommendation for funding for the biennium beginning

July 1, 2020, for major building and facility repair and maintenance for state institutions, UW and the Community Colleges.

- No later than October 31, 2019, the State Construction Department, UW, and the Community Colleges shall report to the State Building Commission and the JAC on the expenditures and commitments made from the appropriations in this year's budget bill.
- All **bulk computer hardware and operating software** shall be made through the Department of Enterprise Technology Services – applies to all agencies except UW and the Community Colleges. The CIO shall collaborate with UW and the Community Colleges to identify opportunities to reduce costs for bulk purchases of computers and operating software.
- \$5M from the LSRA to the Office of the Governor for a single grant or loan awarded to a Community College for one-year operational costs of an **automotive technology trade school** (LCCC acquisition of WyoTech).

Governor Line Item Veto of the Budget Bill:

Governor Mead vetoed several items in the budget bill, including the following:

- Section 312 – Statewide employee reduction and budget reduction
- Section 331 – Operation of automotive technology trade school grant or loan – the Governor removed the requirement that recommendations be submitted on or before April 1, 2018.

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION –

[HB 194](#) ended up being the vehicle of choice for state-funded capital construction projects. Of interest to the colleges:

- **Build Wyoming Loan Program** where local political subdivisions, including community college districts, may apply through the State Loan and Investment Board to receive loans to fund community infrastructure needs for the following purposes:
 - Up to \$400,000,000 may be loaned to local political subdivisions under separate program allotments for general infrastructure projects (up to \$200,000,000) or for roads and street projects (up to \$200,000,000).
 - Up to \$60,000,000 may be loaned to community college districts to help fund construction and renovation of student dormitories.
- Up to \$60M for the **community college residence hall loan program**:
 - Loans shall be at an interest rate of one percent (1%) plus seventy-five thousandths of one percent (.075%) for each year of the loan term in excess of five (5) years;
 - Loans shall be for an initial term of not fewer than five (5) years
- \$500,000 from the Legislative Stabilization Reserve Account to the Community College Endowment Challenge Account for use as matching funds for a **Central Wyoming Community College outreach facility in Teton County**.
- Projects:
 - NWCCD- Health Science Bldg. \$385,000
 - LCCC- PE Building Reno \$7,300,000 authorization
 - NWC- Performing Arts Ctr.¹ \$495,000
 - NWC- Student Center ¹ \$550,000
 - LCCC- Albany County Campus¹ \$1,300,000 authorization
 - CC- Visual Arts Bldg.^{1 2} \$5,750,000

¹ As a condition of this general fund appropriation, the community college to which the funds are appropriated shall expend the entire appropriation of other funds prior to the release of any general funds appropriated for purposes of the authorized capital construction project.

² Casper College shall complete requirements specified in footnotes 1 and 3 of this section for the Casper College-Agriculture and Equine Center appropriation before release of the general fund appropriation for the Casper College-Visual Arts Building.

- CC- Ag & Equine Center^{1 3} \$2,000,000
- WWCC- Mechanical Repairs⁴ \$1,071,200
- LCCC- Fine Arts Bldg. ¹ \$7,000,000
- LCCC- Crossroads \$1,200,000 authorization

OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST –

One of the significant bills of interest to the WACCT was [HB175 – common college transcripts](#). The bill was drafted at the frustration of several members of the legislature who had family members with course transcript difficulties between the colleges and UW. What resulted was the following requirement of the Wyoming Community College Commission, *“Develop and maintain a common transcript system that uses common course numbering for all courses provided at the community colleges or the University of Wyoming. The system shall facilitate program planning and the transfer of students and course credits between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming. The development and ongoing maintenance of the statewide course numbering system, including determining course equivalencies, shall be accomplished with the assistance of appropriate committees that shall include faculty members and staff of the community colleges and the University of Wyoming.”*

As required in the bill, the WCCC, the seven community colleges and the University of Wyoming shall submit a report not later than October 31, 2018 to the Joint Education Interim Committee that establishes a plan for development of an electronic transcript transfer system that allows each student information system to send and receive transcript data automatically and establishment of a course equivalence and common course numbering system. The plan shall include recommendations for resource needs and policy or statute changes necessary to accomplish this directive.

ENDOW BILLS –

The Legislature passed several bills in support of the ENDOW (Economically Needed Diversity Options for Wyoming) Initiative:

- [Senate File 29 Education-computer science and computational thinking](#) will add computer science to the state educational program – making Wyoming the second state in the country to require its schools to offer computer science education for K-12 students.
- [Senate File 40 Commercial air service improvement](#) supports the Wyoming Department of Transportation’s (WYDOT) 10-year Commercial Air Service Plan (CASP) to create a reliable and affordable option for air service in Wyoming. CASP would enable the WYDOT Aeronautics Division to contract with one airline to provide commercial air service to a major hub airport, such as Denver or Salt Lake City. Local communities and the state would be able to determine the fares, flight times and potentially share in the profits.
- [Senate File 100 Economic diversification-broadband services](#) establishes a broadband coordinator position, a broadband advisory council and a Wyoming broadband grant fund to help ensure every community in Wyoming can connect with the world through reliable high-speed internet.

³ For the Casper College-Agriculture and Equine Center, any funds expended pursuant to 2014 Wyoming Session Laws, Chapter 26, Section 3, Section 006, footnote 5, up to seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000.00), shall be considered expenditures of other funds for purposes of footnote 1 of this section if the Casper College-Agriculture and Equine Center is constructed on the property acquired from that expenditure.

⁴ Of this general fund appropriation, five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) shall only be expended upon a determination by the governor, in consultation with Western Wyoming Community College and the state construction department, that insufficient appropriations are available to address emergency repair needs related to building system failures at the college.

- [Senate File 108 Economic diversification and development](#) expands the state’s agriculture marketing program and provides for an international trade representative to promote and sell Wyoming products.
- [Senate File 118 Kickstart Wyoming-economic diversification](#) will build out Wyoming’s entrepreneurial network by establishing a dedicated organization to provide capital access funds for startups.
- [Senate File 119 Workforce development-priority economic sector program](#) establishes a dedicated fund for workforce training in priority economic sectors. The community colleges are included in this workforce training so WACCT will continue to track how this program evolves.
- [House Bill 70 Open Blockchain Tokens Exemptions](#), [House Bill 101 Electronic Corporate Records](#), [House Bill 126 Limited Liability Companies-Series](#), and [House Bill 19 Wyoming Money Transmitter Act-virtual currency exemption](#) and [Senate File 111 Property taxation-digital currencies](#) are all part of a package to help drive a new industry in Wyoming. Wyoming is getting a lot of national attention from the passage of these bills.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the successes of the budget session. It did not happen overnight, but we did good work. Let’s continue to shine the light on Wyoming’s community colleges!