



2021 POLICY PRIORITIES – OCTOBER 2020

SUPPORT THE SOLUTION - WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE EAGER TO ANSWER THE CALL

Wyoming's Community Colleges are equipped right now to build our economy with:

- **An Educated Citizenry** – Community Colleges increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs.
 - The Colleges strive to streamline student educational pathways, aligning workforce needs with programmatic offerings.
 - Each college district partners with local K12 school districts to offer concurrent enrollment opportunities for rural students.
 - Wyoming's community colleges enroll nearly three-quarters (3/4) of all college students in the state.
 - Wyoming Community Colleges served 29,486 credit students during the 2018-2019 academic year (WCCC website, 2018-2019 Enrollment Report), as much as any major university.
 - Adult basic education programs, offered by Wyoming Community Colleges, enrolled 1,733 students in 2016-2017, helping those students to obtain high school equivalency credentials and workforce skills (WY ABE Profile 2017, WCCC website).
 - Community College graduates have higher earning power which brings value to the local and state economy. The colleges provide a cost-effective way for people in Wyoming to attain a higher education. This correlates directly with low unemployment, higher quality of life, less drug use, fewer medical issues – a lower tax burden.
- **Economic Diversification and Development** – Wyoming's Community Colleges have been laying the groundwork for the state to diversify and develop its economy, but there is more work to be done:
 - As seen from the college's response to the State's Wyoming Works (WW) funding, the colleges are eager to advance new programs. More funds are needed to meet the colleges' and industry needs.
 - The colleges have brought forth the Bachelor of Applied Science four-year degree in response to businesses.

- When there is sufficient demand to warrant new programs, the Colleges do their best to find funding to hire faculty and purchase equipment.
- The colleges are required (federally for Perkins funds) and are proud to have local Advisory Committees to ensure they are continually seeking local industry input to meet their needs while also obtaining great internships and job placements for students.
- The college systems serve the state as **economic, cultural, and educational hubs**, helping local communities to thrive.
- Without the 7 Community College hubs, many of Wyoming's rural communities would offer little to attract new businesses.
- Many thousands of non-academic events (e.g., concerts, festivals, conferences) take place at the college serving hundreds of thousands of non-credit citizens each year.
- With many of Wyoming's college grads leaving the state we need to do more, not less, in bolstering the local appeal and opportunities in our rural communities.
- In terms of dollars injected into the local economy to establish opportunities for new, diverse businesses, community colleges contribute so much and are game changers for local regions.
- **Workforce Development** – Local industries have asked the colleges to train their workers and offer safety programs and “soft skills” to help their workers advance. The colleges have heard the call:
 - Each of the seven colleges have local industry CTE advisory committees but are always asking, “how can we help?”
 - The legislatively driven Wyoming Works program is a great example of aligning local business and industry sector needs with college programming.
 - More than 800 businesses, industries, community partners and other agencies participated in the advisory councils across the state in identifying nearly 250 authorized Wyoming Works programs. Those programs range from accounting to welding, and include industrial, retail, service, technology, hospitality, outdoor recreation, education, government, health care and manufacturing career opportunities.
 - Recent efforts to create a shared CDL program (NWC, LCCC and EWC) is a good example of the colleges striving for diversification for their local economies.
 - The Wyoming Works initiative created the meat science consortium with Central Wyoming College, Eastern Wyoming College and Sheridan College to develop a Meat Science Certificate Program. With this consortium, the Mobile Meat Science unit was purchased which will assist in training students to support a workforce crucial to our local food supply chain in Wyoming. This will enable our colleges to train the next generation of butchers to be able to invigorate and establish a refreshed meat processing and marketing system supported by small to mid-scale, locally minded meat enterprises.

- Each college enjoys a high demand for their nursing programs and can only fill a certain number of students based on the number of faculty they are able to salary. EWC developed a nursing night classes program to meet the needs of local hospitals in their service territory.
- In 2019, a consortium of industry leaders partnered with WWCC to develop a Plant Operations program to support the trona mines, Simplot, and other southwest Wyoming manufacturers.
- **Efficient and effective systems** – Wyoming’s Community Colleges maximize return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.¹

The Colleges continue to strive for **cost efficiencies** through coordination at the WCCC level and will continue to do so under the strained financial environment. Examples include:

- Centralized data warehouse in partnership with multiple state agencies
- Statewide contracts for major technology systems, including Colleague, Canvas and Zoom
- Library databases purchased through a statewide consortium
- Shared facilities between UW and most community colleges
- Shared equipment for academic programs

Finally, the current system also allows for several examples of joint **student success** efforts, as the focus is always on the student first:

- 2+2 transfer agreements with UW
- UW, five of the Community Colleges and many K12 districts share the same Learning Management System, Canvas.
- A statewide transfer system portal is currently being developed
- Statewide website (WYCLASS) lists all online classes currently available across the state
- UW and the seven colleges have a common course numbering system
- Shared professional development conferences
- Councils of leaders from all of the Wyoming Community College institutions that work on joint governance projects
- Statewide projects and initiatives such as the Attainment Council, WCCC statewide strategic plan, among others.

¹ State’s Needs Survey, Wyoming Community Colleges Sub-Committee College Sustainable Funding, Summary Responses and Probing Questions, August 2020

WHAT IS THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

- Wyoming's Community College system is ranked #1 in the nation according to a recent report from WalletHub, with 5 of the 7 Wyoming colleges ranked in the top 35 of 650 colleges.²
- 75% of UW's 2019 spring semester students were community college transfers.
- Wyoming's Community Colleges add \$1.1B in added income to the Wyoming economy.³
 - For every \$1 spent:
 - Students - \$3.70 gained in lifetime earnings
 - Taxpayers - \$1.40 gained in added state revenues and social savings
 - Society - \$4.90 gained in added taxes and public sector savings

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

- 1. Support the Solution - Empower the Community Colleges to Drive Economic Development**
- 2. Study the appropriate funding structure for Wyoming's Community Colleges including state aid, local taxes, and student tuition, and consider creative funding opportunities.**
- 3. Include the community colleges in the Wyoming Constitution as UW and K21 are protected.**
- 4. Incorporate a state-wide funding mechanism to mirror the state-wide services the colleges provide.**
- 5. Allow more tools in the local toolbox.**
- 6. Incentivize desired state goals for higher education of an educated citizenry, economic diversification & development, and workforce training through the community college funding formula.**
- 7. Adjust HB 80 to incentivize distance education, consortium programming, consolidating in programming, non-credit and apprenticeship programs, and external cost adjustments.**
- 8. Support capital construction and restore major maintenance funding to allow the colleges to meet the needs of industry and maintain facilities to meet the needs of students.**
- 9. Invest in a Wyoming Adult Student Financial Aid Program.**

² <https://wallethub.com/edu/e/best-worst-community-colleges/15076/?fbclid=IwAR05TyZ-FLpD6n8mI3FaxU4kOfKT8FjsAn1IsLw9ZcvK5cep6XJIXJ9bhY>

³ The Economic Value of Wyoming Community Colleges, March 2016, 2016 Economic Modeling Specialists Intl.

EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The primary challenge facing Wyoming’s Community Colleges is sustainable funding. The state currently contributes 58% of total funding with the state aid block grant. Student tuition and local mill levies contribute the other 42%, split almost equally. The State currently faces a \$1.7B budget shortfall and the Governor just imposed the first 10% cuts to state agencies. Another 10% may be forthcoming and will be devastating to the colleges. This comes at a time when the Community Colleges are part of the solution to keep the pulse of the state beating – training workforce, a competitive workforce, increasing educational attainment, and creating education opportunity for thousands of people statewide. **If this is what the Wyoming Legislature expects from the Community Colleges, a corresponding commitment to fund those expectations would be appropriate.**

Funding sustainability priorities (see the attached matrix of funding options):

- Since the colleges serve all 23 counties, any future sustainable funding for the Wyoming Community College system should include a state-wide revenue component.
- The Legislature should empower the Community Colleges with more tools in the local funding “toolbox”. This would empower the state to drive more contributions from community college economies, which are inherently local.
- A funding formula for the future should incentivize the colleges to meet the needs and wants of the state (i.e. incentives for colleges to work together to reduce programmatic costs, financial reward for programming consortiums, delivery of distance education, development of non-credit, industry specific programs and apprenticeships).

WACCT asks that state aid to the Community Colleges be held as flat as possible, and supplemented with rainy day funds, until one or more of these solutions can be implemented and a sustainable funding source be supported legislatively.

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION AND MAJOR MAINTENANCE

WACCT encourages continued investment in the capital facilities and major maintenance funding to ensure the safety, currency, and relevancy of the colleges’ physical campuses. Although the capital construction bill from the 2020 Budget Session was not successful, the Community Colleges remain steadfast in their support for the projects in that bill, as prioritized by the WCCC.

- **With the recent shift to quarterly payments for major maintenance, and now the reduction in funding, the colleges are limited in their ability to address major maintenance projects.**

- **Recognizing the current fiscal position of the state presents additional challenges, the Colleges support the 2020 interim capital construction bill that moves forward the projects that will have no cost to the state at this time and those deemed crucial.** Those include the following:
 - WWCC capital renewal project for \$11.740M
 - Authorizations for property acquisition for NWCCD
 - Authorizations without funding for NWCCD Gillette College Academic Center Level II and WWCC Nursing Level III planning
 - CWC's no-cost approval of the Jackson land purchase/swap
- **The Colleges also stress the importance of the other community college projects – there are significant impacts of delaying the process for these projects.**
 - “Cost of delay” – something with which we are all familiar in Wyoming. This is true for potholes, highway maintenance, as well as capital projects.
 - The rigorous 13-point evaluation process of the Wyoming Community College Commission and the prioritization from the State Building Commission address the critical infrastructure failures and needs of the colleges. This is a cost-effective year-over-year process.
 - The colleges are already committed to securing donations and other sources for funding one-half the cost of the construction projects. For the larger projects this means that those communities and donors are already stretched financially.
 - Community College capital construction projects provide a major stimulus to an aching economy.

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN AN ADULT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM

As with the last several years, WACCT continues to encourage the state Legislature to establish a state-level, adult-focused financial aid program that provides financial assistance adequate to encourage adults to enroll in/return to colleges to earn high-value postsecondary credentials. Encouragingly, the Governor and Legislature appropriated a short-term adult aid program using CARES Act dollars, but that is just a first step.

- UW, the Wyoming Community College Commission, ENDOW and by executive order, the State of Wyoming have formally adopted higher education attainment goals.
- Higher education attainment levels are directly correlated to economic productivity and will be even more so in the future.
- If Wyoming high schools graduated every senior in the state, and if Wyoming had the highest college-going rate in the nation, the numbers would still not be sufficient to reach the higher education attainment goals.

- Therefore, Wyoming must re-engage working adults already committed to living here and encourage them to earn a post-secondary credential.
- According to the Lumina Foundation, Wyoming has 87,034 working-aged adults with just a high school diploma and 56,149 with some college, but no credential.
- Wyoming could meet the attainment goal if the colleges could help just 40 percent of these individuals earn a post-secondary credential.
- It is difficult for working adults to leave the labor force to pursue higher education because of life commitments and financial obligations.
- With Hathaway focused on traditional-age students, the addition of an adult-focused scholarship program is a natural counterpart to serve all Wyomingites' pursuit of higher education.

RED HERRINGS

A GOVERNANCE SOLUTION WILL NOT SOLVE A FUNDING PROBLEM

- Community Colleges in Wyoming locally service our local communities. Taking governance by locally elected trustees away takes the “community” out of community colleges.
- Wyoming’s community college system is unique in that our community colleges are not as urban as others across the country. Indeed, all 23 counties benefit from the services of the seven community colleges and the service territories are very rural. In Wyoming, the colleges serve as the cultural and community hubs of their communities.
- Advocates who support system consolidation typically do so for two main reasons:
 - To save money. The idea is that there may be duplication of efforts across schools that can be reduced by centralizing some administrative functions. (UW and the Colleges have a long list of collaborations, *see above*)
 - To ease student transfer and improve student success. The reasoning is that it should be easier to enroll and transfer between schools within a single system than between independent colleges. (*In Wyoming, the WCCC coordinates student transfer with UW and we have made great progress in the last few years.*)
- Empirical studies show that it is not clear that system consolidation actually leads to improved student success and reduced costs. Other possible downsides of system consolidation include⁴:
 - Loss of local governance

⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12zb0ZPhFtJENJu7YZf4mlkluBYasyZix/view>, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AKKRQGBpPhzapUCy7zUckn1isYfAiSCJ/view>, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11F2pWZ9FXzwsXHC2XEKJjci00KAGEEoU/view>

- Loss of the community colleges' ability to nimbly meet local needs and maintain their local character
- Loss of community college emphasis on serving the community through non-credit programming, workforce development, and other important non-academic community needs.
- Increased state-level bureaucracy
- System consolidation is typically highly politically controversial, and may distract from other issues that are important to colleges

ONLINE PROGRAMMING DOES NOT SAVE MONEY

Moving to online programming for non-CTE programming in the name of saving money is not based on data or research. According to a July 2020 article by the Brookings Institute⁵, there are three takeaways for leaders and policymakers to consider:

1. Recent and ongoing increases in online coursework are unlikely to lead to substantial cost savings for institutions.
2. Institutions will need to offer more student support services such as tutoring, mentoring, mental health services, and these supports will likely make online instruction even more costly.
3. The recent mass move to online instruction across the country highlighted deep inequities in online access and supplementary supports, as well as facets of education that cannot be easily recast into an online format such as diesel mechanics that need the equipment and tools to learn their trade or students in healthcare, like most professions, need hands-on learning to meet the challenges of their job.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FUNDING THE COLLEGES – HISTORY AND IMPACT OF BUDGET CUTS

- The Community Colleges are unprotected in the Wyoming Constitution. K12 is guaranteed revenues for an adequate and equitable education for all Wyoming students and UW to keep their education as free as possible. The Community Colleges are not afforded a similar constitutional guarantee.
- Approximately 58% of funding for Wyoming's Community Colleges currently comes from direct State appropriations (*This does not include health insurance, capital construction*).
- Between the 2011/2012 and 2019/2020 biennium, unrestricted state aid to the community colleges decreased by 8.2%.

⁵ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/07/28/why-the-move-to-online-instruction-wont-reduce-college-costs/>

- FY16 and FY20 State Appropriations were cut 5.77%
- Local revenues declined 15.122% during this time.
- Adjusted for inflation, the decline amounts to \$53.8M and this does not include impacts from the pandemic.
- Wyoming's community college tuition has increased 96.4% in the last decade (2009-2019)⁶.
 - Between FY16 and FY20, tuition and fees at Wyoming's community colleges have increased 7.9% during that same time.
 - Colleges have “stepped up” at the students' expense, increasing tuition and fees; currently accounting for 23% of budget.
 - The WCCC has increased tuition eight (8) times over the past 10 years.
- FY2020 has already seen an additional 10% decline in State Appropriations, with another 10% possible.
- Any additional budget cuts beyond the 10% already enacted in FY20 will lead to additional layoffs at our institutions (beyond those already implemented over the past two years), and almost certainly lead to the loss of entire programs which will directly impact the ability to deliver on workforce training and educational attainment – two pillars to a thriving economy. As institutions grapple with having to cut classes and programs, those eliminations will further decrease enrollment, and thus continuing or even accelerating the funding tailspin.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES – WYOMING'S BEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, AND “WHY IT MATTERS”

- Wyoming's Community Colleges want to not only be good team players and do our part in addressing the current budget crisis, but also desire to be significant partners in implementing future economic development plans for the state.
- Community Colleges “comprehensively” serve our communities. In Wyoming, our community colleges are truly comprehensive. Not only do the colleges provide for-credit classes, they do all the community programming, economic development, and non-credit activities, have residence halls, sports teams, restaurants, theaters, museums, etc. It is impossible to compare a community college in another state – it is apples to oranges. Why? They need to remain competitive, maintain quality programs, and bring value to their communities they serve.
- The majority of community college students are “part time, employed and older and are “place-bound”. They cannot simply pack up and move to another town for college. They have car payments, children, a job, a family, and they cannot leave.

⁶ WICHE Tuition and Fees in the West, 2019, <https://www.wiche.edu/pub/tf>

- Local communities need replication of programming. The fundamental design of community college for-credit programs is based on local advisory committees around which we design and place our students. Each community needs these programs.
- Community Colleges are the “hubs” of our Wyoming communities by providing high school equivalency, English as a second language, and other courses to help develop our communities. They are also the hubs for dual and concurrent enrollment for high school students, saving families thousands of dollars.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE – HOW IT WORKS

Over the years, the Wyoming Legislature has asked the Community Colleges to meet attainment goals, build workforce programs, offer financial aid packages to adult learners, work with K12 and UW to build pathways, and the list goes on. Local industries have asked the colleges to train their workforce and build high-demand programs. This is accomplished through the current governance system of **locally elected Boards of Trustees** coordinated by the **Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) and this system works well for Wyoming**. It is a system that maintains local control and is coordinated at the state level and ensures location-appropriate programming and economic development for students and businesses while capturing system-wide efficiencies and opportunities.

The Wyoming Community College System mission includes:

- Increasing attainment levels across the State of Wyoming
- Serving business and industry by producing employable graduates with well-rounded skills
- Partnering with K12 and UW to strengthen pathways to careers relevant to Wyoming’s economy
- Enhance living in our State by offering cultural and accessible lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens

Each part of this task will look different, as community and regional needs vary. Community colleges have long been known for being flexible, responsive, and innovative. This is due in large part to the local control afforded by our current system.

Coordination at the state level provides for added assurances, and cost-saving efficiencies and opportunities. The Wyoming Community College Commission:

- Coordinates and aligns the colleges with statewide priorities, through a college system strategic plan
- Coordinates the collection and dissemination of all student and fiscal data
- Allocates state funding through an approved formula
- Coordinates articulation and student success initiatives with UW

- Coordinates councils for the seven presidents, academic councils, student affairs councils, etc. to ensure consistency and efficiency and to take advantage of economies of scale.
- Identifies and organizes cost-saving and efficiency measures via common software and hardware solutions
- Identifies and organizes new initiatives (e.g., student attainment) and grant opportunities (e.g., Wyoming Works)
- Approves new academic programs and degrees and reviews existing ones
- Provides many general services so that each individual college does not have to duplicate that work.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING OPTIONS MATRIX

Option	Description	Fiscal Impact	Authority	PROS	CONS
Increase Permissive One Mill Levy to Two	Statute currently allows the Board of Trustees of a Community College District to levy an additional one mill on the district's property taxes. This must be considered and approved every two years. All seven community colleges have this millage in place. Through statute change, this could be moved to a maximum of two mills.	\$15.7M	Boards of Trustees (which statutory change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows districts to raise funds as necessary Colleges can respond directly to local industry needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some localities may not have an appetite for increased mil levies Not all districts' mil values are created equally The role of a CC trustee might become more politicized
Out of District Tuition Differential or increase tuition in general	Allow "out of district" tuition (charge a higher fee to students who come from one of the 16 non-taxing counties, or out of state.	Tuition increase (\$109) = \$31M Out of district (varies) ~\$20M-\$15M	Wyoming Community College Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairer to in-district resident who are paying for services A good compromise to out of district residents paying a mil levy Only those enrolled pay rather than all county residents Targets those utilizing the services of the college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectation of services in service districts may increase if students are paying more for classes Likely insufficient to solve the funding issues alone.
Non-District counties impose 1 mill	There are 16 Wyoming who are not part of a community college district, and as such are not providing any tax support to fund the colleges. This option would impose a 1 mill levy on these counties.	\$14.9M	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairer to current district resident who are paying mil levy currently All counties pay instead of just seven If residents in other counties are paying for services perhaps for services perhaps, they will be encouraged to take advantage of them CCs serve all 23 counties – all 23 counties could pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not raise enough revenue alone May create unrealistic expectations of service in those counties May inflate local politics Legislature would have to pass unless it could be an option to do it as a voter referendum Industry will bear more of the burden of the tax
Non-District counties impose 2 mills	Same as above, although this option would impose 2 mills on the counties.	\$29.8M	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairer to current district resident who are paying mil levy currently All counties pay instead of just seven If residents in other counties are paying for services perhaps for services perhaps, they will be encouraged to take advantage of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not raise enough revenue alone May create unrealistic expectations of service in those counties May inflate local politics Legislature would have to pass unless it could be an

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCs serve all 23 counties – all 23 counties could pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • option to do it as a voter referendum • Industry will bear more of the burden of the tax
Removing the 4-year limitation on the additional 5 mills	State statute allows for each community college district to levy up to an additional five mills on the assessed valuation of the district. This must be approved by the voters of the district and may only exist for a total of four years. This option would change that statute to allow these additional mills to remain in effect for up to 10 years, providing better stability with the funding stream.	<p>Each mil is worth approximately \$7.8M</p> <p>Currently the 4 mills for operations and additional one mil equates to \$39.4M in the seven taxing counties</p>	Voters in a CC District (with statutory change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides funding stability • Only up every ten years • Revenue option would not require legislative approval • Gives more tools in the “toolbox” for local approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all tax districts are created equally • Implications of local community not approving • Could create inequities among the districts
1% sales and use tax	This option would impose, by act of the Legislature, a one percent “stabilization” sales and use tax on the 23 Wyoming counties. The tax would only go into effect when certain revenue metrics are hit, resulting in reduced capacity for the state to adequately fund the community colleges. When those revenues would increase back to the predetermined threshold, this tax would be removed.	An additional 1% S&U tax could generate \$140M per year to state general fund and \$63M to locals	State Legislature (through statutory change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows removal when revenue thresholds are met • Could provide sufficient funding • Allows for long-term planning and hiring • Sufficient funding for program development and other dire college needs • Is a state-wide funding option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved by the legislature • Risks state appropriations being reduced further • Sales tax is regressive, would hurt low income residents more
Allow an additional local option sales and use tax to be used for community college funding or modify current economic development optional tax to be used for workforce programming	An optional “8 th penny” or modify current economic development optional tax	Would vary by locality	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows the college to embark on a local campaign to meet local workforce needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May compete with other local optional sales taxes • Local economic development may not want to share or give up those funds.
Statewide mill levy on all levels of assessment	All 23 counties impose a certain number of mill levies to fund all of the colleges	\$45M biennially	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCs serve all 23 counties – all 23 counties pay • Property tax is a broad-based tax and is not regressive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would increase property taxes for extractive industries – a sector that is currently in upset

Align HB80 (the current funding allocation for the Community Colleges) to current state workforce needs.	Adjust HB 80 to incentivize distance education, consortium programming, consolidating in programming, non-credit and apprenticeship programs, and external cost adjustments.	Allocation adjustments would vary by institution.	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would more closely align programming with needs and incentivize the colleges to meet those needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not a long-term solution for sustainable funding
Reduce state aid from approximately 58%.		\$230,577,542/ biennium to ?	State Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces reliance on the general fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augments the need for additional funding sources and/or flexibility for local funding options