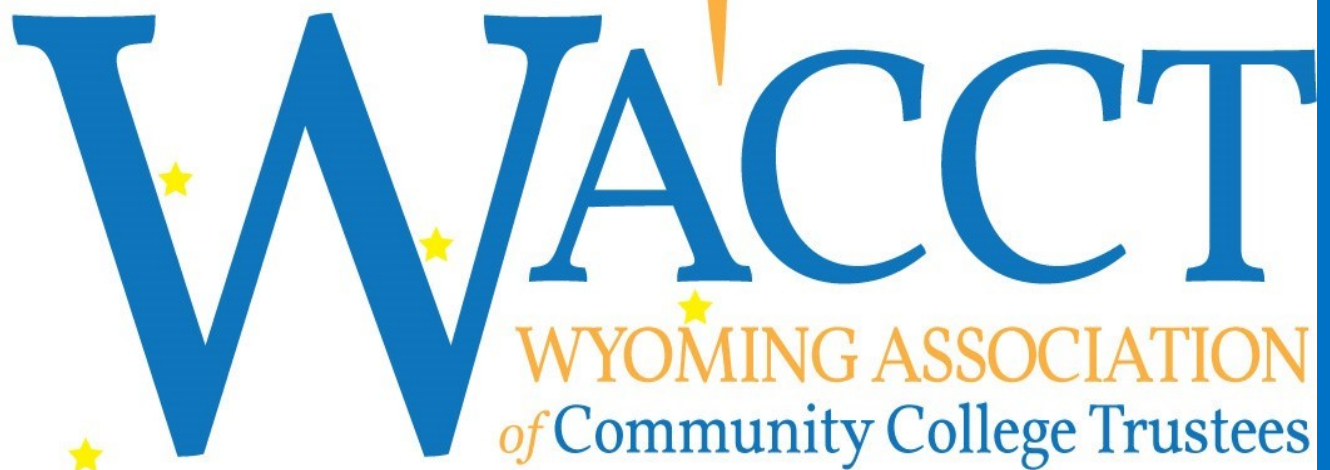


# WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## THE WORKFORCE TRAINERS OF WYOMING 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



The WACCT advocates for Wyoming community colleges at the federal and state level, working with legislators, other elected officials, and regulators to protect and enhance the flexible, accessible environment that has been the hallmark of Wyoming's community colleges.

January 2017

# WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES IMPROVING LIVES AND GROWING JOBS FOR WYOMING'S ECONOMY



Wyoming's Community Colleges provide skills training for high-demand, high-paying, high-skilled occupations and career enhancement opportunities. Their business and community relationships are one of the strongest assets in their regions and in Wyoming. In fact, 60 percent of first time, full-time Wyoming students are enrolled in transfer or technical programs at community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (Fall 2014) . The Community Colleges and the University of Wyoming are having great success in working together on credit transfer agreements.

## STATE AND LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (2016)

- Wyoming's Community Colleges, together with their students added \$1.1 billion to the Wyoming economy.
- Every \$1 of taxpayer money spent on the Community Colleges returns \$1.40 in benefits in the form of added tax revenue and social savings to Wyoming taxpayers.
- Nearly 88 percent of Wyoming's 28,000 Community College credit students stay in Wyoming following graduation.

## PROVIDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

A large portion of Wyoming's workforce will need postsecondary education to meet employers' demands in the near future. Source: Wyoming Department of Workforce Services

- Nearly 39 percent of advertised positions in Wyoming require an education level equal to an associate's degree or higher. Source: Burning Glass Data, posted positions from (Oct 1, 2015—Sept 30, 2016)
- According to the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, 7 out of the 10 fastest growing occupations in Wyoming through 2024 require postsecondary education.

## STUDENTS EARN MORE

Students of Wyoming's Community Colleges benefit from an improved lifestyle and increased earnings.

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (2016)

- Earn nearly \$800,000 more over their working lives than high school dropouts.
- Make on average 14 percent more than high school graduates at the midpoint of their career.
- Receive a return of \$3.70 in higher future earnings for every \$1 students spend on their education at a Wyoming community college.

## WHO WE ARE

The Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees is a non-profit organization of community college governing boards, representing the 49 elected trustees who govern Wyoming's community colleges.

### OUR MISSION

The mission of the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees, a collaborative organization of Wyoming community college trustees with college presidents, is to promote the continued quality, strength, vitality and effectiveness of its members.

### OUR VISION

The Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees will be the leading information source and advocate for Wyoming's community colleges, shaping public policy that strengthens community college education, and providing trustee development to ensure effective governing boards.



## 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



### **CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

The Community Colleges are grateful to the 2016 Legislature for passing HB80 which recalibrates the standard budget every four years based on updated enrollment levels, thereby stabilizing appropriations to the colleges and allowing more effective planning. Yet the seven colleges are making strategic cuts: some have been able to only cut programs and services, while others have been forced to eliminate staff and faculty. All seven colleges have increased or flat enrollments this year. This means the colleges are operating at a high level of efficiency to serve growing enrollments from K-12, the University of Wyoming, and industry.

### **SUPPORT ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION**

The Governor recommended \$1.5M for Community Colleges to respond to key career and technical education needs. WACCT supports the Governor's ENDOW initiative, as developing new programs or expanding existing programs costs time and money. In a time when demand for the services offered by the Community Colleges is on the rise, supporting one of Wyoming's key drivers for economic diversification, the Community Colleges, is critical.

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **HOW ARE THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES CURRENTLY FUNDED?**

- The Community Colleges are funded from three major sources:
  - State aid
  - Local property taxes (up to 5 mills assessed in the home county for each college)
  - Tuition and fees. While each college establishes its own fees structure, tuition is standardized by the Wyoming Community College Commission.
- HB80 (passed in the 2016 legislative session) recalibrates the standard budget every four years based on updated enrollment levels, thereby stabilizing appropriations to the colleges and allowing more effective planning. This means the colleges would request no additional enrollment funding for every other full budget cycle. And it will work both ways. If enrollment has grown by the time of the four-year recalibration, then the calculation for funding would reflect that in a request for increased funding; if enrollment has declined, the calculation will reflect that as well.

## **HOW HAVE THE COLLEGES BEEN IMPACTED BY THE DOWNTURN?**

- In 2016 the Governor recommended cuts to the Wyoming Community College Commission funding of nearly 8 percent, resulting in reduced state aid to the colleges of \$11.5 million.
- The 2016 Legislature implemented the Penny Plan, which amounted to an additional \$2.7 million in reduced operational funding.
- Four of the seven colleges experienced double-digit reductions in their districts' county assessed valuations for 2016, amounting to a total of \$4.8 million in reduced revenue, which was spread among the seven colleges.
- Other funds such as the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment Fund (administered by the State Treasurer's Office) are set to run out of reserve funding in FY 2017. Interest earnings would still be available. (The original source of the Fund is federal mineral royalties. Interest income and reserve funding, when available, is used to pay for faculty recruitment and retention, to establish endowed faculty positions and to support the work of endowed faculty at Wyoming's community colleges and the University of Wyoming).
- All seven colleges have increased or flat enrollments this year, which is typical during a downturn. History tells us that people enroll in their local college to build job skills or learn a new trade in a down economy. This means the colleges are operating at a high level of efficiency to serve increased demand with reduced funding.

## **WHAT HAVE THE COLLEGES DONE TO SURVIVE THE DOWNTURN AND MAINTAIN QUALITY EDUCATION TO STUDENTS?**

- Each of the seven colleges prioritized programs and services to ensure that students continue to receive the best education possible.
- Several colleges RIFed employee positions, did not fill some vacancies and offered early retirement incentives. Others were forced to draw on their reserves (capped in statute at 8% of operating dollars) to prevent layoffs; some used reserves to "teach out" students in terminated programs or cover one-time costs associated with volunteer early retirements.

## **HOW ARE NEW PROGRAMS APPROVED?**

- The seven Governor-appointed members of the Wyoming Community College Commission approve all new programs for the seven colleges.

## **WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES**

ERIN TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PO Box 20893

CHEYENNE, WY 82003

307.631.5677 · [erin@wacct.org](mailto:erin@wacct.org)