



Reflections on Accessibility: Lessons from Regional Tuition Reciprocity Programs

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Jonathan Gowin, M.Ed., New England Board of Higher Education

Ray Burgman Gallegos, Ph.D., Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Panel Participants



Elisa Jaden, Ed.S., serves as a Program Specialist and Regional SARA Director at the Southern Regional Education Board, leading both of SREB's regional tuition reciprocity programs.



Jonathan Gowin, M.Ed., serves as the Director of New England's Student Program, Tuition Break, for the New England Board of Higher Education.



Jonathan McNicholes, MAPL, serves as the Stakeholder Engagement and Convening Assistant Manager at the Midwestern Higher Education Compact and has worked on MSEP since December alongside other policy programs.



Ray Burgman Gallegos, Ph.D., serves as Vice President of the Programs & Services Unit at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and oversees WICHE's three Student Access Programs.



Moderator

Melissa Juarez serves as a Research Analyst at the Southern Regional Education Board. With a background in mathematics and statistics, her work focuses on analyzing SREB's quantitative data.

Agenda

1. Regional Education Compacts
2. Regional Tuition Reciprocity Programs
3. Benefit of Regional Tuition Reciprocity
4. Lessons Learned From Leveraging Regional Tuition Reciprocity for Higher Education Transition and Access
5. Questions and Closing

Meet the Regional Education Compacts



NEW ENGLAND BOARD
of HIGHER EDUCATION



NEBHE



MHEC

SREB

SREB

Southern Regional
Education Board

WICHE

WICHE
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

SREB

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

- Created in 1948
- Created by southern governors to work with states to improve education in the southern region through sharing educational resources.
- non-partisan, non-profit
- The first and the largest interstate regional education compact
- **Unique:** Only compact with both K-12 and Postsecondary Education
- SREB's mission has grown over the decades to also provide policymakers with reliable data to inform sound policies and to serve educators with training that transforms teaching to prepare students for what comes next.

Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC)

- Legislatively created in 1991, with origins through the Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference
- 501(c)3 serving the [12 member states](#) of the Midwest Census Region
- Governed by 60 commissioners plus commissioner alternates
- MHEC brings together midwestern states to develop and support best practices, collaborative efforts, and cost-sharing opportunities. Through these efforts it works to ensure strong, equitable postsecondary educational opportunities and outcomes for all.

New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE)

- Created in 1955.
- Mission is to advance equitable postsecondary outcomes through convening, research and programs for students, institution leaders and policymakers.
- Six state members: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, & Vermont.
 - Support New York & New Jersey via State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements.
- Operate a variety of programs focused on affordability, workforce alignment, and equity.

Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE)

- Created in 1953 to share higher education resources in the West
- Member states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States
- Non-partisan, non-profit
- WICHE works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.



Regional Tuition Reciprocity Programs

SREB

The **Regional Contract Program (RCP)** is a regional tuition reciprocity program that allows students to attend out of state institutions and get near in-state tuition if their desired professional health degree is not offered at an in-state institution.

- Started in 1949
- Voluntary program for states, institutions and students
- States appropriate funds for their residents to attend out of state
- Merit-based
- Dentistry, Optometry, Osteopathy, Podiatry and Veterinary degrees
- States fund their residents using SREB's contracted tuition rates

The **Academic Common Market (ACM)** is a regional tuition reciprocity program that allows students to attend out of state institutions and get in-state tuition if their desired degree is not offered at a public, in-state institution.

- Started in 1974
- Voluntary program for states, institutions and students
- Not merit-based
- All academic levels are eligible
- Students get 100% of tuition (only) covered at in-state rates

MHEC

The **Midwest Student Exchange Program (MSEP)** serves as the Midwest's largest multi-state tuition reciprocity program.

- Founded in 1994
- Volunteer-based, participating: IN, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, WI
- Public institutions charge students no more than 150% of the in-state resident tuition rate
- Private, not-for-profit institutions offer a 10% reduction of tuition rate
- Enrollment decisions are made at the discretion of the receiving institution, which may limit participation or set specific admission or program requirements for MSEP eligibility.

NEBHE

The **New England Regional Student Program, *Tuition Break***, is a regional tuition reciprocity program that enables students to access a more affordable tuition rate when enrolling at an out-of-state, regional, public university

- Started in 1957
- Credentials offered at every level from certificates to doctoral degrees
- Serves approximately 9,000 students annually
- Complete participation among regional public institutions with an in-state/out-of-state tuition model

WICHE

Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP)

- Operating since 1953
- 10 healthcare fields: allopathic and osteopathic medicine, optometry, dentistry, veterinary medicine, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy; physician assistant, and podiatry
- 130+ cooperating programs
- Annual student savings varies by program: \$9K - \$35K
- 11 states/territories fund their students through WICHE's PSEP
- In AY2023-24, 557 students saved \$14.5 million in reduced tuition

WICHE

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)

- For residents of WICHE member states and U.S. Pacific Territory and Freely Associated State jurisdictions
- Student proves residency to enrolling institution's satisfaction
- Student pays 150% or less of enrolling institutions resident tuition; public institutions only
- Students *can* use WUE for a major available in their home state
- ~170 institutions offer certificates, associates and bachelors
- In 2023-24, ~ 47,250 students saved \$559.1 million!
- Since 1988, ~\$6.3 billion savings on ~807,000 annual tuition bills

WICHE

Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)

- For residents of WICHE member states and U.S. Pacific Territory and Freely Associated State jurisdictions
- Student proves residency to enrolling institution's satisfaction
- Student pays 150% or less of enrolling institutions resident tuition; most institutions charge resident tuition
- ~70 institutions offer master's, graduate certificates and doctorates
- 2,000+ graduate programs available
- In 2023-24, ~ 2,877 students saved \$39.2 million!



Benefits of Regional Tuition Reciprocity

ACM Student Benefit

The ACM program extends affordable access to students who might decide not to pursue the degrees they want based on out-of-state tuition that at least doubles in-state tuition rates.

- AY 23-24: Students saved over \$20 million collectively, or about \$10k on average, in their first year alone.

RCP Student Benefit

The RCP extends access to students who might decide not to pursue the degrees they want based on out-of-state tuition rates for a limited number of available seats at medical colleges.

MSEP: Improves Access to Postsecondary Ed

MSEP provides more affordable opportunities for students to attend out-of-state institutions. Over 60 colleges and universities have opened their doors to participating out-of-state students at discounted rates for undergraduate and some graduate students.

In 2023-2024:

- Students and families saved **\$29,809,644**
- **4,322** students served
- Average savings per student: overall **\$6,897**

MSEP: Improves Access to Postsecondary Ed

(continued)

- Report June 2021: *Student Reciprocity Programs and MSEP in the 21st Century*
An analysis of MSEP in the context of American higher education reciprocity and exchange programs.
- In FY24, MHEC staff, members of the MSEP Council, and MSEP stakeholders conducted a review to identify necessary changes to the MSEP. The recommended changes, approved by the MHEC Executive Commission in June 2024, included the following:
 - 1) Increase engagement in MSEP communications and outreach;
 - 2) Implement procedural improvements; and
 - 3) Explore the development and costs of a Midwest College Cost Savings Finder.

NERSP, *Tuition Break*: Student Benefit

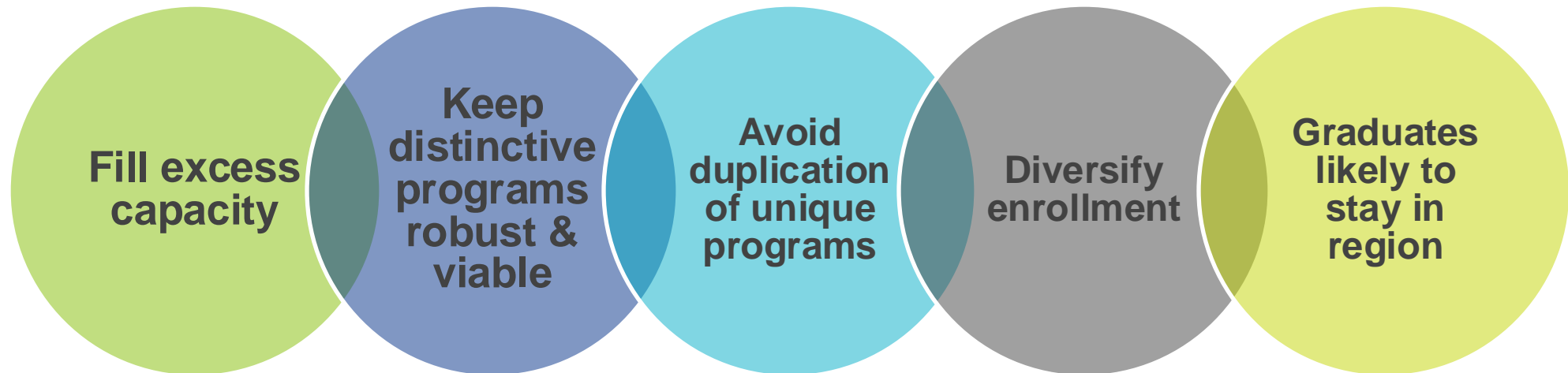
Tuition Break enables access a more affordable tuition rate for students when enrolling at an out-of-state, regional, public university.

Access to reduced tuition may be based on the availability of a student's chosen major at a public institution in their home state, or it may not.

Academic Year 2023-24 Impact:

- **9,001** Students Served
- **\$8,632** Average Annual Savings
- **2,700** Eligible Academic Programs
- Over **\$162M** in Estimated Institutional Revenue Generated

What's the LOGIC Behind Regional Exchange?



Regional Tuition Reciprocity: Who Wins?

- **Cooperating states** don't need to duplicate programs and can maximize scarce resources
- **Students and parents** save on tuition
 - In some instances, student may pay about the same or even less than if they stayed in their home state!
 - Study majors not available in the student's home state, or find a program best geared to student's interests
- **Institutions LOVE** these programs because they:
 - Increase student diversity (ethnic and geographic)
 - Maximize enrollment in programs with excess capacity
 - Maximize occupancy rate of student housing facilities
 - Matriculate high-achieving students; maximize retention & completion rates

WUE/WRGP Student Benefit

WICHE's WUE and WRGP give affordable access to cooperating public institutions in the West. Students pay a 150% or less of the enrolling institution's resident tuition, instead of full nonresident tuition.

PSEP Student Benefit

WICHE's PSEP program gives students affordable access to graduate healthcare programs that are not available at a public institution in their home state.

Open Discussion



SREB



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SREB
Moderator

Some Things You Can Do

The National High School Center's report, *Preparing High School Students for Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment*, provides state, district, and school-level strategies for awareness, transition, and access to college that the standardized use of regional tuition reciprocity programs supports.

Bangser, M. (2008). Preparing high school students for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment. National High School Center. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition_073108.pdf

Some Things You Can Do cont'd

State Level

- Create governance mechanisms and financial incentives to align K–12 and postsecondary planning and budgets.
- Provide feedback to high schools by creating a system for tracking students across the K–12 and postsecondary education systems and into the workplace.
- Develop financial aid policies that provide incentives not only to attend but also to complete postsecondary education.

District and School Level

- Intervene early when students are developing their college and career aspirations.
- Provide appropriate academic, career, and postsecondary counseling and other supports.
- Collaborate with postsecondary institutions, economic development agencies, and employers to help create smoother transitions to college and the workforce.

Bangser, M. (2008). Preparing high school students for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment. National High School Center. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition_073108.pdf

Lessons Learned

Agency, district, and school leaderships' support and promotion of the standardized use of regional tuition reciprocity programs by high school counselors and other personnel fosters awareness of the need for effective transition and access tools to postsecondary education, thus reinforcing high schools' efforts towards and outcomes of successful awareness, transition, and access to college.

Bangser, M. (2008). Preparing high school students for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment. National High School Center. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition_073108.pdf

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QUESTIONS?

References

Bangser, M. (2008). Preparing high school students for successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment. National High School Center. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition_073108.pdf