

Washington Reciprocity Agreements, Tuition Reduction and Student Exchange Programs

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OVERVIEW

State governments and citizens benefit from student exchange, tuition reduction, and reciprocity agreements. For a participating state, access to outside programs may eliminate the need to maintain separate and possibly costly programs in some fields. Out-of-state enrollments also may give colleges and universities the critical mass to ensure the stability of certain programs and contribute to a wider range of cultural and ideological diversity at a state's colleges and universities.

Opportunities to study beyond a state's borders may increase the likelihood for some students to attend college. This is especially true for students whose nearest college may be across a border in another state. For students with limited resources, out-of-state tuition may be too costly without an exchange or waiver program to reduce tuition or other fees.

State law authorized the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to enter into reciprocity agreements with Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia and to report every two years to the governor and legislature on the status of these agreements. (RCW 28B.15.754, 28B.15.736, and 28B.15.758¹). The last of these agreements ended in 2009 and at this time there are no state-to-state or state-to-province reciprocity agreements. Several alternative options for serving students that are not technically residents of Washington have been developed.

This report outlines the current status of legislation regarding reciprocity agreements, reviews the history of state and province level reciprocity, and summarizes other tuition reduction and student exchange programs for Washington students and nonresidents in Washington that are not dependent on state-level agreements.

CURRENT STATUS OF STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECIPROCITY

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) was abolished by the Washington state legislature effective July 1, 2012 and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was established at that time as the newest cabinet level state agency addressing residency tuition rates and related issues (RCW 28B.77.005).² WSAC provides strategic planning, oversight, and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. Authority to establish state-to-state or state-to-province reciprocity agreements was not included in the WSAC enabling legislation, and at this time no reciprocity agreements of this type currently exist.

Although no state-to-state or state-to-province reciprocity agreements exist, several other options have been developed for students interested in tuition waiver programs, student exchanges and tuition reciprocity agreements.

¹ RCW 28B.15.754, 28B.15.736, and 28B.15.758 were repealed by 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 § 245.

² <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.77.005>

HISTORY OF STATE AND PROVINCE LEVEL RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

Beginning in the early 1980s, the HECB negotiated separate annual agreements with Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia, specifying the number of students to be served and/or dollar amounts to be waived. Agreements were designed to provide tuition waivers for a limited number of Washington residents attending college at designated public institutions in another state/province, with equal (or nearly equal) waivers for the other state/province residents at selected Washington public institutions.

EARLY STUDENT PARTICIPATION

In the early 1990s, more than 1,000 Washington residents attended college in a neighboring state/province, and a roughly equivalent number of nonresidents attended college in Washington under reciprocity provisions. The highest participation occurred in 1990-1991, when 1,314 Washington residents attended college in Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia and 1,103 students from these three locations attended school in Washington. The Washington/Oregon reciprocity agreement affected the largest number of students, with more than 900 Washington residents studying in Oregon and 800 Oregon residents enrolled in Washington institutions.

PARTICIPATING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Until the early 1990s, reciprocity agreements covered the six public four-year colleges and universities and 10 community colleges in Washington. Similarly, Oregon's six public four-year institutions and eight community colleges participated in reciprocity. Idaho's participation included its four public four-year institutions, and a separate agreement was signed with a public two-year college in north Idaho. British Columbia's involvement included its four public four-year institutions and six two-year institutions.

CHANGES IN STATE LAW AFFECT RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

Two Washington state laws adopted in 1992 affected the state's reciprocity participation. The first law changed the nature of waivers, including reciprocity. Most waivers became permissive or discretionary for institutions and institutions chose which waiver programs to offer to students. The second law allowed institutions to collect and retain tuition revenue, giving them more control over this revenue and waivers. Previously, tuition was remitted to the state General Fund.

END OF RECIPROCITY PARTICIPATION

British Columbia

Through the 1990s, British Columbia's various institutions continued to participate, but with a reduced number of students. The British Columbia agreement ended in 1999.

Oregon

By the end of the 1990s, Oregon community colleges were continuing to participate in reciprocity, but only two of the four-year institutions remained. The Oregon agreement ended in 2001.

Idaho

Reciprocity with Idaho was facilitated through agreements with the Idaho State Board of Education. Washington State University ended their participation in the agreement in 2003. Eastern Washington University and both the Community Colleges of Spokane and Walla Walla Community College continued participation with four Idaho baccalaureate institutions and North Idaho College through 2007.

The final agreement with Idaho was signed for the 2008-09 year with only Walla Walla Community College remaining as a Washington participant. Idaho adopted tuition waiver policy changes in 2009 that provided more flexibility in issuing tuition and fee waivers to Washington residents without the need for reciprocity agreements. The Idaho State Board of Education notified the HECB that after June 2009 Idaho would no longer participate in reciprocity with Washington.

TUITION REDUCTION AND STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FOR NONRESIDENTS

Institutions in Washington participate in other types of waiver and student exchange programs that reduce tuition for selected students. State statutes authorize various options for institutions to grant waivers for all or a portion of nonresident tuition; these statutes do not require yearly state-level agreements. And, in most cases, waivers are granted at the discretion of the institution.

It must be noted that in this document the term 'tuition waiver' refers to a waiver of the nonresident tuition fees differential – the difference between resident tuition fees and nonresident tuition fees as defined in RCW 28B.15.022.³ Students given these waivers are subject to and responsible for the same tuition and fees as residents of Washington.

Residency and Other Waiver Programs

Border County Higher Education Opportunity Project

The border county project designated Oregon residents living in 13 of Oregon's northern border counties as Washington residents for purposes of tuition in response to Oregon

³ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.022>

policies that provided reduced tuition to Washington residents living in border counties. It was enacted as a pilot in 1999, made permanent in 2003, and clarified in 2009 through HB1474 [RCW 28B.15.0139 (revised 2009)].⁴

Active Military and National Guard Personnel and Families – Resident Tuition

Statutory provisions designate as residents, for tuition purposes, active military personnel and members of the Washington National Guard who are residents in another state but stationed in Washington. Their spouses and dependents also are designated as residents for tuition purposes (RCW 28B.15.012).⁵

Members of American Indian Tribes

A student who is not a resident of Washington, but who is a member of a federally-recognized American Indian tribe and who has lived for a year in one—or a combination of several—designated states (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, or Washington), is considered a resident of Washington for tuition purposes (RCW 28B.15.0131).⁶

Students Holding Graduate Service Appointments and Other Exemptions

Nonresident graduate students holding graduate service appointments may be exempted from all or a portion of the nonresident tuition and fees. Employees (and their dependents) of higher education institutions, who are not residents of Washington, may also be exempted from nonresident tuition and fees. In addition, some classifications of refugees may be exempted from nonresident tuition (RCW 28B.15.014).⁷

Students of Foreign Nations

State laws permit institutions to provide waivers to students of foreign nations. Four-year colleges and universities can waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for students of foreign nations. Waivers, to the extent possible, should “promote reciprocal placements and waivers in foreign nations for Washington residents,” and priority is designated for exchanges sponsored by “recognized international education organizations.” The University of Washington and Washington State University may grant 100 waivers each year; other four-year institutions may grant 20 each year (RCW 28B.15.556).⁸

Community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for students of foreign nations, with a limit of 100 foreign students each year. The waiver is designed to promote reciprocal placements of Washington residents in study abroad programs (RCW 28B.15.527).⁹

Domestic Exchange Programs at Four-Year Institutions

State law allows four-year public colleges and universities to negotiate agreements with out-of-state institutions, provided no loss of tuition and fee revenue is incurred (that is, the exchange participant enrolled at a Washington institution must pay the equivalent amount in tuition and fees that a resident student pays). These programs are referred to as “home tuition programs” and are authorized by RCW 28B.15.725.¹⁰ Washington institutions may

⁴ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.0139>

⁵ <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.012>

⁶ <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.0131>

⁷ <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.014>

⁸ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.556>

⁹ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.527>

¹⁰ <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.725>

establish exchange programs with institutions across the country and the total number of participants is not specified in statute. However, each individual student is limited to one academic year in the program.

In addition, students attending Washington institutions from other states on home tuition agreements may not use the year of enrollment under this program to establish Washington state residency, and are not eligible for state financial aid.

School of Medicine and Dentistry

Both the University of Washington and Washington State University are permitted to exempt nonresident tuition for students from several western states, under contracts with Alaska, Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming (for medicine) and Utah or Idaho (for dentistry) to regionalize medical education (RCW 28B.15.225).¹¹

Community College High School Completion

Community Colleges may waive all or a portion of nonresident tuition fees nonresident students enrolled in a course of student or program that will enable them to finish their high school diploma or certificate. In addition, this waiver applies to up to 40 percent enrolled in the regional education program for deaf students subject to federal funding for this program (RCW 28B.15.520).¹²

Non-Specific Tuition Waivers

A 1999 Washington state law allows institutions to “waive all or a portion of the operating fees (tuition) for any student” (RCW 28B.15.915).¹³ Although not limited to waivers of nonresident tuition, these waivers can be used for this purpose.

Many community colleges in Washington have applied this “non-specific” waiver provision to the nonresident portion of tuition for residents of other states (although not for international students). Many residents of Oregon and Idaho receive tuition waivers at colleges and universities in Washington based on this “non-specific” waiver statute.

Baccalaureate institutions may use their “non-specific” waiver authority for additional nonresident tuition reductions.

State and Educational Employees

Colleges and universities may waive all or a portion of the tuition and services and activities fees for state employees, teachers, and other certified instructional staff within the educational system in Washington. This waiver looks primarily at employment and does not take residency into consideration. Variable fees may be charged participants at the institutions discretion (RCW 28B.15.558)¹⁴

¹¹ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.225>

¹² <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.520>

¹³ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.915>

¹⁴ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.558>

WICHE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS: 16 WESTERN STATES AND TERRITORIES

Washington is a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE),¹⁵ a consortium of 16 states, U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States of the Pacific. WICHE expands access to higher education through three student exchange program agreements: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In addition, WICHE has recently added the Internet Course Exchange program.¹⁶

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)¹⁷

This exchange program includes institutions from nearly all WICHE states. Students pay 150 percent of a state's resident tuition, which is usually much lower than full nonresident tuition charges. Students from all WICHE member states, including Washington, are eligible to request the WUE tuition discount.

While the WUE tuition reciprocity arrangement does not provide financial reimbursement to institutions for WUE students, there are advantages to the participating institution. WUE can help institutions build an enrollment base to strengthen programs, improve efficiency by filling excess capacity, and provide student diversity. Institutions that border other states value the program as it enables them to serve the citizens of the nearby communities.

A 1999 Washington state law (RCW 28B.15.544)¹⁸ authorizes three Washington institutions to participate in WUE – Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, and Washington State University. Currently these colleges accept WUE students, including WSU Tri-Cities. In addition, Western Washington University and both Spokane and Spokane Falls Community Colleges are accepting WUE students. Nonresident students attending Washington colleges and universities as part of the WUE program are not able to use their time attending to establish residency for tuition purposes.

In 2013-14, Washington received 1,459 students from other WICHE states – including 307 from Idaho and 251 from Oregon. Washington sent 3,184 students to other WICHE states - 263 to two-year institutions and 2,921 to four-year institutions. This includes 351 to Idaho colleges and universities, and 482 who studied in Oregon.

Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)¹⁹

This program allows master's, graduate certificate, and Ph.D. students who are residents of the WICHE member states to enroll in some 320 high-quality programs at 56 participating institutions outside of their home state and pay resident tuition. WRGP is a tuition-reciprocity arrangement similar to the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE).

¹⁵ More information about WICHE is available at <http://www.wiche.edu/>.

¹⁶ Data on student attendance in these programs for 2013-14, both as a sending and receiving state, is available on the WICHE website at <http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/statReport0115.pdf>.

¹⁷ More information about WUE is available at <http://www.wiche.edu/wue>

¹⁸ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.15.544>

¹⁹ More information on WRGP is available at <http://www.wiche.edu/wrgp>

Students can enroll directly in the program through WRGP; they are not dependent upon the approval of their home state to participate because the student's home state does not provide funding for each individual student. WRGP represents a tremendous opportunity for Western states to share distinctive programs (and the faculty who teach them) and build their workforce in a variety of disciplines, particularly healthcare.

Washington institutions participating in WRGP include: Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, the University of Washington, and Washington State University. A total of 18 graduate programs are available to students from other states through WRGP.

In 2014, Washington received 86 students from other WICHE states and sent 172 students to programs in other states.

Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) ²⁰

WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program enables students in 10 western states to enroll in selected out-of-state professional programs usually because those fields of study are not available at public institutions in their home states. Students enrolled in WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program receive preference in admission. They pay reduced levels of tuition: for most students, resident tuition in public institutions or reduced standard tuition at private schools.

The home state pays a support fee to the admitting school to help cover the cost of students' education. State support and program participation affecting students are subject to change by legislative or administrative action. The number of students supported by each state is determined through state legislative appropriations.

Washington does not send any students to out-of-state WICHE programs to study in professional fields. Several institutions in Washington (both public and private) accept professional students into programs and receive support from the sending state. These include:

- Dentistry: University of Washington
- Occupational Therapy: University of Puget Sound; University of Washington; Eastern Washington University
- Osteopathic Medicine: Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences
- Pharmacy: University of Washington; Washington State University
- Physical Therapy: Eastern Washington University; University of Puget Sound; University of Washington
- Physician Assistant: University of Washington
- Veterinary Medicine: Washington State University

In 2014-15, Washington sent no students to other states and received 83 (80 at public institutions and 3 at private institutions in Washington). Over \$2 million was received by institutions from other states to support students attending Washington professional programs.

²⁰ More information on PSEP is available at <http://www.wiche.edu/psep>

NATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE (NSE)²¹

The National Student Exchange is a unique, not-for-profit consortium of nearly 200 accredited, baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through NSE, these member institutions provide exchange opportunities for the multitude of undergraduate students for whom an overseas experience is not appropriate, comfortable or affordable. Established in 1968, NSE has provided exchange opportunities to more than 110,000 students.

The program features a tuition reciprocity system that allows students to attend their host institution by paying either the in-state tuition and fees of their host institution or the normal tuition and fees of their home campus. Work completed while on exchange at the host campus is brought back to the home institution and credited to the student's degree program.

In Washington, only the University of Washington participates at this time.

SUMMARY

In the past, state policy in Washington and other states provided several avenues for tuition reductions to facilitate exchanges of students across borders. The most formal of these were “reciprocity agreements” between Washington and Oregon, between Washington and Idaho, and between Washington and British Columbia. These agreements provided a level of tuition waivers for neighboring states’ residents studying in Washington, with similar waiver levels for Washington residents who crossed the borders to attend colleges and universities.

Changes in state law and tuition waiver authority signaled the end of state reciprocity agreements between Washington and neighbor states and provinces with the last agreement expiring in 2009.

The specificity of reciprocity agreements evolved toward less restrictive waiver and exchange arrangements between states. Other avenues emerged for nonresident students to participate in Washington college and university programs, and for Washington students to explore program options at colleges in other states.

Various nonresident tuition differential waivers authorized by the Washington state legislature, including the “non-specific” waiver, have allowed institutions the flexibility to implement tuition reductions to foster the objectives and missions of each college or university. In addition, various exchange options are sponsored by WICHE and contribute to the diversity of program options and students on our campuses.

Overall, the trend is toward continued or even greater use of tuition waivers for selected nonresident students, both in Washington and in neighboring (and other) states. Though formal reciprocity agreements no longer exist, other types of student exchange opportunities across states will likely continue.

²¹ <http://www.nse.org/>

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