



# Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP)

## WRGP Nomination Procedure for 2012-13 & 2013-14

**Submission Deadline: Tuesday, November 1, 2011**

### About WRGP

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) is an exceptional educational resource for the West that allows master's, graduate certificate, and Ph.D. students who are residents of the 15 participating WICHE states to enroll in some 250 high-quality programs at 47 participating institutions and pay resident tuition. The WICHE states are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

WRGP is a tuition-reciprocity arrangement similar to the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE); students can enroll directly in the program through WRGP and 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. This 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. Visit [www.wiche.edu/wrpg](http://www.wiche.edu/wrpg) for more information.

In fall 2010, almost 700 students enrolled through WRGP and saved an estimated \$7.2 million dollars in tuition, and each student saved an estimated average of \$10,587.

Institutions can nominate their graduate programs for participation in WRGP. To be eligible, programs that aren't related to healthcare must be "distinctive," meaning they must be offered at no more than four other institutions in the WICHE region (exclusive of California). Given the tremendous needs in the healthcare workforce, healthcare-related programs are not subject to the "distinctiveness" criteria, but must be of high quality.

WICHE is particularly interested in reviewing nominations for high need and emerging field programs, including but not limited to:

1. Professional Science Masters (PSMs)
2. Graduate certificate programs in emerging fields
3. Microtechnology and nanotechnology
4. Green building and building energy conservation
5. Emerging media and communications
6. Biotechnology and bioinformatics

*"WRGP has allowed us to successfully recruit some of our best graduate students. These students are highly desired by research labs because the cost of in-state tuition and fees is not as prohibitive as the out-of-state rate. WRGP helps students from states within the Western region compete for graduate slots and obtain advanced degrees more affordably."*

*- Mark Quinn, Professor and Department Head, Veterinary Molecular Biology, Montana State University*

7. Computer and cyber security
8. Alternative energy technology
9. Homeland security
10. Healthcare fields not offered through WICHE's PSEP (see [www.wiche.edu/psep](http://www.wiche.edu/psep))

## Program eligibility requirements

To be included in the Western Regional Graduate Program, a graduate program must:

1. Be offered by a regionally-accredited institution in a WICHE state. Member states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.
2. Be a program of high quality and demonstrable strength in terms of faculty, curriculum, library or other resources, student enrollments and placements, or other factors.
3. Be distinctive with respect to total program, specialization, or resources, and fill a need not met by more than four other (five total) public programs in the participating states (outside of programs available in California).

NOTE: Healthcare-related programs are exempt from this four-program maximum. Institutions may also nominate programs outside of the healthcare fields that reflect significant workforce needs within the WICHE region. WICHE staff will review and recommend these special high-need nominations for state approval.

4. Be in a field not included in the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). There are some exceptions to this rule. WICHE staff supports the inclusion of post-professional programs that serve to educate future faculty. The University of Utah's doctorate in occupation therapy (DOT) is an example of a program that qualifies for WRGP, as WICHE's PSEP offers only the master's in occupational therapy. For a list of fields included in PSEP, visit [www.wiche.edu/psep](http://www.wiche.edu/psep).
5. Enjoy strong institutional support and the expectation of continued support.
6. Give some degree of admissions preference to qualified students from participating states.
7. Agree to charge students from participating states not more than resident tuition at public institutions. Private institutions should offer a tuition reduction of at least 25 percent; to date, no private institutions have nominated programs for WRGP, but they are encouraged to do so. All WRGP programs must agree to hold WRGP students harmless in event that the program ceases to be part of WRGP.

*"WICHE's played an important role in my education. I first used WUE to attend college in Alaska while I was a resident of Washington. I earned my bachelor's degree and met my husband there; he was also a WUE student! Now, I'm enrolled through WRGP to attend PSU while I reside in Montana. I have a blind son and want to teach the visually impaired. Thanks to WRGP, I'll be a better educator for my son and children like him. WICHE's student exchange programs have been invaluable to me and my family, and I hope to see them active for many years. Perhaps my children will use them in the future!"*

*- Emily, Montana resident, Class of 2012, Portland State University, Special Education and Visually Impaired Learners*

8. Agree to participation terms as outlined in the "WRGP Administrative Guidelines". Please see the last pages of this document for details.

## How to nominate your program for participation in WRGP

Please use the WRGP nomination form posted on WICHE's website at [www.wiche.edu/wrgp](http://www.wiche.edu/wrgp). Your nomination must include all three items listed below:

1. Contact information and a program summary.  
Please use the form provided. Save it to your computer before completing it, and include it as one of your file attachments.
2. A letter of support from the dean of graduate studies, provost, or vice president of academic affairs. The letter should affirm the institution's support of your department's WRGP nomination and acknowledge the institution's willingness to charge WRGP students resident tuition without additional support from the enrolling student's home state.
3. Appendices that include: a copy of the catalog description of the program, including the list of required courses; faculty qualifications; and, any recent program reviews. Please see the WRGP application form for more detail.

*"WRGP students have brought a diversity of knowledge and experience of resource management in other places to Central Washington University's graduate program. This sharing has been a great benefit to our "homegrown" students and faculty, allowing all to see how resources are managed in other places, and how those strategies might work in the Pacific Northwest. Without WRGP, few of these students could have afforded to attend CWU, and our program would have suffered from their absence. Thanks to WICHE we are a more diverse, vibrant, and regionally-applicable program."*

*- Karl Lillquist, Co-Director, Resource Management Program, Central Washington University*

## Review process and notification of approval

1. Nominations are due by **Tuesday, November 1, 2011**. Please email nominations as a file attachment to [khulstrom@wiche.edu](mailto:khulstrom@wiche.edu).
2. WICHE staff will compile nominations and verify distinctiveness of non-healthcare related programs. Summaries of the nominated programs are then sent to WICHE state higher education offices for review in early January 2012. State office comments are due to WICHE by early February 2012.
3. WICHE staff reviews state office comments and communicates any state office concerns to nominating programs. Staff then finalizes a list of eligible programs for final approval. The list is sent to WICHE regional State Higher Education Offices in February/March 2012.
4. Approved programs will be notified in March 2012. At that time, they will be asked to submit a program profile for posting on WICHE's WRGP website. New programs may begin enrolling students at the WRGP rate for the 2012-13 academic year, or the following academic year.

## More information about WRGP

For more information about WRGP, please visit the WRGP website at [www.wiche.edu/wrgp](http://www.wiche.edu/wrgp). We encourage you to read the administrator and student testimonials about the benefits of participating in the WRGP network. Please see [http://www.wiche.edu/studentTestimonials?filter0\[\]=%5BWRGP%5D](http://www.wiche.edu/studentTestimonials?filter0[]=%5BWRGP%5D) and <http://www.wiche.edu/adminTestimonials>.

# WRGP Administrative Guidelines

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Below you will find some general administrative guidelines and suggestions.

1. **WRGP TUITION RATE.** To participate in WRGP, programs must charge students no more than resident tuition and hold students harmless in the event that the program ceases to be part of WRGP. It is important that you coordinate students' WRGP status with the bursar's office so that they are charged the correct tuition rate. Please note that the receiving institution/department does not receive support fees for WRGP students; WRGP is purely a tuition reciprocity agreement that helps departments build robust programs by diversifying their student enrollment and fill seats in distinct programs that might otherwise go unfilled.
2. **ADMISSIONS PROCESS.** Students apply for the reduced WRGP tuition rate when they apply for admission to your program. They apply directly through your department or graduate school. We encourage your department to follow or establish a common internal WRGP protocol for all WRGP graduate programs offered at your institution, in partnership with your graduate admissions staff. We also encourage you to consult and coordinate with your graduate studies department, registrar, bursar's office, financial aid office and residency office as well, so that they may also answer applicants' questions or refer them to the correct individual in your department.
3. **RESIDENCY VERIFICATION.** To qualify for the WRGP tuition rate, students must prove to your department or residency office's satisfaction that they are residents of a WICHE state at the time of application. Because there are no dollars paid by the student's home state, residency verification is not necessary at the student's home state level. Once in a while, an applicant's residency status may be unclear. For those rare cases, the state higher education department (or equivalent) in the student's home state may be of assistance. You may also call our office for additional guidance if you wish.
4. **ADMISSIONS PREFERENCE.** We ask that you give some degree of admissions preference to qualified students from WICHE states. The 15 WICHE states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, or Wyoming.
5. **WRGP ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS.** Your department sets the admissions requirements for applicants applying for the WRGP rate, as well as any special WRGP application deadlines. If these requirements differ from your standard requirements (a higher GPA, for example), please indicate this in your WRGP online profile.

6. **WRGP PROGRAMS OFFERED ONLINE:** Many states require institutions to obtain approval before serving distance learners in that state. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education made state approval a federal requirement for students receiving financial aid. Subsequently, the federal regulation was vacated, but might return soon. In any case, state regulations remain in place and states with such regulations expect that you have approvals in place prior to serving student in their states.

If you're offering a WRGP program online (partially or fully) we strongly encourage you to read more about the new rules on WICHE's WCET website at: <http://wcet.wiche.edu/advance/state-approval>. We are uncertain about its implications for WRGP programs. WICHE has begun exploring regional reciprocity among western states, but such agreements take time to develop. In the meantime, please coordinate with your institutional office responsible for compliance with these new regulations. If and when they are enforced, each participating institution is responsible for compliance.

7. **NUMBER OF WRGP SEATS OFFERED ANNUALLY.** To participate in WRGP, your program must offer the WRGP discounted rate to at least one or more qualified new applicants each academic year. We encourage you to offer more discounted WRGP seats, especially if your graduate program is a large one.
8. **ENROLLMENT REPORTING.** WICHE requests WRGP enrollment information every fall. We will send the initial request to your program contact who is responsible for reporting the number of WRGP students enrolled in your program and their home state. It is important that your department or registrar code these students as "WRGP" so they can be tracked easily. We do not ask for individual student names; enrollment trackers only report the number of students (by their home state) enrolled in your program (i.e.: 2 AK students, 1 AZ student, 0 CO students, etc.).
9. **WITHDRAWAL FROM WRGP.** In the rare event that a program decides to leave WRGP, we ask they give WICHE a year's notice, and that they grandfather students already enrolled through WRGP at the reduced rate until graduation.

## Contact information

For information about the Fall 2011 nominations round, please contact Kay Hulstrom at 303.541.0294 or [khulstrom@wiche.edu](mailto:khulstrom@wiche.edu). For all other questions, please contact Margo Colalancia at 303.541.0214 or [mcolalancia@wiche.edu](mailto:mcolalancia@wiche.edu).