

# Wyoming Community College Commission

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## Tuition Policy 2018-2023

### I. Introduction

Funding for higher education in the State of Wyoming is a shared responsibility of the state, students, property owners and the colleges. The state assumes its share of this responsibility through its general fund appropriations; students, through tuition and fees; property owners, through local property tax levies; and the colleges, through management of efficiencies and generation of additional local revenue. The Wyoming Community College Commission plays a role in ensuring the state, students, and the colleges assume the appropriate level of responsibility through its mandate of setting tuition levels.

Tuition levels have a direct bearing on both student access and educational quality. A number of considerations go into establishing tuition levels, and this 6-year tuition policy preserves the Commission's accountability to Wyoming citizens for access while providing affordable, quality postsecondary educational opportunities.

### II. Legal Foundation

#### **Wyoming Constitution**

Article 1, Section 023. Education

The right of the citizens to opportunities for education shall have practical recognition. The legislature shall suitably encourage means and agencies calculated to advance the sciences and liberal arts.

Article 7, Section 016. Tuition Free

The university shall be equally open to students of both sexes, irrespective of race or color; and, in order that the instruction furnished may be as nearly free as possible, any amount in addition to the income generated from its grants of lands and other sources above mentioned, necessary to its support and maintenance in a condition of

full efficiency shall be raised by taxation or otherwise, under provisions of the legislature.

Note: This Article of the Constitution applies to the University of Wyoming. The legislature may have interpreted this Constitutional provision for tuition to be “as nearly free as possible” when it crafted language in statutes that described the community colleges as “low tuition” institutions.

### **Wyoming Statute**

The legislature stipulated in the Session Laws of Wyoming, Chapter 228, Section 3(a) the “Wyoming’s Community Colleges are low tuition, open access institutions...”

Furthermore, the Wyoming Community College Commission was given the authority to determine tuition at the community colleges.

W.S. 21-18-202. Powers and duties of the commission.

- (a) The commission shall perform the following general functions:
  - (ii) Establish tuition rates for the community colleges

### **WCCC Rules**

The Commission’s statutory authority to establish tuition rates for the community colleges is reflected in its agency Rules.

#### Chapter 3, General Functions

##### Section 4. Establishing Tuition Rates

- (a) The Commission shall establish tuition rates for the community colleges.
- (b) The Commission shall establish a long-range tuition policy (four to six years) and renew or alter it as needed.
- (c) The Commission may review tuition rates at any time and may address tuition rate changes on a short-term or emergency basis. At a minimum, tuition rates will be reviewed once every two years.
- (d) The tuition rates may include recognition of differential program delivery costs.
- (e) In the event a commission-approved tuition rate results in an amount other than even dollars, the colleges will round down to the nearest whole dollar amount. This provision applies to in-state, out-of-state, and WUE enrollees.

In keeping with its statutory charge, a review of the current policy occurred over the summer of 2018 with a final review on 21 September 2018. Those actions have resulted in this philosophy and policy.

## **Tuition Philosophy**

The Wyoming Community College Commission is to set tuition at a level that facilitates community college attendance for Wyoming citizens. It is designed to support workforce needs and educational goals of students.

- Students share in the cost of education.
- Tuition revenue is an essential resource of a quality education.
- Tuition should be as nearly free as possible.
- Tuition can be used to advance strategic goals.

## **Tuition Policy**

The current tuition rate is \$94 per credit hour for in-state students, \$141 per credit hour for WUE (and Nebraska) students, and \$282 per credit hour for out-of-state and international students.

Effective with the Fall 2019 term, the 12-hour tuition cap shall be raised to 15 hours.

Tuition shall be set for two-year periods that mirror the state's biennial period, however, as stated in Commission Rules, Chapter 3, Section 4 (c), the Commission may change the rate in the interim.

Tuition reviews, policy enhancements and/or changes, and tuition rate changes shall occur during the Commission's October meeting in each odd-numbered calendar year, and shall take effect during the next Fall term.

Beginning with the October 2019 Commission meeting, staff shall provide for consideration of adjusting tuition, the actual or estimated college revenue for the previous fiscal year and the estimated revenue for the current fiscal year in the following categories:

- State Aid as presented in the funding allocation model on 1 July of each odd-numbered calendar year
- Local revenue as presented in the recapture/redistribution workbook on 1 July of each odd-numbered calendar year
- Student, course and other fee revenue as presented in each college's annual budget for the previous and current fiscal years
- Tuition revenue as presented in each colleges annual budget for the previous and current fiscal years

For the purposes of analysis, staff shall provide the percentage of tuition to total undesignated revenue, and the percentage of in-state tuition to total tuition. Using the percentage of in-state tuition to total tuition, calculate the dollar amount required to achieve 23 to 28 percent of total undesignated revenue. That amount shall be divided by

the total estimated in-state tuition revenue to determine the percent increase required, and this percentage shall be multiplied by the current tuition rate to determine the dollar amount of increase required.

Commission staff will provide such analysis for each percentage point from 23 through 28 percent of total revenue along with agreed upon comparators which include both the Wyoming annual CPI and the US Department of Labor annual CPI, the current rate of tuition at UW and its comparison to the calculated tuition rate, and average tuition in states that have a high proportion of state and local revenue to total revenue.