

# Wyoming Community College Commission

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## Tuition Policy AY18 - AY23 (Updated Feb 9 2017) (Updated Feb 22 2018)

### 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 rates.

Tuition rates have a direct bearing on both student access and educational quality. A number of considerations go into establishing tuition rates, 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 1991 Session Laws of Wyoming, Chapter 228, Section 3(a) that “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 by each December.
- (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 on June 1 2016 and has resulted in this new policy.

- Effective with the 2017-2018 academic year, the in-state 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 2018-2019 academic year, the tuition cap of 12 hours is removed. All credit hours taken will be charged the per credit hour rate. **(This action was delayed until the 2019-2020 academic year)**

- Tuition shall be set for 2-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 annual March meeting and shall take effect during the next Fall term.
- Tuition reviews will no longer use:
  - Current average resident tuition and fees to be within two percent of current tuition and fees of WICHE states, less CA plus NE
  - Ratios of current average tuition and fees to Median Household Income.
  - Most recent percentage increase in tuition to be within two percent of the nation CPI for the most recent 12 months.

### **Future Consideration of Tuition Policy**

Establish a range (percentile) for which tuition will address the actual cost of delivery of education. This may become the main pillar of tuition policy, agreeing that the cost or rate of credit hour tuition should be within some range (20-25%) of the actual cost of delivering that credit hour of education. Consider formally adopting a methodology using a cost model or other tool.

Review the possibility of establishing differing in-state tuition rates, one that reflects residence in a taxed county and one for residence in a non-taxed county.

Determine if having commission staff provide tuition comparators from neighboring states and UW is warranted to at least gauge how Wyoming community college tuition compares.