

Wyoming Community College Commission

2300 Capitol Ave., 5th Floor, Suite B, Cheyenne WY 82002

Commissioners

Mr. Gregg Blikre, Gillette
Mr. Dennis Boal, Evanston
Ms. Katherine Dooley, Powell
Dr. Craig Frederick, Guernsey
Dr. Jackie Freeze, Rock Springs
Ms. Julia Newman, Torrington
Ms. Ember Oakley, Riverton



Ex-officio
Governor Mark Gordon
State Superintendent
Jillian Balow
Executive Director
Dr. Sandra Caldwell

Phone: 307-777-7763
Fax: 307-777-6567
www.communitycolleges.wy.edu

Contact: Alina Timofte, PR/PIO

Telephone: 307-777-8703

Email: alina.timofte@wyo.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2020

Op-Ed: Wyoming Community Colleges will help build the economy amid COVID-19 crisis

By Dr. Jackie Freeze, Wyoming Community College Commission Chair

As Wyoming begins its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Wyoming community colleges have stepped up to maintain quality education, support our communities, and help move our economy in a positive direction. Wyoming Community College Commissioners have a front-row seat as our seven community colleges support the state through this challenging time. Their rapid response enabled them to continue to provide quality education and services as everyone struggled with new ways to do business. It is important to note that they are keeping their students engaged and moving forward. Classes continue and students will complete the spring semester with many graduating and moving on to further education or filling important jobs in our state. The colleges implemented immediate strategies to help students complete, ranging from offering free Wi-Fi in their parking lots to distributing computers to ensure students had the necessary tools to finish strong. Faculty members adopted innovative approaches to remote learning, and they are keeping their students focused on their goals and maintaining critical connections and support. Some colleges have stepped in to use their technology to manufacture personal protection equipment (PPE), such as masks, visors, and shields to keep front-line workers protected. Many are working with local emergency response teams to dedicate their facilities and other support as needed. Nurses, respiratory therapists, and other graduates of Wyoming community colleges are working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. The colleges are coping with resource challenges, developing a visionary future, offering most summer school programs online, working on contingency plans to ensure a successful fall semester, and partnering with key decision-makers to help the state's economic recovery.

Wyoming community colleges have always played a critical role in Wyoming by providing high quality transfer preparation, key job skills to power our economy, and responsiveness to community needs for workforce training. The Wyoming Community College Commission's Strategic Plan clearly states that a significant priority is placed upon addressing the workforce

Casper College ● Central Wyoming College ● Eastern Wyoming College ● Laramie County Community College
Northern Wyoming Community College District ● Northwest College ● Western Wyoming Community College

needs of the state. Our priorities laid the groundwork for Wyoming's Community College education being consistently ranked in the top 10 nationally and being regularly recognized for its effectiveness in preparing Wyomingites for employment and innovation. Wyoming community colleges serve almost 30,000 students a year with variety of goals which include preparation for transfer and bachelor's degree completion, technical certificates and degrees, which prepare students to enter the Wyoming workforce, and retraining for displaced workers and innovative skill-building. They also serve as civic and community builders with programs in wellness, arts and cultural enhancement, and personal enrichment. It is these innovative, well-prepared community college graduates who will not only help our economy recover but return more quickly to the thriving environment we expect. Now, more than ever, it is critical for our students to stay focused on their goals, complete the semester successfully, and continue their education next year. This period should not be considered a setback, but a challenge and a way to accomplish goals despite obstacles.

The Wyoming Code of Ethics, Code of the West, tells us to "do what has to be done" and our community colleges will continue to do just that, even during a time of economic hardship, by providing high quality accessible higher education, being at the table to participate in the dialog for change, and doing our part to create an educated workforce that will support the state's recovery. Like our state, Wyoming community colleges are adaptable, resilient, and will support their students no matter what. The Wyoming Community College Commission is proud to serve the colleges and the students of Wyoming and we take our role on behalf of statewide community college education and postsecondary educational attainment and its critical impact on economic vitality very seriously. Thank you, Casper College, Central Wyoming College, Eastern Wyoming College, Laramie County Community College, Northwest College, Northern Wyoming Community College District-Sheridan and Gillette Colleges, and Western Wyoming Community College. Keep up the great work and stay safe and healthy!

Dr. Jackie Freeze

Wyoming Community College Commission Chair