

# Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

**Member States (15):** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

\*The U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States (currently Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are also members of WICHE; however, they are not included in this analysis because of limited information on postsecondary governance.

## Introduction

In March 2019, Education Commission of the States released a comprehensive summary of the postsecondary governance landscapes in each state and the District of Columbia. The [interactive data visualization](#), individual state profiles and 50-State Comparison capture state governance ecosystems that consist of coordinating boards/agencies and governing boards, administrative/service agencies, advisory groups and membership organizations. These resources are intended to assist policy and education leaders in understanding postsecondary governance systems in their states and others.

In partnership with the regional higher education compacts, Education Commission of the States is providing an analysis of their member states' governance systems and individual profiles.

## State Postsecondary Governance Models

Higher education governance systems across the states and District of Columbia are varied and complex. The structures are a mix of coordinating and governing boards at the state, system and institutional levels; and other agencies and organizations may play important roles in the postsecondary landscape.

While no two states have the same postsecondary governance system, the structures fall within general models — even though the categorization is not a straightforward process.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the basic approaches, numerous boards also govern other postsecondary systems, multi-campus institutions and individual institutions.

**Single, Statewide Coordinating Board/Agency:** Twenty states have a single coordinating board and/or agency that is responsible for key aspects of the state's role with public postsecondary institutions and, in some cases, independent colleges.

*WICHE states:* Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington.

**Single, Statewide Governing Board:** Eight states have a statewide governing board that manages and oversees most functions of the public higher education system and typically has broad authority over institutions.

*WICHE states:* Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and North Dakota.

*Note:* Montana's Board of Regents serves governing and coordinating roles for different institutions; however, the board typically is categorized as governing.

**One or More Systemwide Coordinating or Governing Board:** Nineteen states have one or more coordinating or governing boards that oversee institutions within a postsecondary system. These states do not have statewide coordinating or governing boards.

*WICHE states:* Arizona, California, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

**Administrative/Service Agency:** At least 11 states and the District of Columbia have higher education administrative agencies that may oversee financial aid and specific academic programs, institutional licensure approval and information/data services. The agencies' authority varies across the states and with respect to different types of institutions. These states also have system-level coordinating or governing boards and/or governing boards for individual institutions.

*WICHE states:* Alaska and Arizona.

## Coordinating Boards/Agencies, Governing Boards and Administrative/Service Agencies

The following chart summarizes the number of statewide and major, systemwide coordinating boards/agencies and governing boards, as well as administrative/service agencies for WICHE member states. See Notes 1 for further explanation of the boards and agencies. The numbers in parentheses indicate states with more than one board.

Type of Board	Number of States	Number of Boards or Agencies	States
Single Statewide Coordinating Board/Agency	4	4	Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington
Single Statewide Governing Board	6	6	Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and North Dakota
One or More Major, Systemwide Governing Board	3	6	Arizona, California (3) and Utah (2)
One or More Major, Systemwide Coordinating Board	1	1	Wyoming
Major, Systemwide Coordinating and Governing Board	1	2	South Dakota (2)
Administrative/Service Agencies	2	2	Alaska and Arizona

## Appointing Authority of Higher Education Executive Officers

The following table summarizes the authority or entity that appoints, approves or hires the higher education executive officers for statewide and major, systemwide coordinating boards/agencies and governing boards, as well as administrative/service agencies for WICHE states. See Notes 2 for further explanation of the appointing authority of boards and agencies, including some of the states marked with parentheses.

Appointing Authority	Number of States	Number of Boards or Agencies	States
Agency Board or Agency Committee	1	1	Alaska (1)
Coordinating Board	3	3	Oregon, South Dakota (1) and Wyoming (1)
Coordinating Board, With Approval of Governor	0	0	N/A
Governing Board	8	10	Alaska (1), Arizona, California (3), Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota and South Dakota (1)
Governing Board, With Approval of Governor and Senate	1	2	Utah (2)
Governor	0	0	N/A
Governor, With Approval of Senate or Legislature	2	2	Colorado and New Mexico
Governor, on Recommendation of Coordinating Board	1	1	Washington
State Board of Education or Commission/Secretary of Education	1	1	Idaho

## Notes 1

South Dakota has one governing board for the four-year system and one coordinating board for the two-year system. New Mexico does not have a board affiliated with the department of higher education, which serves as a statewide coordinating agency. Wyoming has a coordinating board for two-year institutions and a governing board for the University of Wyoming, which is not considered a system.

## Notes 2

Alaska's Board of Regents appoints the system's executive director and a board that oversees the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education appoints its executive director. In Idaho, the state board of education appoints the executive director, who typically engages in postsecondary issues in and for the state. This is a separate position than the voter-elected superintendent of public instruction. South Dakota's coordinating and governing boards appoint the executive directors.

## Regional Compact Analyses and State Profiles

The analyses and state profiles for each regional higher education compact can be accessed from this [link](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Aims C. McGuinness, State Policy Leadership for the Future: History of state coordination and governance and alternatives for the future (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2016), <https://www.ecs.org/state-policy-leadership-for-the-future-history-of-state-coordination-and-governance-and-alternatives-for-the-future/>, 46-47.