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**The Regional Outlook**

Seven of the top 10 states in terms of projected job growth are in the West: Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. In the 15 WICHE states, an additional 5.9 million jobs will be added in the decade leading up to 2012. While California has the greatest numerical growth in the region, with some 270,000 new jobs being created each year, the states seeing the fastest job growth are Nevada (41 percent), Utah (31 percent), Idaho (24 percent), and Arizona and Colorado (23 percent). Most of the region’s fastest growing professions are in the health and computer sectors.

Sources: Workforce Report Data

**WICHE**

WICHE and its 15 member states — Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming — work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life.

For more information on WICHE’s Student Exchange Programs, contact Margo Schultz at 303-541-0214 or mschultz@wiche.edu or write to: WICHE/Student Exchange Program PO Box 9752 Boulder, CO 80301-9752

Visit our website at www.wiche.edu.

**Higher Education & the Workforce**

In 2006 a good education is no longer just a way for an individual to get ahead. It is also, and increasingly, the best way a state can get ahead — and therefore a real economic priority. A college degree confers specific, calculable benefits on a state’s citizens: the average lifetime income of an individual with a bachelor’s degree is $2.1 million, compared to $1.2 million for those with just a high school diploma. But the benefits realized by the state are just as impressive as those that an individual sees. Not only does a state with a well-educated populace see increased tax revenues from its (better-paid) citizens, it is also able to use the education level of its citizens as a powerful lure for business and industry — a way to build its economy overall.

For that to happen, however, a state must make sure that all of its citizens have access to a college education. Businesses are no longer simply looking for a small, well-educated elite but instead need to be able to draw upon a labor pool that’s both broadly educated and diverse. In fact, a report from the Business-Higher Education Forum, a coalition that includes some of the country’s top corporate CEOs, states that an educated and diverse population is an essential competitive asset in today’s global economy.

In Washington, the demand for well-educated employees will only increase over the next several years. In the decade leading up to 2012, healthcare occupations will see growth of 20 percent. Teachers will be in demand: nearly 9,000 new elementary and middle-school educators will need to be hired. Computer fields will undergo growth of 24 percent, while managers will see their ranks swell by 17 percent — over 20,000 new managerial openings will need to be filled in all. The growth of these sectors is good news for Washington’s citizens, since wages for jobs in these areas are significantly higher than the average for Washington in general. But entry into these jobs comes with a price tag: most positions in these fields will require a bachelor’s degree or higher. The question for Washington and other states is how, in a time of tight budgets, to meet the increasing demands on higher education and thereby meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated economy.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has had workforce issues at the top of its agenda since its creation in the 1950s. In fact, WICHE was launched specifically to address the shortage of workforce-training opportunities in medicine, dentistry, and other professional fields. Today, WICHE offers a slew of undergraduate, graduate, and professional options that help the West’s states educate and train their citizens, building their economies in the process.

**Washington’s Occupational Outlook**

Employment in Washington (including hourly and salaried jobs and self-employment) is projected to grow by 17 percent from 2002 to 2012, adding some 525,100 new jobs to the state’s economy and growing the workforce from 3,039,510 to 3,564,610. The rate of growth is higher than the 15 percent increase projected for the nation as a whole.

Growth will occur in most sectors of Washington’s economy, with the largest number of new jobs being generated in lower-paying fields such as retail sales, cashiering, and food preparation and service. However, Washington’s “top jobs” — those with the strongest employment outlook and high earnings — are all professional positions (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Washington’s Top Jobs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Jobs with the strongest employment outlook (2002-12) and strong wages.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
All of the top jobs listed on Table 1 require considerable education and training. Three of them (mechanical engineer technician, nuclear medical technician, and dental hygienist) require an associate’s degree, while all the rest demand a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Washington will see strong growth in a variety of sectors in the decade leading up to 2012. Computer-related jobs are expected to see significant growth. Overall, the state is projected to add over 23,000 new jobs in this area.

Healthcare will also see big increases: nearly 18,000 new jobs will be created in a variety of fields, from dentistry to nursing, and about the same number will be hired to replace those who leave their fields. The demand for registered nurses will see a 20 percent increase: about 20,000 R.N.s will be needed to hire for new and replacement posts. And Washington will see strong competition for those nurses: the top five states needing the largest numbers of nurses are all in the West. Physicians and surgeons will hire some 4,400 practitioners. Two other essential professionals, managers and teachers, will also see a large number of hires in the decade leading up to 2012, due to the aging of the state’s population.

The projections indicate that plenty of jobs will be available for those without formal training beyond high school. However, wages in the sectors hiring those workers – retail sales, cashiering and food service will be top employers – fall significantly below the statewide mean ($40,320 a year), and many positions don’t provide even a living wage. Over the next several years, workers who have the most education and training will have the best opportunity for high-paying jobs in growing sectors. In addition, a number of professions requiring education beyond the bachelor’s degree are expected to see moderate to strong growth (see Table 2).

### Washington Professional Employment Projections, 2002-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number 2002</th>
<th>Number 2012</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Total Openings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All professions</td>
<td>3,095,510</td>
<td>3,544,610</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1,295,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>3,610</td>
<td>4,690</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>4,858</td>
<td>5,916</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>4,056</td>
<td>4,790</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>2,118</td>
<td>2,580</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometrists</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>5,020</td>
<td>5,920</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapists</td>
<td>3,890</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician Assistants</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>2,010</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians and Surgeons</td>
<td>12,870</td>
<td>15,390</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatrists</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>45,930</td>
<td>55,260</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes new jobs and replacements, rounded. 


Washington & WICHE’s Student Exchange Program

In 2002, 44 percent of Washington’s new high school graduates enrolled out of state, according to WICHE’s Policy Indicators for Higher Education (www.wiche.edu/Policy/Indicators). The easiest way for them to do that: our Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), which allows students to enroll in out-of-state institutions at a reduced tuition level (150 percent of resident tuition). Over 2,900 Washington students enrolled in WUE in 2005, saving over $16.7 million and working toward degrees in fields that are essential to Washington’s economy. Some of the most popular fields for Washington students: communications, education, engineering, biology, business, hotel/restaurant management, and psychology.

WICHE’s Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) offers students opportunities to train outside of their home state in 14 highly competitive fields: architecture, dentistry, graduate library studies, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant, podiatry, public health, and veterinary medicine. In Washington, employment projections in all these fields are on the rise (see Table 2). Through PSEP, Washington students are studying to be optometrists and osteopathic physicians. In general, at least 60 percent of PSEP students return to their home state to practice.

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Veterinarians. Veterinarian is the third fastest growing job in Washington among occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree or higher. Veterinarians held 1,210 jobs in 2002 in Washington; that number will grow to 1,640 by 2012, a 36 percent increase. Demand for vets will be strong across the country (the nation will see a 26 percent increase in hires), especially as older vets retire and as the household pet population increases. Median annual earnings of veterinarians in Washington were $70,010 in 2004; the top 10 percent earned $103,380 and up (nationwide, that figure was $120,150).

Pharmacists. In Washington, some 2,000 pharmacists will have to be hired to fill new and replacement positions in the decade leading up to 2012. Pharmacists held 5,020 jobs in 2002, a number slated to jump to 5,920 in 2012, an 18 percent increase. Competition for pharmacists...
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