

## **R628, WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program<sup>1</sup>**

**R628-1** The following policy has been codified as Utah Administrative Code R765-628.<sup>2</sup>

### **R628-2 References**

- 2.1** Utah Code § 53B-4-101, WICHE Compact
- 2.2** Board Policy R512, Resident Student Status

### **R765. Higher Education (Utah Board of), Administration.**

#### **R765-628. WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program.**

##### **R765-628-1. Purpose.**

This rule outlines the application requirements and funding procedures for the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).

##### **R765-628-2. Authority.**

Section 53B-4-101 authorizes this rule.

##### **R765-628-3. Definitions.**

- (1) "Certifying officer" means the designated Commissioner's office employee who:
- (a) promotes PSEP opportunities to Utah residents;
  - (b) processes certification applications for prospective students seeking to enroll through eligible PSEP programs; and
  - (c) serves as the office liaison with WICHE staff for the purposes of processing funds for each student and tracking the student's academic progress through graduation.
- (2) "Commissioner's office" means the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Adopted May 18, 2023; amended March 1, 2024; and January 9, 2025.*

<sup>2</sup> This administrative rule must also be approved by the Utah Office of Administrative Rules and minor, non-substantive edits to conform with the Utah Administrative Cod style guide may be made.

(3) "Bona fide resident" means, for purposes of PSEP eligibility, an applicant who is a resident of the state of Utah and who has maintained residency within Utah for a consecutive period of at least five (5) years before the time of application. The applicant may provide evidence of Utah residency including, but not limited to, Utah voter registration, Utah vehicle registration, Utah driver's license or identification card, Utah state income tax return, Utah high school transcripts, Utah college transcripts, rental contract or mortgage documents, utility bills, etc. for five consecutive years prior to their application. Temporary absences from the state for education, religious service, humanitarian service, military service, or medical reasons, shall not interrupt the continuity of the residency period for purposes of PSEP eligibility, provided that the individual maintains the intent to return to the state of Utah as their permanent home and provides documentation to verify the applicant's continued connection to the state during their period of physical absence. The determination of whether a student qualifies as a bona fide resident for purposes of PSEP eligibility shall be based on the totality of circumstances.

(4) "PSEP" means the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program, which is a regional exchange program for students pursuing certain professional healthcare degrees at participating universities in other WICHE states and territories whereby the student pays reduced tuition because the student's home state pays a fee to the enrolling institution to reduce tuition costs.

(5) "Support fee" means the agreed upon award amount set for each eligible program and academic year, as negotiated between WICHE and the cooperating programs and approved biennially, in even years, by the WICHE Commission.

(6) "WICHE" means the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

#### **R765-628-4. Application.**

(1) Each new applicant shall submit the following to the certifying officer by October 15th of the year before admission to an eligible professional program:

- (a) a completed WICHE PSEP application for Utah as published by the Utah Board of Higher Education;
- (b) a signed consent and waiver form;
- (c) college transcripts (undergraduate and graduate, if applicable); and

(d) additional documentation to verify the applicant's status as a bona fide resident of Utah for five consecutive years before the time of application, as requested.

(2) The certifying officer shall give each applicant who is certified as meeting the residency requirement in Subsection R765-628-4(6) one of the following certification statuses:

(a) "Certified/Incoming" when the applicant submits the application by October 15th and the applicant will be enrolling as a first-year student;

(b) "Alternate Certified/Enrolled" when the applicant submits the application by October 15th and the applicant is enrolled in 2nd year or beyond of professional program;

(c) "Alternate Late Certified/Incoming" when the applicant submits the application after October 15 and the applicant will be enrolling as a first-year student; or

(d) "Alternate Late Certified/Enrolled" when the applicant submits the application after October 15th and the applicant is enrolled in 2nd year or beyond of professional program.

(3) Each applicant shall notify the certifying officer of any admission offers to cooperating programs.

(4) Each WICHE school shall notify WICHE's central office of any offers.

(5) WICHE and the certifying officer shall monitor the number of certified applicants and each applicant's admission offers.

(6) To be eligible for certification, a student shall have established that they are a bona fide resident of Utah for five full consecutive years before the time of application.

(7) If a student does not receive funding and wishes to recertify for the following year, the student shall reapply and submit all required documentation for Utah certification.

### **R765-628-5. Funding Applicants.**

(1) The number of new students funded in each approved field shall be determined by available funding.

(2) The certifying officer shall give priority for funding, before new applicants are considered, to each returning PSEP student who was awarded in prior academic years and who has remained in good academic standing.

- (3) WICHE shall:
  - (a) track academic progress; and
  - (b) report concerns to the certifying officer.

(4)(a) If insufficient funding exists to award each new applicant with an admission offer, the certifying officer shall rank each new applicant, as follows:

- (i) Certified/Incoming students shall be given first consideration;
- (ii) then Alternate Certified/Enrolled students;
- (iii) then Alternate Late Certified/Incoming, and
- (iv) lastly Alternate Late Certified/Enrolled students.

(b) If further ranking is required within the groups set forth in Subsection R765-628-4(2), the certifying officer shall rank each student by the following categories until all available funding is awarded:

(i) student institutional rankings for Utah applicants, provided to WICHE confidentially;

- (ii) application submission date;
- (iii) cumulative undergraduate GPA; and
- (iv) length of time that the student has been considered a bona fide resident.

(5) If offered funding, each student shall return the following documents no later than the deadline set by the certifying officer:

(a) a signed contract accepting the funding, agreeing to the terms of funding, and acknowledging intent to return to Utah to practice their profession upon completion of the program; and

(b) a copy of the student's final acceptance letter to an approved optometry or podiatry program.

(6) If the student fails to submit the required documentation by the established deadline, the student may forfeit the student's PSEP eligibility.

(7) Each student receiving military, federal, or private scholarships or full fellowships that cover tuition shall be ineligible to receive WICHE support.

(8) The certifying officer shall consider each case in which tuition is partially covered on an individual basis.

### **R765-628-6. Continued Eligibility.**

(1) Upon certifying and awarding a student, the Utah Board of Higher Education shall continue to provide a support fee for that student through the normal duration of the program, as defined by WICHE with the standard program in optometry and podiatry being four years in duration, and subject to:

(a) the appropriation of necessary funds; and  
(b) the student being in good academic standing, as defined by the attending institution.

(2) WICHE shall:

(a) monitor academic progress annually until each degree requirement has been met; and

(b) communicate any changes in status, such as leave of absence or academic probation, with the certifying officer.

(3) The Commissioner's office may not support any student for duplicative coursework.

(4) The certifying officer may request documentation to verify continued enrollment, continuous Utah residency, intent to return to Utah post-graduation, or other pertinent information to remain eligible for funding.

### **R765-628-7. Leave of Absence.**

(1) A student may request a leave of absence for unexpected or sudden circumstances that arise after the student enrolls in an eligible program.

(2) The student shall obtain an approved leave of absence from the student's enrolling program.

(3) Once institutional approval is obtained, the certifying officer may approve a leave of absence for purposes of PSEP for no more than one year at a time.

(4) The certifying officer and the enrolling program shall notify WICHE of the approved leave of absence.

(5) The certifying officer may reduce a student's funding upon return to enrollment if funding has been provided for incomplete or failed coursework.

(6) The certifying officer may require a student to reapply for PSEP funding upon return if the student's leave of absence extends for more than one year.