



---

---

## **Higher Education**

### **University of Wyoming**

#### ***History***

Established by Article 7, Section 15 of the Wyoming Constitution, the University of Wyoming (University) is recognized as a land-grant research institution, meaning it has a dual mission of teaching and research. The University Board of Trustees (Board), pursuant to W.S. 21-17-203 through W.S. 21-17-204 and Article 7, Section 17 of the Wyoming Constitution, is responsible for overall governance of the University. More specifically, W.S. 21-17-203 states “they possess all powers necessary or convenient to accomplish the objects and perform the duties prescribed by law, and shall have custody of the books, records, buildings and all other property of the university.” In addition, pursuant to W.S. 21-17-204, the Board “shall prescribe rules for the government of the university and all its branches.” The Board consists of 12 members appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate. To support the Board, the Office of Academic Affairs, within the University, oversees the teaching mission and is responsible for academic administration, while the Office of Research and Economic Development oversees the research mission and the use of federal funds related to sponsored grants and programs.

#### ***Funding***

Article 7, Section 16 of the Wyoming Constitution requires that the cost of instruction at the University be “as nearly free as possible” considering both University-generated funds and other funding sources made available by the Legislature. The policy, set forth in W.S. 21-17-107, states that:

the Legislature shall appropriate monies intended for the support and maintenance of the University of Wyoming. The appropriations shall specify the purposes for which the monies are intended and may be used. The appropriations shall apply to and include all monies received by the university from the United States for the endowment and support of colleges for the benefit of agriculture and mechanic arts. No expenditure shall be made in excess of an appropriation, and no monies so appropriated shall be used for any purpose other than that for which they are appropriated.

The Legislature has also provided various other mechanisms to keep tuition low for students. For example, the Legislature has created the Hathaway Scholarship Program, Wyoming Investment in Nursing Program, Veteran’s Tuition Program, Advanced Payment of Higher Education Costs program, and Tuition and Fees for Survivors or Dependents of Emergency Responders. The University receives block grant funding which allows more flexibility to provide the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivering high programmatic outcomes.

---

---

## **Community Colleges**

### ***History***

The Wyoming community college system has eight community college districts that were established starting in 1945. They are listed as follows: Casper College in Casper, 1945; Northwest College in Powell, 1946; Eastern Wyoming College in Torrington, 1948; Sheridan College (Northern Wyoming Community College District) in Sheridan, 1948; Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, 1959; Central Wyoming College in Riverton, 1966; Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, 1968; and Gillette Community College in Gillette in 2021.<sup>1</sup>

In 1951, the Wyoming Community College Commission (Commission) was established. The Commission is an advisory board and provides a forum for the community colleges and other stakeholders to study and recommend adjustments to the system on an ongoing basis, including how to maintain and coordinate consistency and standards among the colleges, and with the University. The Commission has undergone several legislative reorganizations since 1951. Currently, the Commission is comprised of seven members, appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Wyoming Senate. The Commission's duties are divided into six functions, including general, coordinating, administrative, approval, review/reporting, and implementation. Statute specifies that decision making authority related to the operation of the colleges not specifically granted to the Commission are reserved for the college district boards. Each college district board has seven members and is guided by W.S. 21-18-201 through 21-18-319.

### ***Funding***

Traditionally, community colleges were established locally and funded primarily with local revenues. In addition to property taxes, other fee revenues like tuition, course fees, and auxiliary revenues from student service centers, cafeterias, etc. assisted in meeting colleges financial responsibilities. Appropriations were approved for community colleges, although these funds were originally intended to supplement local college funding and revenues. The share or proportion of these three revenue sources (property taxes, institution generated revenues, and state appropriations) vary for each college. Prior to each new biennial budget period, the Commission, with consultation and input from the colleges, must review, update, and modify the statewide college system strategic plan. The plan must prescribe the components of the educational program and attach program components to statewide system priorities. This plan must also link to state operational and capital construction budget requests and funding. Pursuant to W.S. 21-18-203(a), the colleges' requests for state appropriations must be submitted through the Commission, and beginning with FY2021, and every four years thereafter, the standard budget should follow the definition used by other state agencies. An enrollment adjustment to the standard budget is required every four years, with additional criteria on how that adjustment will impact the budget request. The Commission is required to hold at least one public hearing for the colleges' budget requests. Colleges must provide biennial funding reports to the Commission and state appropriations to the colleges must be provided through the Commission, unless otherwise provided by the Legislature.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1969, Gillette College was established as a part of the Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD). In 2021, Gillette College became its own community college district and is in the process of seeking its own accreditation, separate from the NWCCD, a process which can take three to five years to complete.

---

---