

What is a WUE school?

You may have heard folks at school talking about WUE, and you have no idea what they are talking about! First, what does WUE even stand for? Western Undergraduate Exchange. And per the WUE website, this is what it is:

The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) is an agreement among WICHE's (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) 16 members (states and Pacific territories), through which 160+ participating public colleges and universities provide steep nonresident tuition savings for Western students.

Phew, that is a mouthful, but what it means is that students who qualify for admission to public schools in those 16 states or territories may be eligible for a discount to the out-of-state tuition charged. The states that participate are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the US Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States. Now that may sound simple, but unfortunately, that is not the case because not all public schools in all states participate, and even the schools that do participate do not offer the discount for all majors. So, let's look at a few examples.

To start, in California, the only school in the University of California system that participates is UC Merced. For Fall of 2022 the tuition for out of state students was listed at just over \$45,000(per their website), however the WUE tuition was right around \$18,000. That is a huge savings for a world class education. Many schools in the Cal State University system are part of the WUE system, but many of the more competitive schools are not (San Diego State or Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to name two of the more popular schools). To take it a step further, while there are 16 Cal State schools that do participate, not all majors are part of the program, for example, only a handful of nursing programs are eligible.

In Oregon, the two biggest schools where students from Maui like to apply are University of Oregon and Oregon State University. Oregon State participates, and U of O does not. But while most majors are part of the exchange, the difference at Oregon State is that not all students from qualifying states are eligible. It is a competitive scholarship where only the top 30% of applicants are given the award. At Oregon State the tuition break for an accepted WUE student is approximately 50% off of the normal out-of-state rate.

In Idaho, there are several schools that all participate in the exchange and all of them are under \$10,00. Most majors are offered and there are many other scholarship opportunities available. The state of Idaho may not be on everyone's list of first choices, but if you like skiing and the

outdoors, Idaho is a great place to be. It is important for students to remember that they are choosing a place to attend college, not to go on vacation.

Here are a few of my own favorites:

UNLV- "The Ninth Island", Las Vegas offers most all majors at one of the best tuition rates at \$11,520

Western Washington University- Located in Bellingham, current WUE tuition is listed at \$11,798

Northern Arizona University- Flagstaff is a lovely spot and NAU offers a lot for \$16,536

The bottom line is that you need to decide what your family budget is, and do your research to see if a WUE school is right for you. What may be the right place for one student is not always (actually rarely is) the right place for another. If you want to find out more information about WUE schools please visit my website at [thecollegeauntie.com](http://thecollegeauntie.com), and click on the dropdown menu to the financial aid section.

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