



GOV. COMM. 20-66  
(HOUSE)

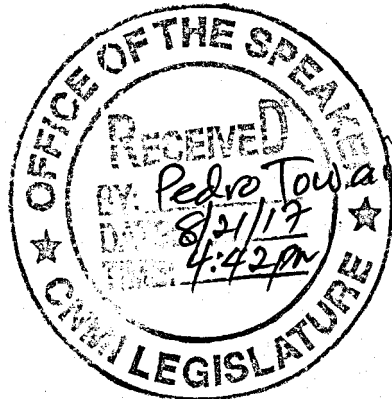
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Ralph DLG. Torres  
Governor

Victor B. Hocog  
Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable Arnold I. Palacios  
Senate President, The Senate  
Twentieth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Rafael S. Demapan  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Twentieth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950



21 AUG 2017

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law Senate Bill No. 20-08, SD1, entitled, "To enable the CNMI to participate in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Professional Student Exchange Program; and for other purposes," which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twentieth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 20-08**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

VICTOR B. HOCOG  
Acting Governor

HOUSE CLERK'S OFFICE  
RECEIVED BY   
DATE 8/24/17 HE 10:41a

cc: Governor; Attorney General; Northern Marianas College; CNMI Scholarship Office; Public Auditor; Department of Public Lands; Special Assistant for Administration; Special Assistant for Programs and Legislative Review



**THE SENATE**  
**TWENTIETH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 20-08, SD1**

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**AN ACT**

To enable the CNMI to participate in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Professional Student Exchange Program; and for other purposes.

***SENATE ACTION***

Offered by Senator(s): Jude U. Hofschneider

Date: January 27, 2017

Referred to: Committee on Education and Youth Affairs

Standing Committee Report No.: None

First and Final Reading: June 30, 2017

***HOUSE ACTION***

Referred to: None

Standing Committee Report No.: None

First and Final Reading: July 28, 2017

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dolores S. Bermudes".

**DOLORES S. BERMUDES**  
**SENATE CLERK**



THE SENATE  
TWENTIETH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2017

S. B. NO. 20-08, SD1

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AN ACT

To enable the CNMI to participate in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Professional Student Exchange Program; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTIETH NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the "CNMI Professional Student  
2 Exchange Program Act of 2017."

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Commonwealth Legislature finds that the  
4 CNMI is currently a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education  
5 (WICHE). Membership in WICHE allows students from the CNMI to be eligible for  
6 reduced tuition at more than 200 participating WICHE institutions. Moreover, CNMI  
7 students under WICHE's Western Undergraduate Exchange Program (WUE) are eligible  
8 to request for a reduced tuition rate of 150% of the resident tuition rate when they attend  
9 one of the 159 WUE institutions instead of paying out-of-state tuition which is sometimes  
10 double or more than double the resident tuition for many states. In addition, WICHE's  
11 Western Regional Graduate Program enables CNMI students to select any of the 400  
12 participating graduate programs and pay the enrolling institution's resident tuition rate,  
13 instead of the nonresident rate that an out-of-state student would normally pay.

14           The Commonwealth Legislature does recognize that although being a member of  
15 WICHE greatly benefits graduate and undergraduate students in the CNMI, students who  
16 aspire to pursue post-graduate professional fields of study in the healthcare professions  
17 currently do not have the necessary scholarships available in the CNMI to assist them.

1 However, the Commonwealth Legislature finds that WICHE will serve those students who  
2 want to pursue a professional degree in healthcare fields such as Dentistry, Allopathic  
3 Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathic Medicine, Pharmacy, Physical  
4 Therapy, Physician Assistant, Podiatry and Veterinary Medicine through WICHE's  
5 Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP). WICHE's PSEP enables students to enroll  
6 in some 130 selected out-of-state professional healthcare programs and pay reduced  
7 tuition. States typically fund students to enroll through PSEP if a professional healthcare  
8 program is not available at one of their in-state public institutions. Through PSEP, a  
9 student's home state pays a "support fee" to the receiving school to reduce the cost of the  
10 student's education. Most students enrolled in public programs pay resident tuition; if the  
11 support fee does not cover the difference between resident and nonresident tuition, they  
12 may pay slightly more.

13 The Commonwealth Legislature further finds that in order for the CNMI to fully  
14 invest in our students' education and help to bring in qualified local healthcare  
15 professionals, it is essential to participate in programs such as WICHE's PSEP. Therefore,  
16 the purpose of this legislation is to promote a higher level of education for our students by  
17 enabling the CNMI to participate in WICHE's PSEP.

18 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to the codification of the CNMI Law Revision  
19 Commission, the following is hereby enacted as follows.

20 "Section 101. Professional Student Exchange Program. The CNMI shall  
21 participate in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Professional  
22 Student Exchange Program.

23 Section 102. Support Fee and Field Selection.

24 (a) The PSEP Support Fees shall be determined by the WICHE Commission.

25 (b) The CNMI WICHE Commissioners shall determine the Professional  
26 Healthcare Fields of Study that the CNMI will offer assistance for in  
27 collaboration with the CNMI Scholarship Office.

28 Section 103. Program Administration. The CNMI Scholarship Office shall  
29 administer the PSEP scholarships and the CNMI Scholarship Administrator shall serve as

1 the certifying officer for eligible students. The CNMI Scholarship Office may promulgate  
2 rules and regulations to effectively implement this chapter.

3 Section 104. Reporting. The CNMI Scholarship Office shall submit an annual  
4 report to the presiding officers of the Legislature and the Governor reporting, among other  
5 things, the number of students participating in the program, the number of graduates who  
6 have successfully completed their Professional Healthcare Degree/Medical Degree at a  
7 U.S. accredited Professional Healthcare Institution/Medical School, and the number of  
8 participating students who have returned to the Commonwealth to work.

9 Section 105. Criteria and Requirements. To be eligible for this scholarship  
10 program an individual must:

- 11 (1) Be a United States citizen.
- 12 (2) Be a registered CNMI voter.
- 13 (3) Be a CNMI resident for at least three consecutive years prior to enrollment in a  
14 Professional Healthcare Institution/Medical School.
- 15 (4) Possess a bachelor's degree.
- 16 (5) Furnish a letter of acceptance from a U.S. accredited Professional Healthcare  
17 Institution/Medical School.
- 18 (6) Agree to return to the CNMI after completion of professional field of study and  
19 work in the CNMI for a period of two years for each year of scholarship  
20 assistance.
- 21 (7) Agree to reimburse the CNMI of all moneys received if the student chooses to  
22 switch course of studies not directly related to the approved professional  
23 healthcare field of study recommended by the CNMI WICHE Commissioners.
- 24 (8) If the recipient fails to complete the program, the recipient must pay all the  
25 scholarship funds received through this scholarship program. The CNMI  
26 Scholarship Office Board of Directors must establish a repayment period not to  
27 exceed 10 years. Default in payment shall accrue an annual interest rate of 8%.
- 28 (9) Not be a recipient for any other financial assistance funded by the CNMI  
29 Scholarship Office.

SENATE BILL NO. 20-08, SD1

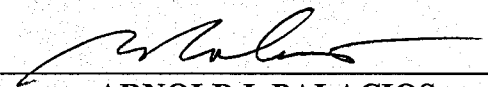
1 (10) Not be a recipient of any other full scholarship programs such as the United  
2 States Military Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP).”

3 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such  
4 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
5 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
6 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

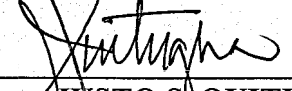
7 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not  
8 be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under  
9 statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation or order adopted under the statutes.  
10 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant  
11 to prior law. The enactment of this Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any  
12 way modifying, any liability civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence at the  
13 date this Act becomes effective.

14 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
15 Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

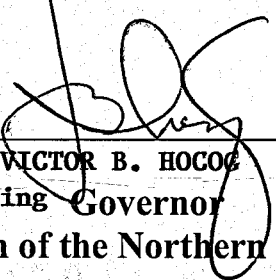
CERTIFIED BY:

  
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ARNOLD I. PALACIOS  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ATTESTED BY:

  
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JUSTO S. QUITUGUA  
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Approved this 21<sup>st</sup> day of August, 2017

  
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VICTOR B. HOCOG  
Acting Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands