

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

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NC-SARA Update: SARA Tipping Point

SARA Tipping Point: 27 SARA States!

Boulder, Colorado – As of June 29, 2015, twenty-seven states have now joined the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) initiative, a key moment for SARA and higher education. In the past month, we have had the pleasure of welcoming Iowa, approved by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to join the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA) on June 1. Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma soon followed with approval by Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to join the Southern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (S-SARA) on June 29.

These states join 23 others (Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wyoming and West Virginia) as members of SARA. SARA is a nationwide initiative of states that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The effort is funded by a \$3 million grant from Lumina Foundation, \$200,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and fees paid by institutions.

We celebrate this momentous tipping point of having over half the states in the United States as members and as a marker of the great success the SARA initiative has become. The benefits for students continue to expand nationally, including access to educational offerings, better resolution of complaints, reduced institutional costs, and enhanced overall quality of distance education.

“We are especially pleased to welcome Iowa, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee as the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th SARA state. We’re pleased about all states that join SARA, of course, but reaching the point where we now have more than half of the states as members is special,” stated Marshall Hill, Director, NC-SARA. “We expect several more states to join SARA by year’s end, followed by others in 2016. Many thanks to all in the broad SARA community who have worked so hard to move us so quickly forward.”

The Iowa College Student Aid Commission will serve as the state “portal” agency for SARA. Known as Iowa College Aid, it is a state agency dedicated to making the path to education and training beyond high school easier for Iowans. Iowa College Aid provides college



administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$70.0 million annually, conducts research, and distributes higher education data. Representatives anticipate being ready to start accepting SARA institutional applications by the end of 2015.

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Chancellor, Glen D. Johnson, remarked, “Providing our students with access to high-quality educational offerings has always been a top priority for Oklahoma’s system of higher education. Joining the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement will allow our colleges and universities to deliver innovative distance education opportunities to current and future students residing in SARA member states, regardless of their geographic location.” The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education has been selected as the state “portal” agency.

In Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education will be operating the institutional liaison agency of SARA. Dr. Brett Powell, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, noted, “Online learning is a significant and important component of the higher education landscape. I am pleased that Arkansas will be part of this effort to coordinate the regulation of online programs for the benefit of both Arkansas institutions and Arkansas students. Our institutions will be relieved of a significant administrative burden and our students will have greater assurance of educational quality as a result of our relationship with SARA.”

“We look forward to the variety of opportunities SARA will bring to Tennessee institutions offering distance education programs and Tennessee students enrolling in such programs. By expanding the education options available to Tennesseans, the SARA partnership will

play an integral role in Tennessee's effort to meet the Drive to 55, the push for 55 percent of Tennesseans to be equipped with a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025." ~ Dr. Russ Deaton, Interim Executive Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission. We are pleased to announce the Tennessee Higher Education Commission will be the local state "portal" agency for Tennessee.

The SARA agreements are overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and are being implemented by the four regional higher education interstate compacts: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Once a state joins SARA, accredited degree-granting institutions in the state that offer distance education courses can seek approval from their state to participate in SARA. When approved, these institutions will be able to operate in other participating SARA states without seeking independent authorization from those states. Participating in SARA is entirely voluntary for institutions, as it is for states.

As of June 29, 2015, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in 31 states and several additional states have determined that no legislation is needed.

2nd Quarter Complaint Reporting

July 1- 22, 2015 marks the next round of required complaint reporting requirements for 2nd quarter 2015.

Per SARA requirements, States participating in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements shall report the following information to the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements on a quarterly basis:

1. The number of complaints, by institution, appealed to the state's SARA portal agency after the person making the complaint has completed the institution's or governing board's (if relevant) complaint resolution process;
2. The resolution of those complaints in the aggregate, by institution: number resolved in favor of the person making the complaint, number resolved in favor of the institution, number resolved by agreement, and number pending resolution.

Upcoming Presentations

**Education Commission of the States
National Forum on Education Policy
June 29 - July 1, 2015
Denver, Colorado**

**National Association for College
Admission Counseling (NACAC)
October 1-3, 2015
San Diego, California**

**President's Forum Annual Meeting
November 18, 2015
Washington, DC**

What is SARA?

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts.



**National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements**

*A voluntary, regional approach
to state oversight of distance education*