

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

March 2015 • Volume 2 • Issue 2

Ohio joins SARA

Ohio has been approved by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to join the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA). This state joins 19 others (Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington 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.

“Governor Kasich has made college affordability and accessibility top priorities, and these agreements go a long way toward making higher education more affordable and more accessible for all Ohio students,” said John Carey, chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents.

The Ohio Board of Regents is a cabinet-level agency for the governor of the State of Ohio that oversees higher education for the state and it will serve as the state “portal” agency for SARA. The agency’s main responsibilities include authorizing and approving new degree programs, managing state-funded financial aid programs and developing and advocating policies to maximize higher education’s contributions to the state and its citizens. Representatives from the Ohio Board of Regents will begin accepting institutional participation applications on April 1, 2015. Additional information about SARA is available on the Regents’ website at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/academic-program-approval>.

“We are very pleased that Ohio has decided to participate in SARA through MHEC,” stated Larry Isaak, MHEC president. “The streamlined SARA process agreed to by states, for regulating online educa-



tion, improves student access to educational opportunities and will save institutions hundreds of thousands of dollars in regulatory fees.”

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.

“Ohio is a welcome addition to the growing number of SARA states nationally,” explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. “We are glad to have them join us in the initiative. Now with 20 SARA states, benefits for students continues to expand including access to educational offerings, better resolution of complaints, reduced institutional costs, and enhanced overall quality of distance education.”

As of March 2, 2015, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in an additional six states and four states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation in SARA.

Process for institutions to participate in SARA

After a state joins SARA and has established its state portal agency (SPA) to perform its SARA duties, accredited degree-granting institutions offering distance education courses can seek approval from their home states. The institutional process starts with the SARA application. Institutions applying to operate under SARA must submit this application to its home state portal agency.

Once the institution application has been approved by the SPA, NC-SARA, the regional compact, and the institution will be notified of the approval. The SPA will send the institution a link to the NC-SARA payment form to finalize participation in SARA. Item 12 on the application details annual SARA institutional fees; these are based on most recent reported IPEDS numbers:

- \$2,000/year for institutions with fewer than 2,500 FTE students
- \$4,000/year for institutions between 2,500-9,999 FTE students
- \$6,000/year for institutions with 10,000 or more FTE students

Payment details are included in the online registration form. Payments are accepted by credit card, check or electronic funds transfer. Note, if electing to pay by check the system creates an invoice. [Institutions requiring a W-9 can access the file by clicking here.](#)

Checks should be payable to WICHE/NC-SARA and mailed to:
WICHE/NC-SARA, 3035 Center Green Drive, Suite 200, Boulder, Colorado 80301.

Checks received prior to SPA approval will be returned and checks made payable to any payee other than the above will cause a delay in finalization of institutional participation. Credit card payments are part of the online process. Cards accepted: VISA, MasterCard and American Express. Note, statements will show a charge to WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) for this transaction.

Once payment is received, the institution is officially participating in SARA and will be listed on the nc-sara.org site. Institutions will also receive a welcome letter from NC-SARA with access to approved SARA institution logos.

SARA Update webinar with Jenny Parks

March 24, 2015 -- 1:00 p.m. CT

[To register, click here](#)

Jenny Parks, M-SARA director, will be joined by additional speakers with an update on the progress of state authorization reciprocity across the nation. Relevant updates related to U.S. Department of Education news, SARA policies and standards (including data collection and submission) will also be included. Time will be allotted for questions and answers.

Upcoming Presentations

Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions (ASAHP) Spring Meeting
March 19, 2015
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

MHEC Webinar
March 24, 2015 • online

The Higher Learning Commission 2015 Annual Conference
March 28-31, 2015
Chicago, Illinois

University Professional & Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) 100th Annual Conference
March 30-April 1, 2015
Washington, DC

Texas Distance Learning Association (TXDLA) Conference
April 7-10, 2015
Dallas, Texas

Alliance 2015 Annual Meeting
April 8-10, 2015
Rapid City, South Dakota

Contacts

Marshall A. Hill, Executive Director
303.541.0237 • mhill@nc-sara.org

Lisa Greco, Communications Coordinator
303.541.0267 • lgreco@nc-sara.org

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements
3005 Center Green Drive, Suite 130
Boulder, Colorado 80301
information@nc-sara.org • 303.541.0283



National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

A voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of distance education