

# UPDATE NEWSLETTER

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## *Five states join SARA*



**Arizona, Oregon and South Dakota were approved by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) on November 11, 2014, to become members of the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA). Soon after on November 16, 2014, Kansas and Missouri were approved by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), to join the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA).**

These states join 12 others (Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North 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.

The newly formed Arizona SARA Council will serve as the state portal agency for SARA. Teri Stanfill, executive director, Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education commented, "Arizona is proud to be approved as a SARA state. All sectors of the higher education community have worked extremely hard collaboratively to form the new AZ-SARA Council over the past year. The Council looks forward to playing a vital role in working with participating institutions and the other states in streamlining distance education regulatory requirements."

The Kansas Board of Regents will serve as the state "portal" agency for SARA. The Board coordinates the state's 32 public higher education institutions (six state universities, one municipal university, nineteen community colleges, and six technical colleges) along with administering the state's student financial aid, adult education, high school equivalency, and career and technical education programs, while also regulating all out-of-state and private postsecondary institutions who wish to operate in Kansas. "We believe that the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) will help reduce the cost of providing online instruction, broaden course offerings for Kansans, and enhance interstate cooperation," said Andy Tompkins, president and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents.

Serving as Missouri's "portal" agency is the Missouri Department of Higher Education, which serves more than 450,000 students through 13 public four-year universities, 20 public two-year colleges, one public two-year technical college, 25 independent colleges and universities and more than 155 proprietary and

private career schools. "The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement puts important measures in place that will help expand higher education opportunities for Missouri students. SARA will enable us to streamline the process of offering online education for our state's colleges and universities and strengthen our oversight of online education programs," said David Russell, Missouri commissioner of higher education.

Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) will serve as the state portal agency for SARA. The Commission is responsible for advising the Legislature, the Governor, and the Oregon Education Investment Board on higher education policy. Ben Cannon, executive director of the HECC, stated, "Many Oregon public and private colleges and universities have come to the table with tremendous support for joining SARA, which allows them to reduce the overall cost of compliance in other states, and increases access to quality distance education programs for Oregon students. As the administering agency for SARA in Oregon, we look forward to partnering with institutions in Oregon and states across the nation in the interest of students. We are excited for this new level of inter-state reciprocity and increased collaboration." Oregon's higher education system enrolled hundreds of thousands of students in 2014 in its seven public universities, 17 public community colleges, 67 private for-profit and independent colleges and universities, and hundreds of private career and trade schools.

The South Dakota Board of Regents has constitutional authority to govern the system of public higher education in the State of South Dakota and will serve as the SARA state portal agency. "South Dakota now becomes part of a nationwide initiative to make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines," said Jack Warner, executive director and CEO for the South Dakota Board of Regents. "As distance delivery of higher education grows, we want to help students gain access to these opportunities, ensure that the programs are of high quality, and help resolve any complaints on behalf of consumers. This SARA agreement helps to make all of that possible." There are 31 post-secondary institutions in South Dakota who are SARA-eligible. In Fall 2012 (the most recent fall term available in IPEDS), those institutions had a total Fall FTE of 43,115.

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.

"I am excited to have 17 states as members of SARA," explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. "This progress in the initiative illustrates the importance of SARA in providing a streamlined alternative to the state-by-state approach institutions must currently follow to gain needed authorizations to serve students in states other than their own."

As of November 14, 2014, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in an additional eight states and three states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation in SARA.

#### National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

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## Upcoming Presentations

**Information Session:**  
**Louisiana Institutions of Higher Education**  
December 3, 2014  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**International Forum for Women in E-learning (IFWE)**  
December 3-5, 2014  
San Antonio, Texas

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) 2014 Annual Meeting**  
December 8, 2014  
Nashville, Tennessee

**New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Annual Conference**  
December 10-12, 2014  
Boston, Massachusetts

## New FAQs

SARA staff have developed new FAQs based on questions received. These FAQs focus on SARA and institutions and SARA and the physical presence standard. If you have a question, please email: [information@nc-sara.org](mailto:information@nc-sara.org)

*Why does SARA use the U.S. Department of Education's financial responsibility composite scores to assess the financial soundness of non-public institutions that seek to participate in SARA?*

*If a college operating under SARA has an agreement with a flight school in another SARA state to offer the flight training component of a program leading to a degree or certificate from the SARA institution, is that a "clinical" site for purposes of SARA?*

Visit: [nc-sara.org](http://nc-sara.org) for answers.



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