

# UPDATE NEWSLETTER

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## *First SREB states join SARA*



Virginia State Capitol Building CC Skip Plitt

**Louisiana, Virginia and West Virginia have been approved by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), as the first states in the compact's region to become members of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA).**

Virginia has an effective operational date of October 17, 2014; Louisiana and West Virginia have an effective operational date of December 1, 2014. These states join Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota and Washington 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 and fees paid by institutions.

“For many students, online classes are key to graduating, which is critical to state goals to increase college completion rates and build a better educated work force,” explained SREB President Dave Spence. “Adult students who juggle other responsibilities when they return to complete degrees stand to benefit in particular.”

Louisiana's Board of Regents will serve as the state “portal” agency for SARA. The Regents coordinate efforts for the state's 34 public colleges, universities and professional schools. They also serve as the state liaison to Louisiana's accredited, independent institutions of higher learning. The Board of Regents represents the public higher education community before all branches of government and the public and maintains close contact with student interests through the Council of Student Body Presidents.

“Distance education has been like the Wild West, growing so fast that meaningful regulation and student protection has been difficult,” said Peter Blake, director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). “This agreement brings some much-needed organization to the process and saves the institutions time and money.” SCHEV is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education and will serve as the

state portal agency for SARA. SCHEV makes higher education public policy recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly in such areas as capital and operating budget planning, enrollment projections, institutional technology needs, and student financial aid.

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission develops and oversees a public policy agenda for West Virginia's four-year colleges and universities. A source of support for institutions and students, the Commission's work includes academic affairs, administrative services, finance and facilities, financial aid, health sciences, human resources, legal services, policy and planning, science and research, and student affairs. The Commission will serve as the SARA state portal agency. "Making distance education courses more readily accepted across state lines will help more students progress toward their degrees," said Dr. Paul L. Hill, Chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. "Our institutions are doing a great job at growing and leveraging online offerings, and West Virginia's participation in SARA will serve to bolster those forward-looking efforts."

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 to participate in SARA from their state. When approved, these institutions will be able to operate in other participating SARA states without seeking independent authorization. Participating in SARA is entirely voluntary for institutions, as it is for states.

"SARA allows states to focus on their home-state institutions, rather than on institutions from many other states," explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. "SARA can help expand educational offerings available to state residents and will significantly reduce costs for institutions that are active in online education, lessening this particular need to raise fees and thereby supporting affordability."

As of October 16, 2014, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in an additional 13 states and three states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation in SARA.



## National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

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

3005 Center Green Drive, Suite 130 • Boulder, Colorado 80301  
303.541.0283 • [information@nc-sara.org](mailto:information@nc-sara.org) • [www.nc-sara.org](http://www.nc-sara.org)

## Upcoming Presentations

**University Professional & Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) Central 2014 Regional Conference**  
October 22, 2014  
Denver, Colorado

**The Presidents' Forum 2014 Annual Meeting**  
October 23, 2014  
Washington, DC

**Online Learning Consortium International Conference**  
October 29, 2014  
Lake Buena Vista, Florida

**University Professional & Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) New England Regional Conference**  
October 29-31, 2014  
Manchester, Vermont

**Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) Annual Conference**  
November 3, 2014  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Conference**  
November 12-14, 2014  
Chicago, Illinois

**Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) Annual Meeting**  
November 16 -18, 2014  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) Annual Meeting**  
November 19-21, 2014  
Portland, Oregon

## Contact

**National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements**  
3005 Center Green Drive, Suite 130  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
[information@nc-sara.org](mailto:information@nc-sara.org)  
303.541.0283  
[www.nc-sara.org](http://www.nc-sara.org)