

UPDATE NEWSLETTER

January 2015 • Volume 2 • Issue 1

Minnesota joins SARA

Minnesota has been approved by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to join the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA). This state joins 18 others (Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia) as members of SARA.



Photo by Alexius Horatius

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.

“Minnesota joining SARA not only benefits institutions in our state that offer distance education courses, it also benefits our students,” said Larry Pogemiller, commissioner of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) will serve as the SARA state “portal” agency. OHE is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state’s clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends. Representatives from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education will begin accepting institutional participation applications on February 15, 2015. Information about SARA will be available on the OHE website.

“SARA is being strengthened every day with new states and institutions joining the effort,” stated Larry Isaak, MHEC president. “The streamlined process of regulating online education continues to enrich the interstate cooperation between our states and nationally, in turn improving student access to educational

opportunities, and saving 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.

“We are excited to start the year off with Minnesota joining SARA,” explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. “Now with 19 member states in the initiative, the benefits for students continues to expand nationally. This includes access to educational offerings, better resolution of complaints, reduced institutional costs, and enhanced overall quality of distance education.”

As of January 26, 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.

Upcoming Presentations

**Council of College and Military Educators
Annual Symposium**
January 29, 2015
Anaheim, California

American Teacher Educators (ATE) MHEC
February 13-18, 2015
Phoenix, Arizona

Online Learning Consortium Collaborate
February 24, 2015
Kansas City, Missouri

**Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching
Excellence (COTE) Summit**
February 27, 2015
Syracuse, New York

**WICHE Cooperative for Educational
Technologies/State Authorization
Networks (WCET/SAN) SARA Compliance**
March 2-3, 2015
Atlanta, Georgia

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

NC-SARA Policies and Standards Update

Board members of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) assembled on December 2, 2014, in Atlanta to decide on a number of items essential to the initiative's continued development. In terms of physical presence standards, the board approved modifications to the NC-SARA Policies and Standards regarding clinical placements. Clinical placements were removed from the "Physical Presence" subsection, recognizing they are a unique and significant aspect of SARA that will require continuing work. A detailed explanation of supervised field experiences covered by SARA, including contracts and licensing, has been approved by the board. [This content is on page 12 of the NC-SARA Policies and Standards document.](#)

The term "supervised field experiences" is defined as: a student learning experience under the oversight of a supervisor, mentor, faculty member or other qualified professional, located in the host state, who has a direct or indirect reporting responsibility to the institution where the student is enrolled, whether or not credit is granted. Examples include practica, student teaching, or internships. Independent off-campus study by individual students not engaged in a supervised field experience is exempt from requirements of this compact and does not constitute a physical presence of a postsecondary institution in a SARA member state.

Other items recently (December 5, 2014) revised or added to the NC-SARA Policies and Standards

- Final approval was given to two policy issues that were first considered by the NC-SARA Board at the meeting on May 14, 2014: 1) policy on data to be submitted by SARA institutions, and 2) policy on reporting of complaints. (See pages 13-15 of the NC-SARA Policies and Standards).
- The board also approved clarification of the term "legal domicile" (See page 2, #17 of the NC-SARA Policies and Standards).
- The possibility of institutions being approved by their states to join the initiative on provisional status was added (See page 5 of the NC-SARA Policies and Standards).
- And the board agreed to add recruiting to the list of activities by SARA institutions that do not trigger physical presence in SARA states. (See page 12, subsection 2 (i) of the NC-SARA Policies and Standards).

SARA Update webinar with Jenny Parks

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

[To register, click here](#)

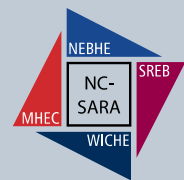
Jenny Parks, M-SARA director, will be joined by additional speakers with an update on the progress of state authorization reciprocity across the nation. Relevant updates related to U.S. Department of Education news, SARA policies and standards (including data collection and submission) will also be included.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

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*