



National Council for
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

A voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of distance education

MEDIA RELEASE

www.nc-sara.org

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Ohio joins SARA

Boulder, Colorado – 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 education, 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.

About NC-SARA, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE, and Lumina Foundation

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education. The initiative is administered by the country's four regional higher education compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, SREB and WICHE) and overseen by NC-SARA. States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states and better resolution of student complaints.
www.nc-sara.org

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact is a nonprofit regional organization assisting Midwestern states in advancing higher education through interstate cooperation and resource sharing. MHEC seeks to fill its interstate mission through programs that expand postsecondary opportunity and success; promote innovative approaches to improving institutional and system productivity; improve affordability to students and states; and enhance connectivity between higher education and the workplace. Member states are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.
www.mhec.org

The New England Board of Higher Education promotes greater educational opportunities and services for the residents of New England. It works across six New England states to engage and assist leaders in the assessment, development, and implementation of sound education practices and policies of regional significance; promote policies, programs, and best practices to assist the states in implementing important regional higher education policies; promote regional cooperation and programs that encourage the efficient use and sharing of educational resources; and provide leadership to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the economic well-being of New England.
www.nebhe.org

The Southern Regional Education Board works with 16 member states to improve public education at every level, from pre-K through Ph.D. SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Atlanta. SREB states currently participate in SREB's Electronic Campus Regional Reciprocity Agreement, and SREB is working closely with SARA to expand reciprocity nationwide. Member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
www.sreb.org

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and its 16 members work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic and civic life. WICHE's members include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
www.wiche.edu

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025. For more information log on to www.luminafoundation.org.