

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## U.S. Department of Education selects representatives from WCET and NC-SARA for negotiated rulemaking committee

Boulder, Colorado — Russ Poulin has been selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a representative for upcoming negotiated rulemaking sessions to review proposed regulations concerning program integrity and improvement issues for the Federal Student Aid programs. Poulin serves as interim co-executive director and deputy director, research and analysis for WCET (WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies). He and Marshall Hill, who has previously served on three such rulemaking sessions, will represent the field of distance education in the process. Hill is executive director of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), which provides a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of post-secondary distance education. Both Poulin and Hill work at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

The Department of Education develops proposed regulations in collaboration with representatives of the constituencies who will be affected extensively by the regulations. This process involves a series of meetings during which these representatives, referred to as non-federal negotiators, work with the Department to reach consensus on the proposed regulations. The Department solicits nominations from the public and from the list of nominees, selects negotiators with the goal of providing sufficient representation for the parties impacted while keeping the size of the committee manageable.

The possible regulations the Program Integrity and Improvement Committee is likely to address are:

- Cash management of funds provided under the title IV Federal Student Aid programs, including the use of debit cards and the handling of title IV credit balances;
- State authorization for programs offered through distance education or correspondence education;
- State authorization for foreign locations of institutions located in a state;
- Clock to credit hour conversion;
- The definition of “adverse credit” for borrowers in the Federal Direct PLUS Loan Program;
- The application of the repeat coursework provisions to graduate and undergraduate programs.

In addition, regulations aimed at preventing financial aid fraud in distance education may be considered.

In his role at WCET, Poulin organizes information-sharing activities among the organization’s members and has led national responses on new federal distance education regulations. Poulin coordinates WCET’s efforts in researching the management of online learning, works on multi-institution e-learning consortia issues, and consults on WICHE’s Adult College Completion Network. Previously, he coordinated distance education activities for the North Dakota University System. He holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and economics from the University of Colorado Denver and a master’s in statistics and research methodology from the University of Northern Colorado.

Hill’s involvement with SARA spans work with the Presidents’ Forum/Council of State Governments drafting team, the development of SARA agreements with the country’s four regional higher education compacts, and membership on the National Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education. Prior to assuming his NC-SARA position in August of 2013, he served eight years as executive director of Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. Hill earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in music from Utah State University and a Ph.D. in music education, with a minor in higher education, from Florida State University.

## **About WICHE, WCET, and NC-SARA**

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and its 16 member states 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 (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate).

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The WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) is a cooperative, membership-driven, non-profit focused on advancing technology enhanced higher education by working at the intersection of practice, policy, and technology. WCET has a long and successful history in fostering collaborative projects, information sharing and networking among some of the country's most established and innovative postsecondary providers of e-learning.

[www.wcet.wiche.edu](http://www.wcet.wiche.edu)

NC-SARA is a national initiative seeking to make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines, as well as making it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. NC-SARA and the associated SARA initiatives directed by the four regional higher education compacts, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, the New England Board of Higher Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, are funded by a \$2.3 million grant from Lumina Foundation.

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