



National Council  
for State Authorization  
Reciprocity Agreements

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

## NC-SARA's Collection of Enrollment Data

Marshall A. Hill

Executive Director, NC-SARA

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On February 9, NC-SARA convened in Boulder a group of individuals to discuss the collection of enrollment data from SARA institutions. This article shares information about that meeting and next steps for NC-SARA's enrollment data collection. I've organized it around the meeting's agenda. Topics included a report on the May, 2016 survey; the timing of future surveys; cell size limitations; experiential learning placements; potential consequences of poor institutional reporting; data definitions; and the advisability of collecting FTEs vs. 12-month headcounts.

### Summary of the May, 2016 Enrollment Data Collection:

- 867 institutions SHOULD have reported
- 846 DID report (21 didn't)
- 306 reporting institutions reported "zero" enrollments in all states

### Discussion, Recommendations and NC-SARA responses:

The reporting instructions for May 2016 directed institutions with fewer than ten students in a state to report enrollments in that state as "zero." NC-SARA gave that direction to respond to institutional concerns about possible FERPA violations. The cell size limitation clearly accounts for some legitimate underreporting of enrollments, but having 36 percent of institutions report zeros *for all states* is not explained by that direction. Other factors were clearly in play.

### Recommendations and NC-SARA Responses

- Continue to schedule enrollment reporting in May. **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Use IPEDS Fall Enrollment Report procedures and definitions, and continue to require SARA institutions to report distance ed enrollments disaggregated by state. **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Remove the cell size limit, have institutions report *actual enrollment numbers*, and in addition to placing that information on the NC-SARA website, make it available for downloading. (The group was not persuaded that removing the cell size limit would cause FERPA concerns. NC-SARA agreed to secure a legal opinion on that point.) **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Add an "Explanation" field for institutional comment about their reporting. **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Consider discussing with the vendors of student information systems the challenges institutions have in determining where their students are when accessing instruction and enlist their help in creating solutions. **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Regarding the reporting of enrollments in experiential learning:
  - Instruct SARA institutions to NOT REPORT such enrollments in May, 2017 (because they are not included in the IPEDS protocols);
  - Develop and provide to institutions definitions and protocols for reporting such enrollments in the future; make the reporting of such enrollments a separate survey, and strongly consider collecting that information by broad program area (education, allied health, etc.);
  - Make the reporting of such enrollments by SARA institutions *voluntary* for May, 2018 reporting and *required* for May, 2019 reporting;
  - NC-SARA, WCET, and WCET's SAN group should work together to disseminate this information and encourage the development of increased institutional capabilities in this area;
  - **NC-SARA response – will do regarding 2017 data collection, and will recommend that the NC-SARA board approve the recommended approach for future reports.**
- Regarding institutions that do not report, or report clearly implausible data:
  - Increase prodding by state SARA staff and regional compact SARA staff as needed; **NC-SARA – will do.**
  - Ask SARA staff to develop and recommend policy on this issue for consideration by the NC-SARA board. Consider adding a notation about non/poor reporting to the institution's listing on the NC-SARA website; consider "probation" and potential expulsion from SARA participation for non/poor reporting.
  - **NC-SARA – will do.**
- Craft the coming spring 2017 *NC-SARA Data Reporting Guide* to conform to these recommendations. Provide the 2017 Guide to the institutions as soon as possible. **NC-SARA – will do.**

**Table 1. Data Committee Roster**

Name	Title	Organization
Kris Biesinger	Senior Advisor	Southern Regional Education Board
Marianne Boeke	Senior Associate	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
Blake Carpenter	Manager, Data Analytics	Univ. of Texas-Arlington
Mary Lou DeRosa	Executive Director, Financial Services	Sacred Heart University
Lanna Dueck	Executive Director	Arizona SARA Council
Tyson Heath	Manager, State Authorization	Western Governors University
Marshall Hill	Executive Director	NC-SARA
John Lopez	Director	W-SARA
Jennifer Parks	Director	M-SARA
Russ Poulin	Director, Policy & Analysis	WCET - The WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies