



MEDIA RELEASE

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Three additional WICHE states join SARA

Boulder, Colorado – Arizona, Oregon and South Dakota have been approved by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to become members of the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA). These states join 12 others (Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North 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.

“Having additional states from the WICHE compact join SARA helps assure that the West remains a leader in the country in providing high quality distance education,” remarked WICHE President David Longanecker. “The rapid introduction of innovation within higher education creates a dynamic learning environment and the SARA initiative expands access to educational offerings for students, while enhancing the quality of oversight at substantially reduced costs of compliance for states and institutions.”

The newly formed Arizona SARA Council will serve as the state portal agency for SARA. Teri Stanfill, Executive Director, Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education commented, “Arizona is proud to be approved as a SARA state. All sectors of the higher education community have worked extremely hard collaboratively to form the new AZ-SARA Council over the past year. The Council looks forward to playing a vital role in working with participating institutions and the other states in streamlining distance education regulatory requirements.”

Oregon’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) will serve as the state portal agency for SARA. The Commission is responsible for advising the Legislature, the Governor, and the Oregon Education Investment Board on higher education policy. Ben Cannon, Executive Director of the HECC, stated, “Many Oregon public and private colleges and universities have come to the table with tremendous support for joining SARA, which allows them to reduce the overall cost of compliance in other states, and increases access to quality distance education programs for Oregon students. As the administering agency for SARA in Oregon, we look forward to partnering with institutions in Oregon and states across the nation in the interest of students. We are excited for this new level of inter-state reciprocity and increased collaboration.” Oregon’s higher education system enrolled hundreds of thousands of students in 2014 in its seven public universities, 17 public community colleges, 67 private for-profit and independent colleges and universities, and hundreds of private career and trade schools.

The South Dakota Board of Regents has constitutional authority to govern the system of public higher education in the State of South Dakota and will serve as the SARA state portal agency. “South Dakota now becomes part of a nationwide initiative to make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines,” said Jack Warner, executive director and CEO for the South Dakota Board of Regents. “As distance delivery of higher education grows, we want to help students gain access to these opportunities, ensure that the programs are of high quality, and help resolve any complaints on behalf of consumers. This SARA agreement helps to make all of that possible.” There are 31 post-secondary institutions in South Dakota who are SARA-eligible. In Fall 2012 (the most recent fall term available in IPEDS), those institutions had a total Fall FTE of 43,115.

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.

“I am excited to have 15 states as members of SARA,” explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. “This progress in the initiative illustrates the importance of SARA in providing a streamlined alternative to the state-by-state approach institutions must currently follow to gain needed authorizations to serve students in states other than their own.”

As of November 11, 2014, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in an additional 10 states and three 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.
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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.
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 logon to www.luminafoundation.org.