NC-SARA
ANNUAL DATA REPORT:
Technical Report for Fall 2020 Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment & 2020 Out-of-State Learning Placements

NC SARA

**National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements**

About SARA

Recognizing the growing demand for distance learning opportunities, higher education stakeholders – including state regulators and education leaders, accreditors, the U.S. Department of Education, and institutions – joined together in 2013 to establish the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA). SARA helps expand students' access to educational opportunities and ensures more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance learning programs.

SARA is a voluntary agreement among 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The agreement establishes comparable national standards for interstate offerings of postsecondary distance education; participating colleges and universities must adhere to stringent requirements, including accreditation and remaining in good financial standing. To learn more, please visit NC-SARA's website.

As of October 2021, more than 2,300 institutions in 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands all voluntarily participate in SARA.

About NC-SARA

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a non-profit organization that provides national leadership, in partnership with the four regional compacts, of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) for distance education regulation across the member states and territories.

NC-SARA helps ensure consistent compliance with distance education rules for state authorization among member states and participating institutions. NC-SARA also works with states, institutions, policymakers, and students to understand the purpose, benefits, and value of SARA.

NC-SARA's mission is:

- To provide broad access to postsecondary education opportunities to students across the country;
- To increase the quality and value of higher learning credentials earned via distance education; and
- To assure students are well served in a rapidly changing education landscape.

To learn more, please visit NC-SARA's website.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Introduction

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) has completed six years of exclusively distance education enrollment data and three years of out-of-state learning placement data collection, analysis, and reporting. The purpose of this technical report is to provide a summary and analysis of these data from SARA-participating institutions for 2020, collected in 2021. This report is organized in two sections: the first section reports Exclusively Distance Education (EDE) enrollment data, and the second section reports out-of-state learning placement (OOSLP) data.

Clarifying Language Used in Data Reporting

NC-SARA uses the term "Exclusively Distance Education enrollment" (EDE enrollment) to describe student enrollment reported exclusively in distance education courses. The data collected has remained consistent since SARA data collection began in 2015; the clarification is to ensure that stakeholders understand that these data are the same that IPEDS refers to as "Enrolled exclusively in distance education courses." For SARA reporting purposes the EDE enrollment is disaggregated by state. The term "out-of-state learning placements" is abbreviated as OOSLP for SARA data reporting purposes, as it has been since OOSLP reporting began in 2018. For the purposes of this report, "state" is defined as a state, commonwealth, organized territory, or district (District of Columbia) of the United States. Additionally, "Non-SARA" states refer to California and the U.S. territories that do not participate in SARA. See Appendix A: Technical Notes for more information on the IPEDS distance education definitions.

New Data Report Format with Interactive Data Dashboards

This report differs from prior NC-SARA Annual Data Reports in that it is a technical report now supplemented with the opportunity to view the data interactively through data dashboards on the NC-SARA website. Therefore, most data visualization is provided through the dashboards rather than as figures and data tables in the report itself.

COVID-19 and 2020 Data

This is the first year of reported data that reveal potential impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it marks a critical inflection point in NC-SARA's dataset; comparisons to data collected in prior years are included on key points of interest to SARA stakeholders.

In the summer of 2021, NC-SARA also conducted a voluntary survey on emergency remote learning to provide context and additional information from those institution staff who submitted data to NC-SARA. The complete report, *NC-SARA Institution Survey: Perspectives on the Pandemic*, is available on the NC-SARA website. While we cannot quantify the proportion of increased reported EDE enrollment directly attributable to institutions' reporting emergency remote learning enrollment, it is likely safe to say it had a substantial impact.

Summary of Results

2,201 institutions reported EDE enrollment for Fall 2020 and Out-of-State Learning Placement (OOSLP) data for calendar year 2020 to NC-SARA during the 2021 spring reporting period. Analysis of these data submissions include these key findings:

- There was a 5.4% increase in the number of institutions participating in SARA between 2019 and 2020, from 2,088 reporting institutions in 2019 to 2,201 reporting in Fall 2020.

- Given COVID-19, the 2020 data was expected to show an increase in reported EDE enrollment and a decline in reported OOSLP. What was uncertain was the magnitude of the difference from the strong baseline of data reported for both in 2019. The 2020 data reveal significant impacts on both EDE enrollment and OOSLP reported to NC-SARA.

  - Reported total EDE enrollment nearly doubled (93.1%) from 3,016,944 in 2019 to 5,825,723 in 2020.
    - Out-of-state EDE enrollment comprised 32.4% (1,888,067) for 2020 compared to 46.3% (1,395,756) in 2019.
    - In-state EDE enrollment more than doubled from 1,621,188 in 2019 to 3,937,656 in 2020; represented nearly 68% of reported enrollment for 2020.

- The proportion of total EDE enrollment reported by public institutions increased from 52.7% in 2019 to 66.5% in 2020; private non-profits' reported EDE enrollment decreased from 30.6% in 2019 to 23.4% in 2020; and for-profit institutions' reported EDE enrollment also decreased from 16.7% to 10.1% in the timeframe.

- Reported OOSLP declined only 3.9% from 271,784 reported for calendar year 2019 to 261,275 reported for calendar year 2020.

- The top 3 OOSLP CIP codes reported for calendar year 2020 remain consistent with prior years: Health (CIP #51) represents 56.5% (147,712), Education (CIP #13) represents 10.3% (26,803), and Business (CIP #52) represents 5.2% (13,509).

Commentary on 2020 Results:

- It is safe to conclude that a significant proportion of the reported increase in EDE enrollment was the result of institutions offering courses exclusively through distance education that would normally have been offered on-campus.

- It seems likely that the large growth in public institution EDE enrollment is the result of the pivot to remote emergency learning by many public institutions serving in-state students exclusively through distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The growth in reported EDE enrollment suggests that students who continued their studies through the COVID-19 pandemic did so largely online.

- While a decline in OOSLP was expected due to campus and organizational closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, the decline was less than expected.

About NC-SARA'S Data Reporting

SARA policy requires participating institutions to report EDE enrollment and OOSLP annually. The data are reported to NC-SARA through an online reporting portal in the spring following the due date for institutions to make their Fall Enrollment (EF) reports to IPEDS. (Institutions reported their 2020 data to NC-SARA in the spring of 2021.) The SARA reporting window is May 15 through June 15 each year.

The data are disaggregated by the state, territory, or district where the student is physically located while enrolled exclusively in distance education course(s). Reporting instructions and screenshots of the online data reporting portal are in the *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions[1]*.

Commitment to Transparency in Data Reporting

Since its inception, NC-SARA has maintained a strong commitment to transparency in data reporting. While based on IPEDS EF reporting, the EDE enrollment data that institutions report to NC-SARA may not match IPEDS exactly because of the different approaches SARA uses to identifying the location of military students as well as the impact of branch campus reporting. Institutions self-report to NC-SARA, and there is no process to validate individual campus reporting back to their IPEDS data submissions. In addition, there are institutions that report to NC-SARA and not to IPEDS.

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reporting

Historically, institutions participating in SARA annually reported the number of students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses at the institution outside the home state of the institution. Beginning with the 2018 reporting, NC-SARA requested that institutions include in-state EDE enrollment in their annual reporting. Members of the Data Advisory Committee recommended this requirement after many institutions reported that out-of-state distance education reporting alone did not accurately represent the magnitude of their EDE enrollment since many institutions are focused on serving students in their own states. A comprehensive discussion of how SARA distance education reporting is based on federal IPEDS reporting, including the unique characteristics of SARA reporting, is available in Appendix A: Technical Notes.

Out-of-State Learning Placement Reporting

Out-of-state learning placements (e.g., clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, etc.) are of interest because they help describe interstate activity. Learning placement activities are an important part of many academic programs and the number and extent of such placements are of great interest and concern to educators, practitioners, licensing bodies, and state regulators.

---

[1] *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2020 Distance Education Enrollment & 2020 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-03/Data-Reporting-Handbook-for-2020-FINAL-03_22_21.pdf. (Retrieved 9/16/21.)

OOSLP reporting is also important because it meets the commitment made to the state regulator community during the development of SARA.

For these reasons, reporting OOSLP annually is required for SARA participation. Unlike EDE enrollment reporting, there is no existing mechanism for gathering and reporting OOSLP. This is the third year that reporting OOSLP has been mandatory. It is important to note that *all* on-the-ground, out-of-state learning placements are reported, not just those associated with distance education offerings. SARA does not currently require institutions to report virtual learning placements.

New NC-SARA Data Dashboards

Since its inception, SARA data have been made available publicly on the NC-SARA website. Beginning with the 2020 data reporting, NC-SARA is making the complete data set available through online interactive dashboards on the NC-SARA website. You may use this link to explore the data by state or region including:

- Reporting Institutions
- Total EDE Enrollment
- Incoming EDE Enrollment by state or region
- Outgoing EDE Enrollment by state or region
- SARA v. Non-SARA EDE Enrollment
- Incoming OOSLP by state or region
- Outgoing OOSLP by state or region
- Total Reported EDE Enrollment by Institution
- SARA v. Non-SARA OOSLP

Methodology

In May 2021, NC-SARA sent email requests to the SARA institutional contacts at 2,216 institutions, with a link to report Fall 2020 EDE enrollment and calendar year 2020 OOSLP. NC-SARA received complete responses from 2,201 institutions, for a response rate of 99.8%. Exemptions were extended to two institutions that reported staffing hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic; nine institutions received exemptions due to their non-renewal status. There were four institutions that did not report. NC-SARA staff recognize and appreciate the efforts of the institution staff for their commitment to their reporting obligations to NC-SARA during campus closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As has been the case since the first data collection for 2015 in the spring of 2016, institution staff may use the comment field in the online data reporting portal to provide context about their data. Historically, many use this field to explain how the reported data differs from their IPEDS reporting. This year about a third of the comments received were related to how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the data reported.

Reporting Emergency Remote Learning Implemented in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

NC-SARA provided guidance to participating institutions in the *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions*[2] that asked institution staff to refer to the IPEDS guidance regarding how to report emergency remote learning that would otherwise have been delivered in person. NC-SARA sought to align with this guidance. Complete information regarding emergency remote learning reporting is available on the IPEDS' Distance Education in IPEDS website. There are important distinctions between emergency remote learning and well-planned exclusively distance education offerings as addressed in this *Educause Review* article[3], among others. Based on comments provided during NC-SARA's distance education data collection, institutional staff interpreted the IPEDS guidance differently. Some institutions read it to mean that they should report emergency remote learning as EDE enrollment, while others read it to mean that they should not. This divergence in interpretation of the IPEDS' guidance makes the 2020 data difficult to interpret with certainty.

SARA Member States

There were no new member states accepted by SARA between the reporting window for 2019 and 2020. As of September 2021, all U.S. states except California are SARA members. In addition, the District of Columbia (DC) and the territories of Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (VI) are members of SARA. The following U.S. territories are currently not members of SARA: American Samoa (AS), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FM), Guam (GU), Marshall Islands (MH), and Palau (PW).

Regional Compacts' Role in SARA

The regional compacts have a critical role in the oversight and implementation of SARA. NC-SARA works with the country's four regional compacts to implement uniform standards and procedures for accepting and monitoring states' membership in each of their respective regions: New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). The map in Figure 1 shows the SARA states and territories and the regional compacts with which they are members or affiliated. States shown in gray are not members of a regional compact but have affiliated with one of the compacts for purposes of SARA.

---

[2] *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2020 Distance Education Enrollment & 2020 Out-of-State Learning Placements,* https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-03/Data-Reporting-Handbook-for-2020-FINAL-03_22_21.pdf, (Retrieved 8/19/21.)

[3] Hodges, C.; Moore, S.; Lockee, B; Trust, T; and Bond, A. "The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning." *Educause Review*, March 27, 2020. https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning. (Retrieved 9/30/2021.)

,

Figure 1. Map of SARA States, Territories, & District
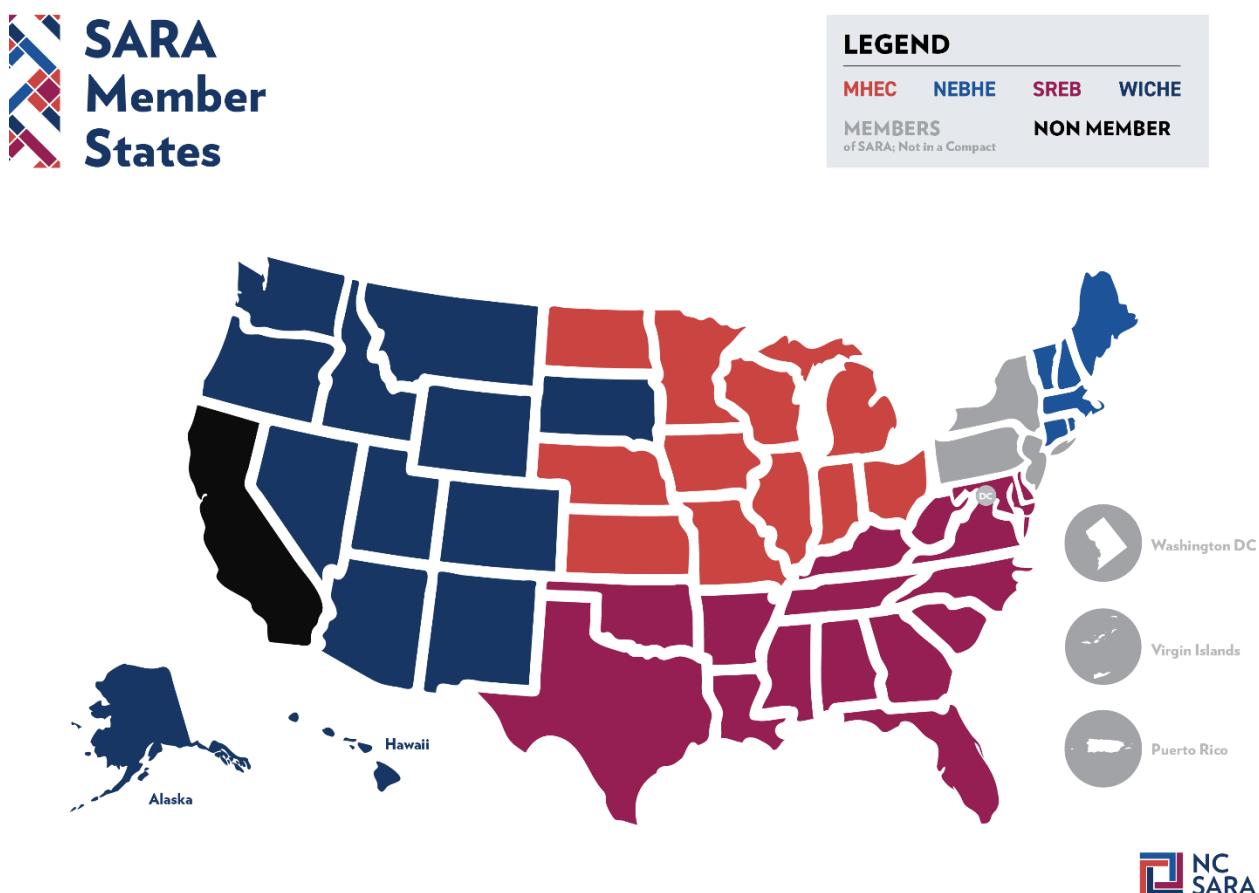
Reporting Institutions

There was an increase of 113 institutions -- 5.4% -- participating in SARA during the 2020 reporting period. Of the 2,201 complete responses received, 72 institutions (3.3%) reported no EDE enrollment; 770 institutions (34.9%) reported no OOSLP. (Some institutions participate in SARA for the ability to offer OOSLP to their students, with no intentions of offering courses or programs exclusively through distance education.)

Figure 2 provides trend data over time on the number of participating institutions since data reporting was first required in 2015.

Figure 2. Number of Reporting Institutions 2015-2020
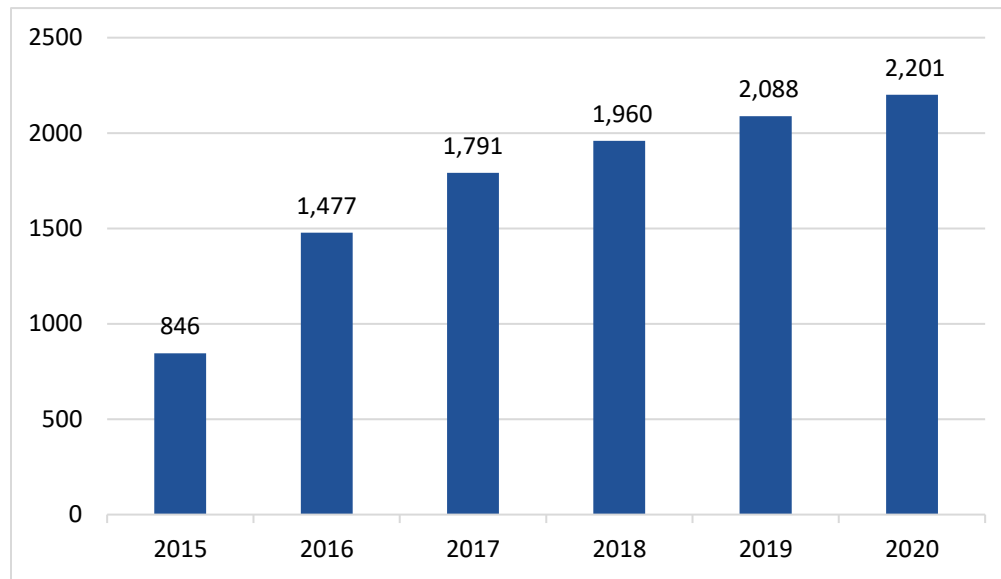
Reporting Institutions by State

The number of institutions participating in SARA varies greatly by state. Texas has the most participating institutions with 128, while the U.S. Virgin Islands currently has just one SARA-participating institution.

Figure 3 is a screenshot of NC-SARA's online data dashboard for SARA-participating institutions. (NC-SARA's data dashboard is available on the website, here.) The data table in Figure 4 provides the number of participating institutions per state at the time of the 2020 data reporting period.

Figure 3. NC-SARA Data Dashboard: Number of Participating Institutions
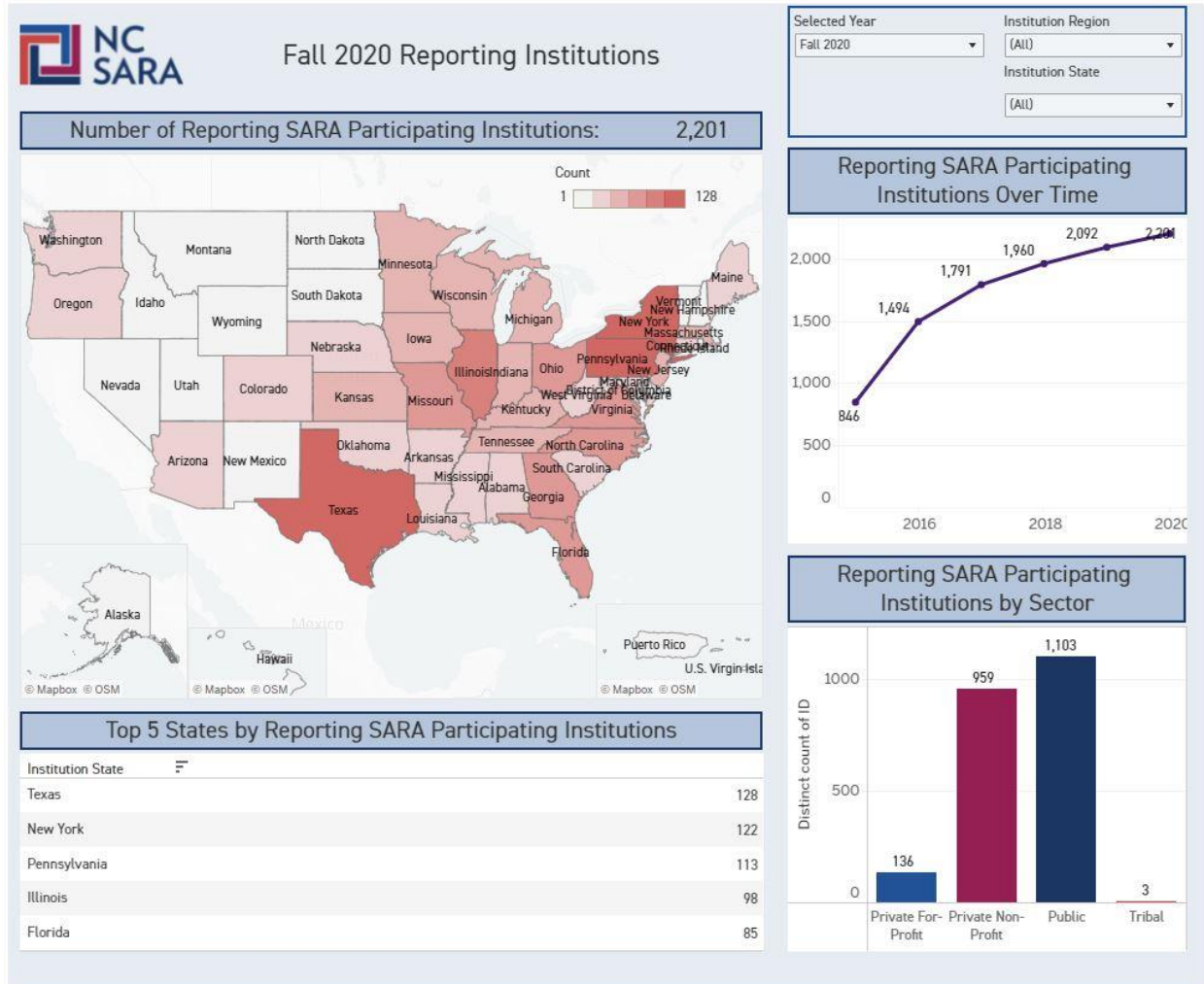
Figure 4. Reporting Institutions by State

State/Territory (A-M)	Total Reporting Institutions	State/Territory (N-Z)	Total Reporting Institutions
Alabama	41	Nebraska	26
Alaska	4	Nevada	10
Arizona	32	New Hampshire	15
Arkansas	32	New Jersey	48
Colorado	42	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	31	New York	122
Delaware	4	North Carolina	83
District of Columbia	13	North Dakota	14
Florida	85	Ohio	83
Georgia	82	Oklahoma	38
Hawaii	10	Oregon	31
Idaho	13	Pennsylvania	113
Illinois	98	Puerto Rico	19
Indiana	55	Rhode Island	9
Iowa	51	South Carolina	40
Kansas	45	South Dakota	17
Kentucky	46	Tennessee	60
Louisiana	34	Texas	128
Maine	25	US Virgin Islands	1
Maryland	35	Utah	21
Massachusetts	63	Vermont	15
Michigan	64	Virginia	72
Minnesota	63	Washington	43
Mississippi	31	West Virginia	29
Missouri	75	Wisconsin	49
Montana	13	Wyoming	8

Reporting Institutions by Sector

- Public institutions made up 50.1% (1,103) of all institutions reporting EDE enrollment to NC-SARA for 2020;

- Private non-profit institutions represent 43.6% (959);

- Private for-profit institutions account for 6.2% (136) of reporting institutions participating in SARA and reporting for 2020.

In addition, three tribal institutions reported to NC-SARA for 2020, representing 0.1% of the total. Figure 5 illustrates the sector percentages for the 2,201 reporting institutions.

Figure 5. Reporting Institutions by Sector for 2020
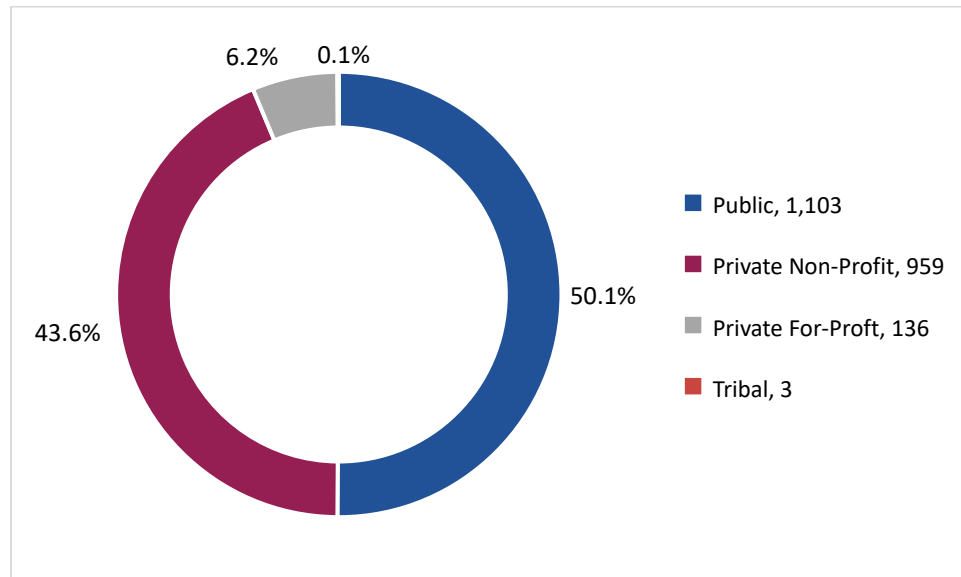
Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

EDE enrollment reporting has been a mandatory requirement for institutions participating in SARA since 2015. This section of the annual report focuses on reported EDE enrollment.

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Defined

SARA EDE enrollment reporting requirements are based on the institutions' EF reporting to IPEDS each fall. Participating SARA institutions report student enrollment exclusively in distance education courses disaggregated by state, territory, or district where the learning takes place. Detailed descriptions of the IPEDS' definitions and how SARA EDE enrollment reporting differs from IPEDS reporting can be found in Appendix A: Technical Notes.

Since the IPEDS' EF reporting represents just the fall term, it represents less than half of all EDE enrollment at most institutions. Therefore, the reported EDE enrollment is not representative of annual distance education activity, though it is the industry standard.

Total EDE Enrollment Reported

There was a 93.1% increase in Fall 2020 EDE enrollment from Fall 2019: from 3,016,944 to 5,825,723. These data are displayed in Figure 6.

Figure 6. 2020 Reported Total EDE Enrollment
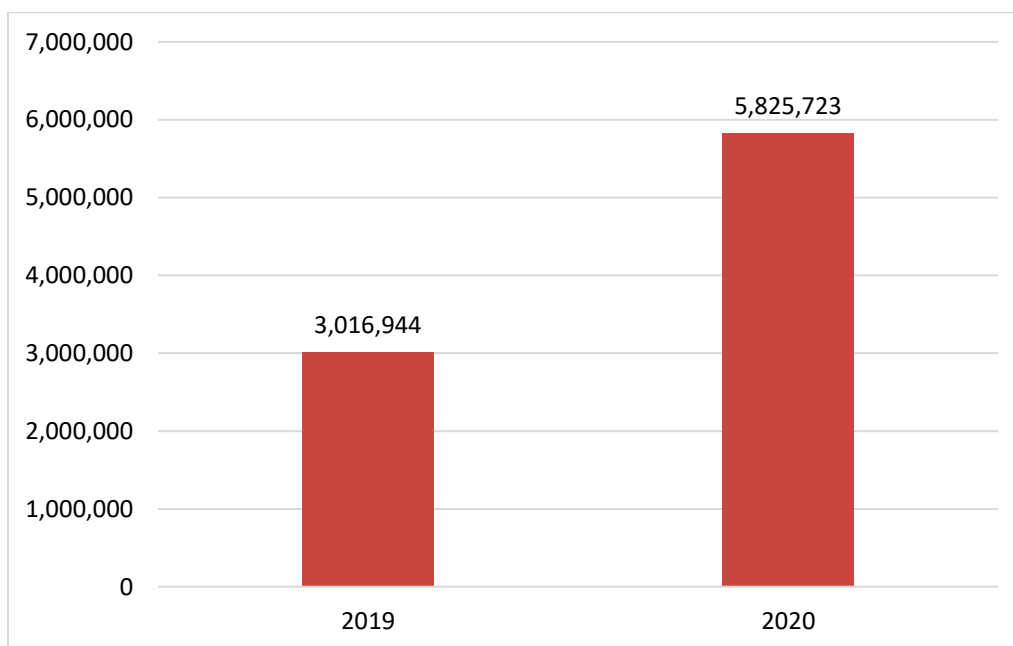
In-state EDE enrollment comprised 67.6% (3,937,656) of reported enrollment, while out-of-state reporting comprised 32.4% (1,888,067) for 2020. The significant growth, both in the sheer EDE enrollment reported and the proportion of reported enrollment, is likely attributable to the pivot to emergency remote learning by many institutions in response to the COVID-19

pandemic. Students who continued their education did so largely online. Figure 7 displays the reported EDE enrollment for 2018-2020, including the 93.1% increase in reported enrollment in 2020 and the proportion of in-state and out-of-state reported EDE enrollment.

Figure 7. Reported In-State & Out-of-State EDE Enrollment 2018-2020

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Reported EDE Enrollment

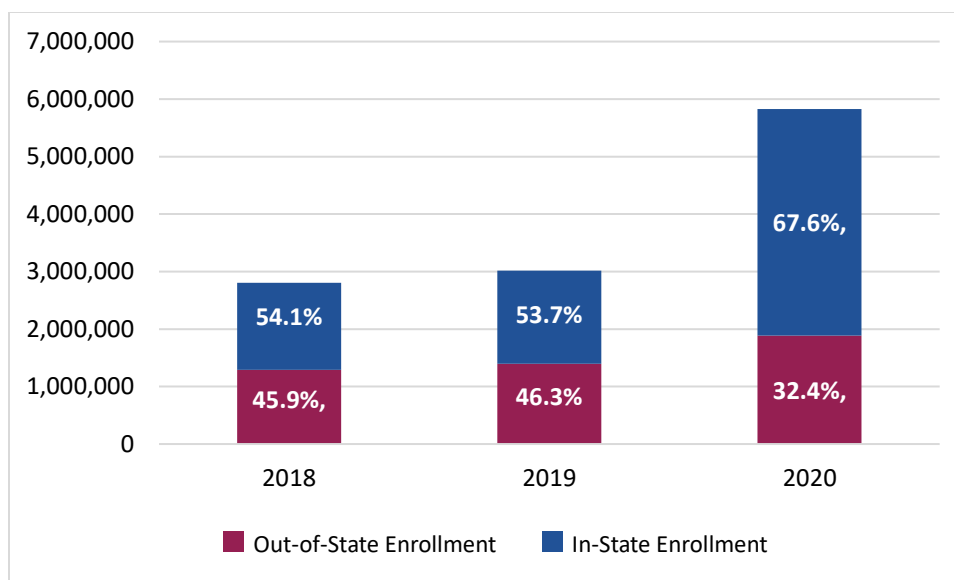The pivot to emergency remote learning made by most institutions for Fall 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely responsible for most of the enrollment increases. However, as previously reported, there was also a net increase of 113 SARA-participating institutions from the prior year, so some of the increase is likely attributable to the increase in the number of reporting institutions.

NC-SARA's instructions to institutions regarding reporting emergency remote learning was to follow the guidance provided on the Distance Education IPEDS website[4]. Staff at SARA-participating institutions interpreted this guidance in different ways; some reported emergency remote learning enrollment to NC-SARA, and some did not. There were 547 comments submitted to NC-SARA related to EDE enrollment reporting. Analysis of the comments revealed that almost a third (29.8%) mentioned that the pandemic was responsible for increases in reported EDE enrollment. This conclusion is also supported by the results of the NC-SARA voluntary survey on emergency remote learning in the summer of 2021 summarized in the report, *NC-SARA Institution Survey: Perspectives on the Pandemic*, available on the NC-SARA website. While we cannot quantify the proportion of increased reported EDE enrollment

---

[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics: *Distance Education in IPEDS*, (n.d.), https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/distance-education-in-ipeds. (Retrieved 9/8/2021.)

directly attributable to institution's reporting emergency remote learning enrollment, it is likely safe to say it had a substantial impact.

Out-of-State EDE Enrollment by Sector

While the large increase in total enrollment is of interest, most of that reported enrollment is in-state. Because SARA was created to facilitate distance education across state lines, the measure of distance education activity that NC-SARA has been collecting since 2015 is out-of-state EDE enrollment.

For Fall 2020:

- Private non-profit institutions continued to report the largest out-of-state enrollment with 44.5% of the total;

- Private for-profit institutions reported 28.3%;

- Public institutions reported 27.2%;

- Tribal institutions reported 245 out-of-state EDE enrollment, or 0%.

The proportions remain consistent by sector over time, indicating that public institutions are more likely to enroll in-state students exclusively via distance education, while private non-profits are more likely to enroll out-of-state students. The sector enrollment percentage and proportion of reported enrollment by sector for 2020 are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Reporting Institutions and Out-of-State EDE Enrollment by Sector
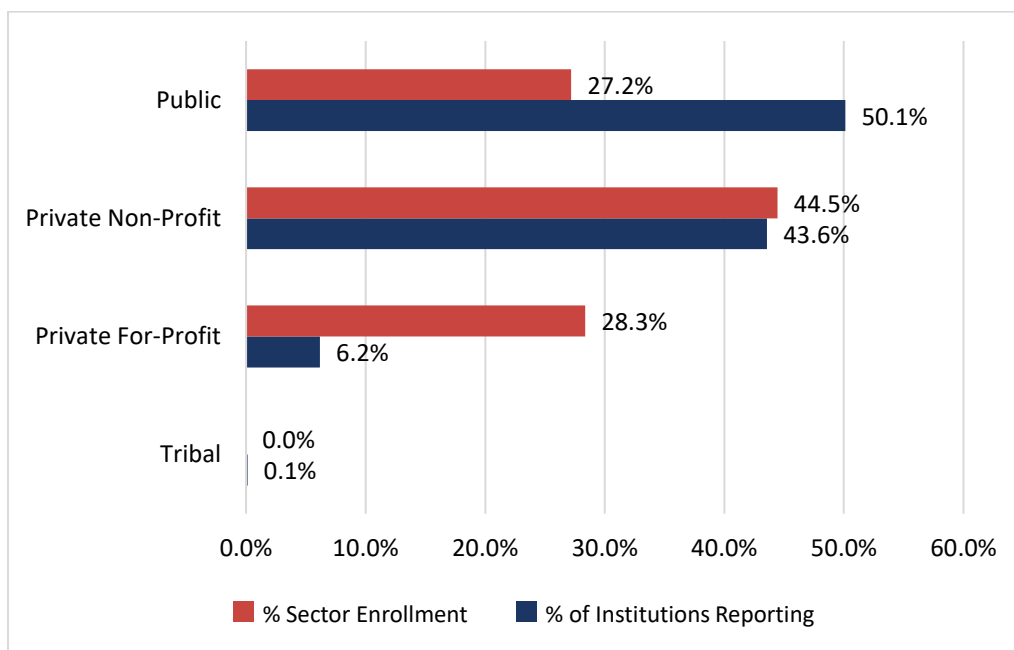
Analysis of EDE enrollment by sector is important to understand the complete picture of distance education activity among SARA-participating institutions. These data reveal

considerable variation among the sectors when in-state and out-of-state EDE enrollment is examined.

- **In-State:** Public institutions represent 85.3% of reported in-state EDE enrollment in 2020. Public institutions have historically dwarfed the other sectors in reported in-state enrollment, representing 78.7% in 2019.[5] This year's increase may well be the result of historically in-state on-campus students who were moved to 100% emergency remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Out-of-State:** Also consistent with prior years' reporting, out-of-state EDE enrollment is dominated by the private non-profit sector with 44.5%; this percentage was 44.4% in 2019, while private for-profits reported 28.4% of out-of-state EDE enrollment in 2020 (33.1% in 2019).

Figure 9 displays the sector data for 2020.

Figure 9. 2020 Reported EDE Enrollment by Sector
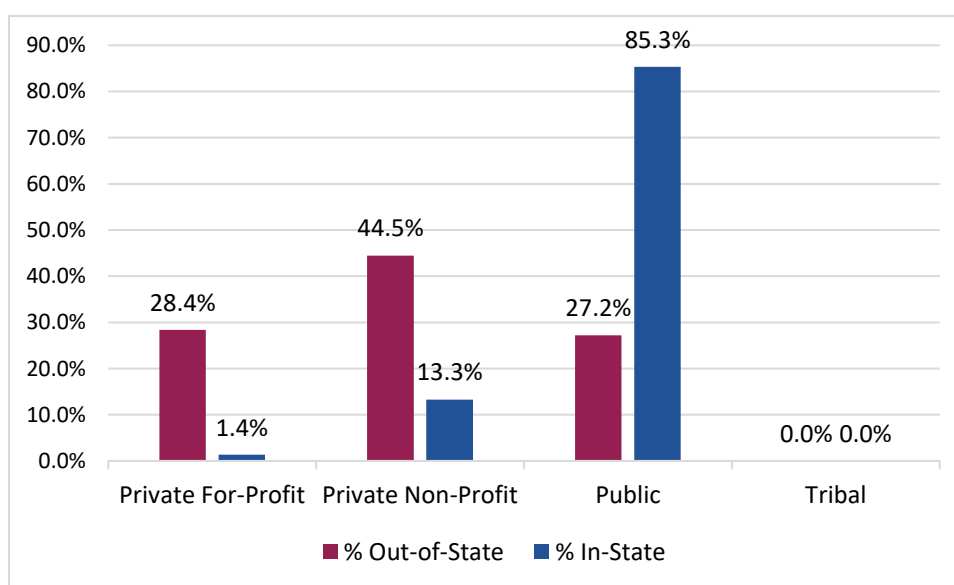
SARA and Non-SARA States' EDE Enrollment

Institutions participating in SARA reported 1,888,067 out-of-state EDE enrollments, 90.0% in SARA states and 10.0% in non-SARA states (California and the territories not participating in SARA). This compares to 90.7% in SARA states (1,265,470) and 9.3% in non-SARA states (130,286) in 2019. Figure 10 presents the EDE enrollment data for 2019 and 2020 for SARA and

---

[5] *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollments & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p.37. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf. (Retrieved 8/17/21.)

non-SARA out-of-state EDE enrollment. The data may be explored in terms of SARA and non-SARA through NC-SARA's data dashboards on the NC-SARA website as well.

Figure 10. 2019-2020 Reported SARA and Non-SARA State's EDE Enrollment (out-of-state distance education enrollment)
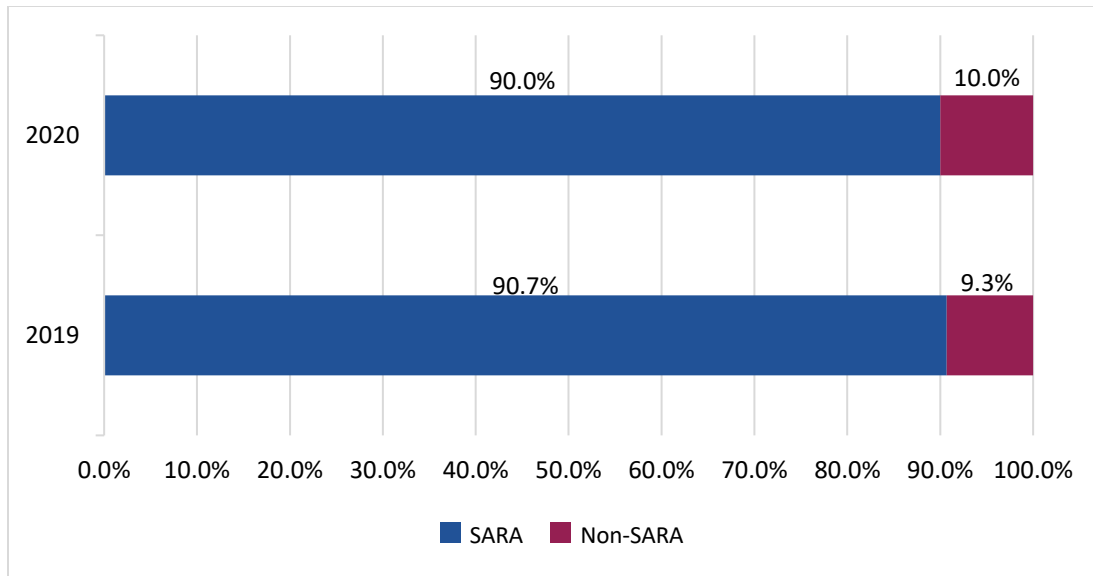
Total EDE Enrollment Reported by Sector

Analysis of EDE enrollment reported for 2020 by institutional sector reveals significant growth in enrollment reported by public institutions.

- Public institutions represented 66.5% (3,873,286) of total reported EDE enrollment compared to 52.7% (1,589,719) in 2019.

- Private non-profit institutions represented 23.4% (1,362,700) of total reported EDE enrollment for 2020 compared to 30.6% (924,463) in 2019.

- Private for-profit institutions represented just 10.1% of total reported EDE enrollment, down from 16.7% (502,263) in 2019.

- The three tribal institutions represented 1,034 (0.0%) of total reported EDE enrollment in 2021 compared to 499 enrollments reported by the two participating tribal institutions in 2019.

These data are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11. 2019-2020 Reported Total EDE Enrollment by Sector (with in-state enrollment)
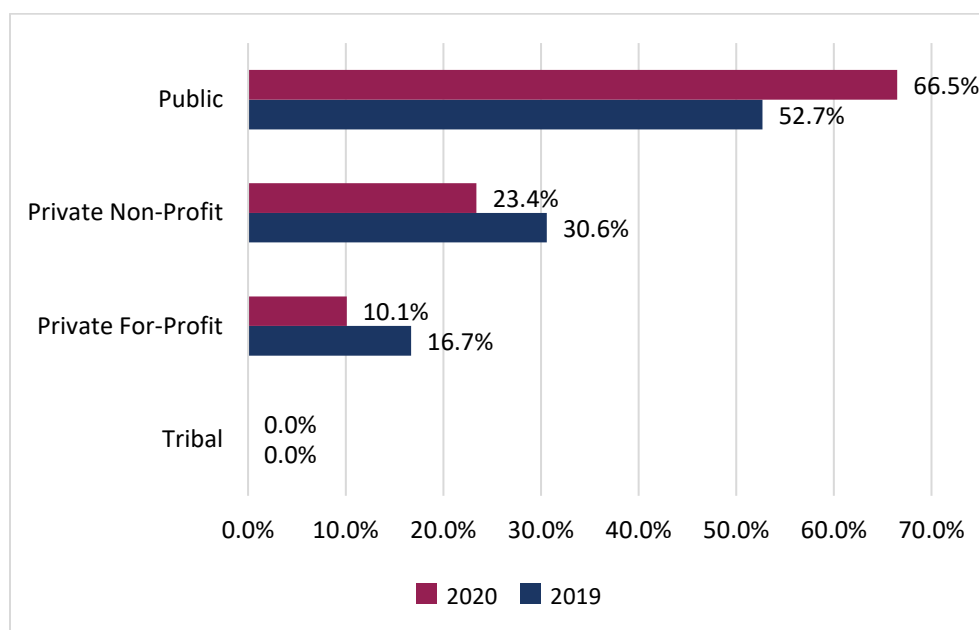
Reported EDE Enrollment and Number of Institutions by Sector

The shift in the proportion of reported EDE enrollment by sector is important to understand in the context of the associated proportion of participating SARA institutions by sector. Historic analysis[6] of reported EDE enrollment by sector has revealed that public institutions represent the majority of institutions as well as reported EDE enrollment. This trend is even more dramatic with the 2020 reported data:

- Public institutions represent half (50.1%) of institutions and 66.5% of reported EDE enrollment.

- Private non-profits represent 43.6% of reporting institutions and just under a quarter (23.4%) of EDE enrollment reported in 2020.

- Private for-profit institutions represent 6.2% of institutions and 10% of reported EDE enrollment.

It seems likely that the large growth in public institution enrollment is the result of the pivot to emergency remote learning by many public institutions serving in-state students exclusively through distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The growth in reported EDE enrollment suggests that students who continued their studies through the COVID-19 pandemic did so largely online. Figure 12 provides details of EDE enrollment and number of institutions by sector.

---

[6] *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollments & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p.31-32. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf. (Retrieved 8/16/21.)

Figure 12. Reporting Institutions and Total EDE Enrollment by Sector (with in-state enrollment)

Legend:
- ■ % Total Reported Enrollment
- ■ % Total number of Institutions Reporting

Sector	% Total Reported Enrollment	% Total number of Institutions Reporting
Public	66.5%	50.1%
Private Non-Profit	23.4%	43.6%
Private For-Profit	10.1%	6.2%
Tribal	0.0%	0.1%
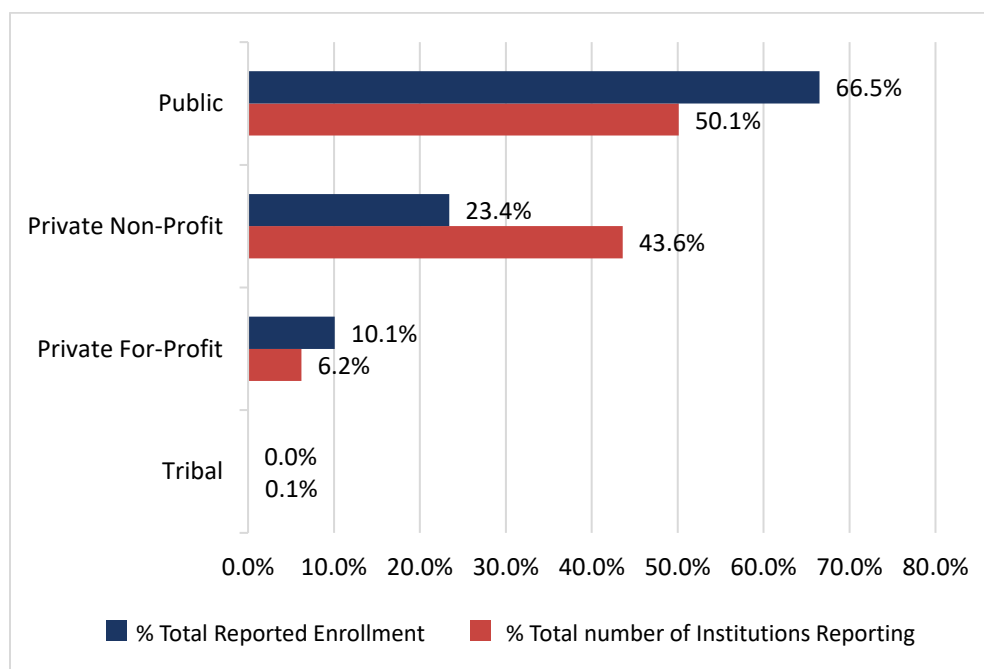
State Summary of EDE Enrollment Data

Institutions participating in SARA report their EDE enrollment by state. The state level EDE enrollment data reported by institutions operating under SARA are available in the interactive data dashboard on the NC-SARA website.

The state level data does not include in-state EDE enrollment. Although total EDE enrollment data are important in general, the focus of SARA is distance education activity **across** state lines. Figure 13 provides state level SARA and non-SARA EDE enrollment, as well as total reported EDE enrollment in the state by other SARA participating institutions. Total state level data are available in the data dashboards on the NC-SARA website.

Figure 13. Reported State Level EDE Enrollment (out-of-state only)

State/District/ Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment in SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment in Non-SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment	EDE Enrollment in State Reported by Other SARA Institutions
Alabama	33,884	2,241	36,125	26,598
Alaska	829	133	962	8,260
Arizona	252,076	47,561	299,637	29,130
Arkansas	6,206	217	6,423	16,587
Colorado	67,272	8,193	75,465	34,003
Connecticut	17,992	1,240	19,232	27,720
Delaware	7,924	644	8,568	8,331
District of Columbia	74,434	3,134	77,568	7,916
Florida	56,860	5,099	61,959	115,584
Georgia	55,919	5,257	61,176	87,332
Hawaii	1,745	1,267	3,012	13,540
Idaho	16,602	3,070	19,672	11,336
Illinois	51,330	6,158	57,488	72,025
Indiana	68,190	4,956	73,146	29,924
Iowa	12,879	710	13,589	13,776
Kansas	19,727	1,260	20,987	14,387
Kentucky	27,647	1,927	29,574	22,615
Louisiana	13,123	1,033	14,156	24,712
Maine	5,804	389	6,193	7,539
Maryland	44,735	4,358	49,093	54,455
Massachusetts	40,614	5,479	46,093	37,722
Michigan	17,426	1,794	19,220	41,079

State/District/ Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment in SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment in Non-SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDE Enrollment	EDE Enrollment in State Reported by Other SARA Institutions
Minnesota	52,690	4,082	56,772	25,871
Mississippi	6,343	257	6,600	17,957
Missouri	27,172	2,034	29,206	33,611
Montana	1,632	284	1,916	6,617
Nebraska	14,920	1,605	16,525	8,203
Nevada	877	577	1,454	22,522
New Hampshire	114,007	8,871	122,878	9,369
New Jersey	16,887	1,522	18,409	74,193
New Mexico	5,598	669	6,267	13,036
New York	59,513	6,966	66,479	89,129
North Carolina	11,261	828	12,089	74,420
North Dakota	5,191	297	5,488	4,957
Ohio	54,314	10,520	64,834	58,152
Oklahoma	7,432	348	7,780	18,841
Oregon	12,063	4,896	16,959	19,839
Pennsylvania	52,686	4,168	56,854	72,067
Puerto Rico	5,362	59	5,421	2,463
Rhode Island	6,781	813	7,594	7,863
South Carolina	10,807	213	11,020	39,366
South Dakota	3,374	206	3,580	4,607
Tennessee	10,069	441	10,510	43,494
Texas	22,401	4,395	26,796	151,102
U.S. Virgin Islands	4	4	8	1,033
Utah	140,616	15,556	156,172	16,596
Vermont	5,244	434	5,678	4,456
Virginia	84,032	4,496	88,528	74,253
Washington	6,600	2,127	8,727	60,065
West Virginia	49,664	4,281	53,945	9,745
Wisconsin	17,640	1,257	18,897	25,740
Wyoming	1,253	90	1,343	5,513
Totals	**1,699,651**	**188,416**	**1,888,067**	**1,699,651**

Top Fifteen Institutions by Size of Reported EDE Enrollment

For 2020, the institutions that reported the largest EDE enrollment are Western Governors University, Southern New Hampshire University, and University of Phoenix. These were the top three institutions based on reported EDE enrollment in 2019 as well.

Institutions that are new to the list in 2020 include University of Central Florida, Florida International University, and Dallas College. The fifteen institutions reporting the largest EDE enrollment to NC-SARA in 2020 are reported in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Top Fifteen Institutions by Size of 2020 Reported EDE Enrollment

Institution Name	State	Sector	Reported SARA State EDE Enrollment	Reported Non-SARA State EDE Enrollment	Total Reported EDE Enrollment
Western Governors University	UT	Private Non-Profit	133,514	13,663	147,177
Southern New Hampshire University	NH	Private Non-Profit	118,376	8,616	126,992
University of Phoenix	AZ	Private For-Profit	76,449	13,362	89,811
Grand Canyon University	AZ	Private Non-Profit	71,195	13,432	84,627
Liberty University	VA	Private Non-Profit	74,215	3,324	77,539
Penn Foster College	AZ	Private For-Profit	70,068	5,263	75,331
Dallas College	TX	Public	66,373	52	66,425
Arizona State University	AZ	Public	48,692	11,869	60,561
University of Central Florida	FL	Public	53,382	105	53,487
Strayer University	DC	Private For-Profit	49,807	591	50,398
University of Maryland Global Campus	MD	Public	46,581	1,838	48,419
American Public University System	WV	Private For-Profit	43,237	3,919	47,156
Ashworth College	GA	Private For-Profit	40,810	3,180	43,990
Purdue University Global	IN	Public	40,816	2,611	43,427
Florida International University	FL	Public	41,194	133	41,327

Out-of-State Learning Placements

NC-SARA's annual data reporting began requiring the reporting of Out-of-State Learning Placements (OOSLP) in 2019 for OOSLPs that took place in calendar year 2018. Details regarding the history of reported SARA OOSLP can be found in Appendix B: Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) of this report.

Out-of-State Learning Placements Defined

As defined in the *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions[7]*, learning placements (clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, etc.) are a critical component of many instructional programs. Although learning placements occur in a variety of disciplines, they are particularly common in certain fields, such as health-related disciplines and education. They are often a required part of obtaining a degree and/or license to practice a particular profession. ***It is important to note that reporting includes on-ground students as well as distance education students' OOSLP.*** Institutions do not currently report virtual learning placements to NC-SARA.

NC-SARA uses the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) system to categorize and report OOSLP and requires reporting by the two-digit CIP code only. Those unfamiliar with CIP codes may reference the CIP website directly[8] or Appendix B for more information.

Criteria for Inclusion in Out-of-State Learning Placement Reporting

Institutions reported out-of-state learning placements that met the following criteria:
1. The placement started between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020.
2. The placement is outside the home state of the SARA institution.
3. The placement involves the physical presence of the student at the out-of-state location(s).
4. One or more of the following is true:
    a. The placement is an activity required for degree completion.
    b. The placement is an activity required for professional licensure.
    c. The placement is offered for credit.
    d. The placement is offered for a fee.

    Placements that meet the above criteria should be reported as follows:
    • Disaggregate by two-digit CIP code;
    • Disaggregate by the state in which the placement was made.

---

[7] *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollments & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p.37. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf. (Retrieved 08/19/21.)

[8] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, *Classification of Instructional Programs Codes*, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=56. (Retrieved 08/24/21.)

Total Out-of-State Learning Placements Reported

There were 261,275 OOLSP reported by participating institutions for the calendar year 2020. Reported OOSLP declined 3.9% from 271,784 reported in 2019. A decline in OOSLP was expected due to COVID-19 related closures of schools and businesses that are often the site of learning placements.

2019 OOSLP Reporting Error

It is important to note that the reported OOSLP total of 271,784 has been revised from 349,930 OOSLP due to an error in reporting. Approximately 100 institutions reported *in-state learning placements* to NC-SARA for 2019 and those in-state learning placements were detected during the 2020 data analysis. The corrected 2019 data table and figures are provided in a corrected version of the *NC-SARA 2019 Data Report* found in the Research and Data section of the NC-SARA website.

SARA and Non-SARA States' OOSLP Data

For 2020, 246,633 (94.4%) of reported learning placements took place in SARA states and 14,642 (5.6%) took place in non-SARA states. These data are consistent with the reported SARA and non-SARA states' OOSLP reported in 2019. Please see Figure15 for additional details; SARA and non-SARA states' OOSLP are also available to explore in the interactive data dashboards on the NC-SARA website.

Figure 15. 2019-2020 Reported SARA and Non-SARA States' OOSLP
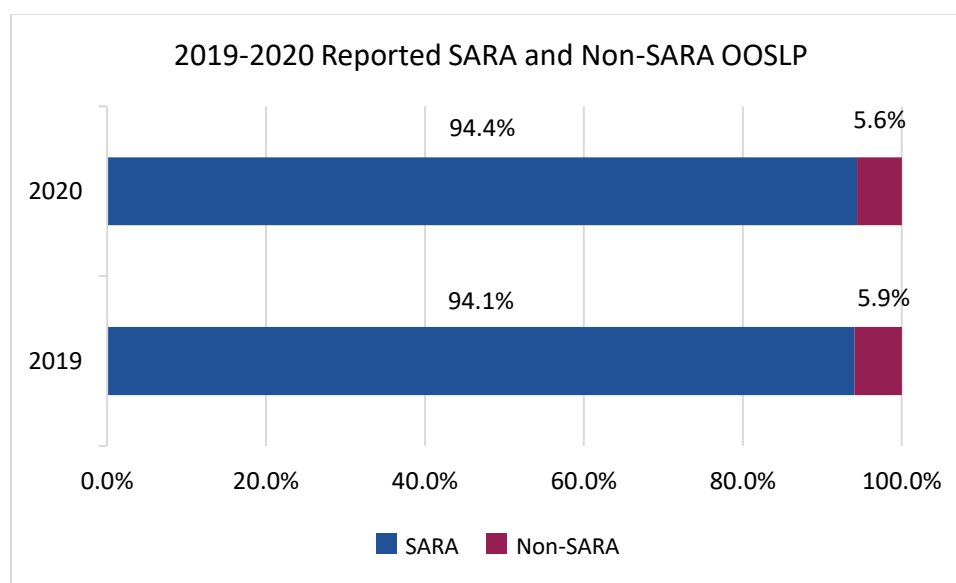
Reported CIP Code Program Areas

The CIP program area with the largest number of OOSLP was Health Professions and Related Programs (CIP #51), with 147,712 placements, representing 56.5% of all placements reported. Education (CIP #13) had the second highest number of placements with 26,803 placements, representing 10.3% of the total placements, followed by Business (CIP #52) with 13,509

placements, which accounted for 5.2% of reported placements. All other program area CIP codes combined accounted for 28.0% of reported learning placements. Figure 16 provides a graphic representation of the 2020 OOSLP data reported.

Figure 16. 2020 Out-of-State Learning Placements Reported by CIP Code Program Area
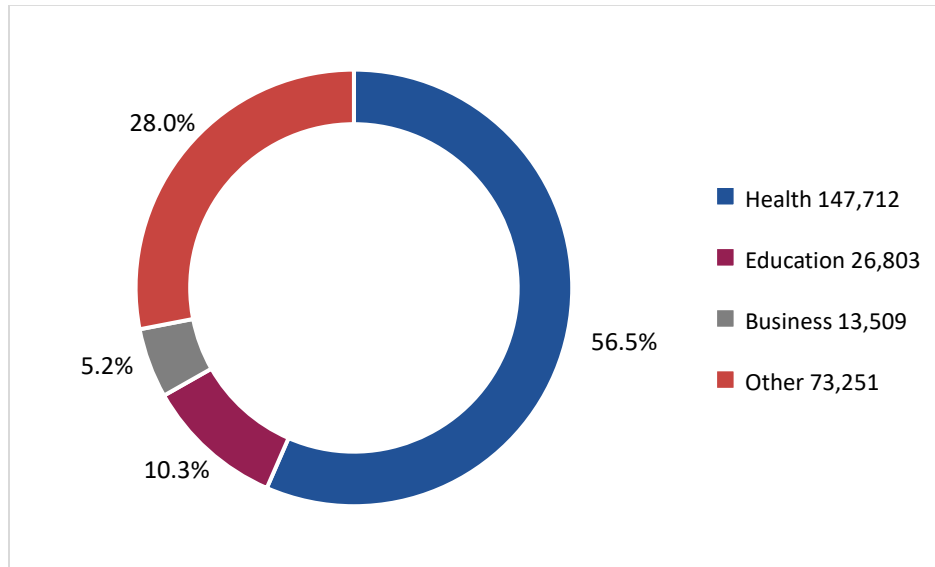
State Summary of Out-of-State Learning Placement Data

Because SARA stakeholders are often interested in the flow of students across state lines, the table in Figure 17 reports outgoing and incoming OOSLP for each member state.

Figure 17. State Summary of Out-of-State Learning Placement Data

State/Territory	Outgoing OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent FROM Institutions in State)	Incoming OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent TO State from Institutions in Other SARA States)
Alabama	6,824	2,197
Alaska	53	989
Arizona	16,932	10,886
Arkansas	1,336	2,708
Colorado	8,702	4,775
Connecticut	2,004	4,043
Delaware	832	2,704
District of Columbia	2,977	3,302
Florida	6,435	16,839
Georgia	3,741	9,707
Hawaii	317	996
Idaho	3,364	2,248
Illinois	20,847	11,647
Indiana	11,415	4,788
Iowa	6,110	3,243
Kansas	3,180	3,586
Kentucky	9,942	4,805
Louisiana	2,904	2,781
Maine	2,879	1,382
Maryland	1,718	7,005
Massachusetts	10,284	5,606
Michigan	2,864	5,705
Minnesota	11,576	5,881
Mississippi	1,305	2,747
Missouri	10,434	6,583
Montana	454	1,242
Nebraska	3,307	2,254
Nevada	555	2,715
New Hampshire	6,610	2,168
New Jersey	1,843	10,673
New Mexico	1,158	1,743
New York	13,107	9,665
North Carolina	2,811	8,530
North Dakota	2,030	1,982

State/Territory	Outgoing OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent FROM Institutions in State)	Incoming OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent TO State from Institutions in Other SARA States)
Ohio	10,537	9,008
Oklahoma	3,620	2,533
Oregon	1,700	3,455
Pennsylvania	15,254	7,762
Puerto Rico	646	275
Rhode Island	2,198	1,887
South Carolina	3,670	5,121
South Dakota	1,814	1,196
Tennessee	5,821	6,549
Texas	4,387	14,388
U.S. Virgin Islands	8	49
Utah	8,071	3,338
Vermont	626	981
Virginia	11,631	7,387
Washington	2,991	6,258
West Virginia	2,391	2,284
Wisconsin	4,870	4,747
Wyoming	190	1,290
Total SARA States	**261,275**	**246,633**
Total Non-SARA States		**14,642**
Total OOSLP Reported	**261,275**	**261,275**

Conclusion

NC-SARA staff acknowledge and thank the staff at reporting institutions for their efforts to report EDE enrollment data and OOSLP for 2020 despite the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic on campus operations. We recognize that institutional research professionals must keep up with ever-changing requirements, even during the most challenging times.

Given COVID-19, the 2020 data was expected to show an increase in reported EDE enrollment and a decline in reported OOSLP. What was uncertain was the magnitude of the difference from the strong baseline of data reported for both in 2019. The 2020 data reveal significant impacts on both EDE enrollment and OOSLP reported to NC-SARA.

- Reported total EDE enrollment nearly doubled (93.1%) from 3,016,944 in 2019 to 5,825,723 in 2020.
  - Out-of-state EDE enrollment comprised 32.4% (1,888,067) for 2020 compared to 46.3% (1,395,756) in 2019.
  - In-state EDE enrollment more than doubled from 1,621,188 in 2019 to 3,937,656 in 2020; represented nearly 68% of reported enrollment for 2020.

It is safe to conclude that a significant proportion of the reported increase was the result of institutions offering courses exclusively through distance education that would normally have been offered on-campus.

OOSLP reporting was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a 3.9% decline in reported OOSLP from 271,784 in 2019 to 261,275 in 2020, as many campuses and organizations that host students for learning placements closed or moved their operations to fully remote work that was not conducive to hosting students or to providing internships virtually. Institutions do not currently report virtual learning placements to NC-SARA.

To provide context and try to understand the impact of emergency remote learning on the reported 2020 data, NC-SARA conducted a voluntary survey on emergency remote learning in the summer of 2021. The institutional contacts who reported data for 2020 were contacted and requested to complete the survey. Responses were submitted from 698 institutions, for a 31.8% response rate. Those results revealed that 85% of participating SARA institutions reported moving courses to emergency remote learning in Fall 2020 because of the pandemic. In addition, 59% reported that they plan to continue offering some or all of their emergency remote learning offerings via distance education after the pandemic. The complete report, *NC-SARA Institution Survey: Perspectives on the Pandemic*, is available on the NC-SARA website.

Trend analysis was provided in the NC-SARA *2020 Annual Data Report*, including many trends for the first five years of NC-SARA's data collection, and those trends showed a solid baseline in reported EDE enrollment and OOSLP, with expected growth based on the addition of participating institutions. Such historic trends are not included in this report but are available through the data dashboards on the NC-SARA website.

Continuous improvement in the reporting system and process is a priority for the NC-SARA staff. NC-SARA staff work with the Data Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to develop and implement improvements in the systems, processes, and communication about data reporting for all SARA stakeholders. The hard work of the State Portal Entity staff, regional compact staff, and NC-SARA staff to improve the process for annual reporting are contributing to improvement in all aspects of SARA data reporting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Technical Notes

IPEDS Distance Education Definitions

The following definitions are provided by The Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)[9].

> **Distance Education** – Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and video cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

> **Distance Education Course** – A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education.

> **Distance Education Program** – A program for which all the required coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses.

NC-SARA Uses IPEDS Definitions

NC-SARA relies on the existing definitions and reporting schedules required by the federal government's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Using these existing structures and processes, that are likely familiar to institutional staff, is part of NC-SARA's commitment to not creating an undue additional reporting burden for participating institutions. IPEDS data collection is managed by the U.S. Department of Education through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and reporting is required of all institutions of higher education that offer federal financial aid in the U.S. states and territories. NCES has been requiring institutions to report distance education data since the IPEDS Fall Enrollment (EF) reporting in 2012. These data are the basis of institutional exclusively distance education enrollment reporting to NC-SARA.

Historic use of Distance Education Definitions

The IPEDS Fall Enrollment report asks institutions to separate students into three categories:

- Enrolled Exclusively in Distance Education Courses

---

[9] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2021-2022 Data Collection System* https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Downloads/Forms/IPEDSGlossary.pdf, (Retrieved 9/7/2021.)

- Enrolled in Some (But Not All) Distance Education Courses
- Not Enrolled in Any Distance Education Courses

To approximate the historic distance education surveys conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group (BSRG) that used a definition of approximately 80% of the course online, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) and others have combined the IPEDS reporting for "Exclusively in Distance Education Courses" and "Some But Not All Distance Education Courses." This combination of reporting has been referred to as "Enrolled in At Least One" distance education course.

Acknowledgment of Prior IPEDS Distance Education Analysis

Prior to the 2012 IPEDS reporting, the Babson Survey Research Group (BSRG) collected data on online enrollments annually, beginning in the fall 2002 period.[10] BSRG used the distance education definition of 80% of the content delivered online. The BSRG survey is a sampling, not a reporting, of the entire population of institutions of higher education. Analysis by the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technology (WCET) provides greater detail about methodology of historic distance education reports and the differences in the data and definitions used.[11]

IPEDS Distance Education Reporting

IPEDS defines a distance education course as "a course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education."[12] The definition also includes detail regarding delivery modality. NC-SARA uses the IPEDS definition of distance education. Using the IPEDS definition and data is meant to lessen the reporting burden for participating institutions, since most are already reporting to IPEDS.

Importantly, IPEDS distance education reporting requires providing enrollment data in four categories. These categories are listed below:

- All students enrolled
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses

---

[10] Allen, I.E. and Seaman J., (2003). *Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States*, Babson Survey Research Group, (Retrieved 9/7/2021.)

[11] Poulin, R. and Straut, T. (2016). *WCET Distance Education Enrollment Report 2016*. http://wcet.wiche.edu/initiatives/research/WCET-Distance-Education-Enrollment-Report-2016. (Retrieved 9/7/2021.)

[12] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2021-22 Data Collection System* https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary. (Retrieved 9/16/21.)

- Students enrolled in some but not all distance education courses
- Student not enrolled in any distance education courses

In addition to these fields, the data provided for students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses is disaggregated by where the students are located. These five IPEDS categories include:

- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in the same state/jurisdiction as institution
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in U.S. not in the same state/jurisdiction as institution
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in U.S. state/jurisdiction unknown
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located outside U.S.
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and location of student unknown/not reported

NC-SARA distance education enrollment reporting includes only students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. NC-SARA requests that institutions disaggregate the EDE enrollment data reported to IPEDS by state for purposes of NC-SARA annual distance education enrollment reporting. For the purposes of this report, the term "distance education" is used synonymously with the IPEDS EDE. It is important to note that nationally, based on 2019 EF IPEDS data, the EDE enrollment reported represents 17.6% (3,450,125) of total reported enrollment (19,637,499)[13]. 2019 IPEDS data is the latest data available at the time of this report. Figure 18 shows the distance education enrollment data reported to IPEDS and to NC-SARA.

---

[13] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics: *Fast Facts, Distance Learning* (n.d.), https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=80, (Retrieved 9/7/2021).

Figure 18. Reporting Requirements of NC-SARA and IPEDS EF
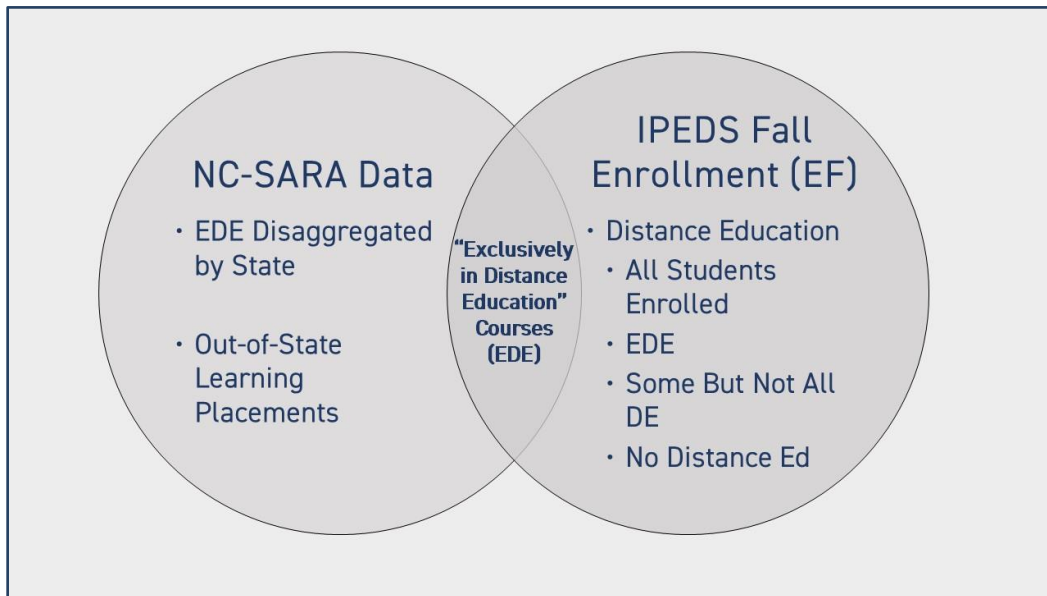
NC-SARA Requires Out-of-State Learning Placement Reporting

Enrollment previously captured and reported under the SARA distance education reporting provisions did not include on-the-ground, out-of-state learning placements (e.g., clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, etc.). Learning placement activities are an important part of many academic programs and the number and extent of such placements are of great interest and concern to educators, practitioners, licensing bodies, and state regulators. Therefore, it was agreed during the formation of SARA, that after successfully creating the process for reporting exclusively distance education enrollments NC-SARA would create a similar process for collecting and reporting out-of-state learning placements. Unlike distance education enrollment reporting, there is no existing mechanism for gathering and reporting OOSLP. SARA does not currently require reporting of virtual learning placements.
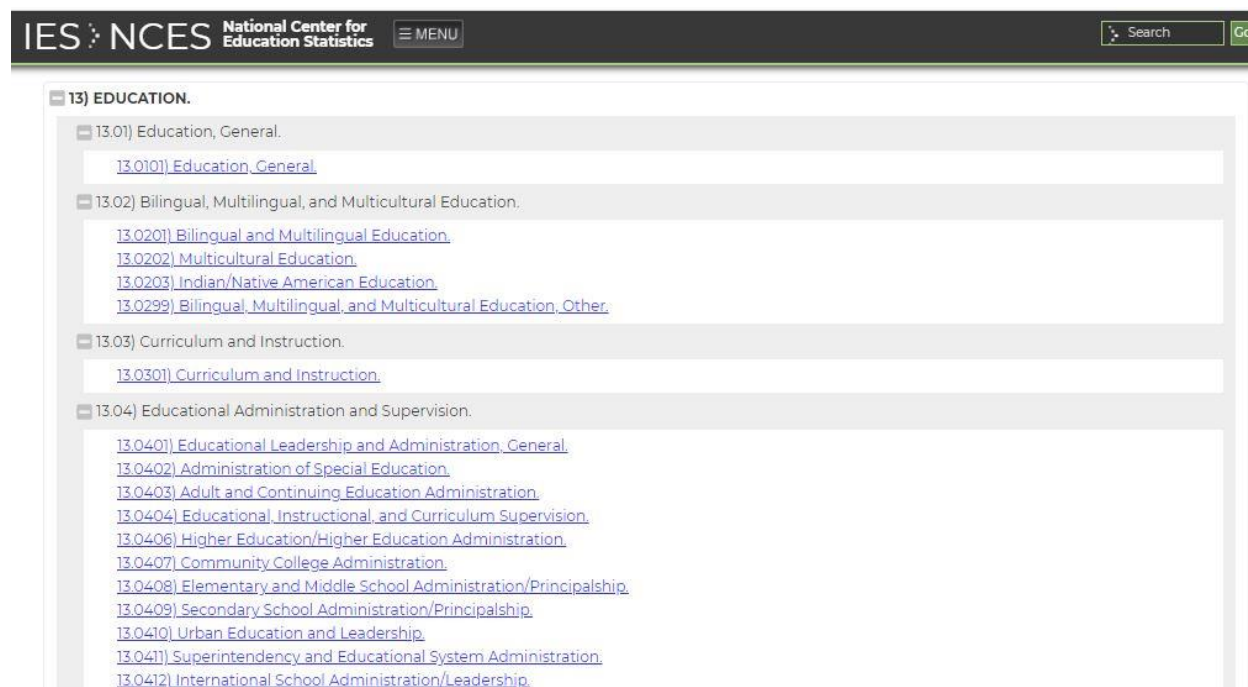
Appendix B. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)

One fundamental characteristic of SARA is its reliance on certain previously existing, workable mechanisms (such as accreditation, federal financial responsibility composite scores, etc.), rather than inventing similar mechanisms anew. Because it is used by almost all U.S. institutions of higher education, NC-SARA is using the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) system to categorize and report OOSLP.

According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) provides a taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completion activity[14]. Developed by NCES in 1980, the CIP has been revised five times, most recently in 2019 for use in 2020. The 2020 CIP Codes are used for reporting to NC-SARA beginning with 2020 OOSLP reporting in the spring of 2021.

The highest order of the taxonomy has 47 two-digit CIP codes that represent program areas. Each program area code may be further subdivided, resulting in either two digits (xx), four digits (xx.xx), or six digits (xx.xxxx). Figure 19 below is a screenshot that illustrates the initial portion of the CIP code for program area Education[15].

Figure 19. CIP Code Example for Education (CIP #13.0)

---

[14] Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES website. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=56, (Retrieved 8/31/2021.)

[15] Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES website. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/cipdetail.aspx?y=56&cip=13, (Retrieved 8/31/2021.)

Institutions have already assigned CIP codes to their academic programs, and NC-SARA does not expect or desire institutions to revisit those decisions for the purpose of SARA reporting. Rather, SARA institutions are to report learning placements categorized by the codes already assigned to the related programs.

Appendix C. References

Allen, I.E. and Seaman J., (2003). *Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States*, Babson Survey Research Group.

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES Website. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=56.

Hodges, C.; Moore, S.; Lockee, B; Trust, T; and Bond, A. "The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning." *Educause Review*, March 27, 2020. https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning.

NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2020 Distance Education Enrollment & 2020 Out-of-State Learning Placements, https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-03/Data-Reporting-Handbook-for-2020-FINAL-03_22_21.pdf.

Poulin, R. and Straut, T. (2016). *WCET Distance Education Enrollment Report 2016*. http://wcet.wiche.edu/initiatives/research/WCET-Distance-Education-Enrollment-Report-2016.

Straut, T. and Boeke, M. (2020). *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollment & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p. 17-23. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics: *Distance Education in IPEDS*, (n.d.), https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/distance-education-in-ipeds.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics: *Fast Facts, Distance Learning* (n.d.), https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=80.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2021-2022 Data Collection System* (n.d.), https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary.

NC
SARA

**National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements**

3005 Center Green Drive, Suite 130
Boulder, Colorado 80301

nc-sara.org