

What is SARA & Why Does it Matter?

Recognizing the growing demand for distance education 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).

These agreements are designed to streamline regulations around distance education programs and make it simpler for states to acknowledge other states' work and decisions about institutional authorization – and also include important consumer protections to support distance education students.

The following brief provides an overview of the purpose of SARA.

What is State Authorization?

States require institutions to obtain approval for regulated activities that occur in their state. These requirements vary by state, and may include online learning, practical experiences, faculty in the state, marketing, advertising, and more. Compliance with state authorization regulations is also required by the federal government for institutions to be eligible for federal financial aid.



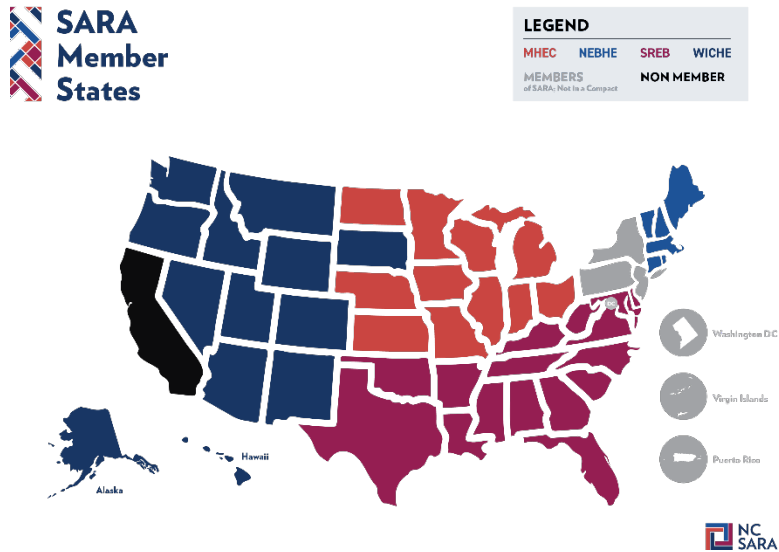
What is SARA, and why is it important in distance education?

SARA is a set of agreements between member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate distance education program offerings.

These reciprocity agreements help streamline distance education regulations, improve coordination between states and higher education institutions, and also help ensure member states and participating institutions adhere to a set of common consumer protections for students. Participation in SARA is voluntary. States join as members voluntarily, just as institutions voluntarily choose to participate through their home states.

How many states and institutions participate in SARA?

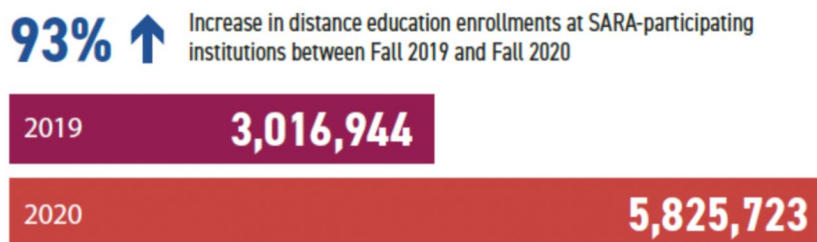
All accredited degree-granting institutions in SARA member states – public, private, independent, non-profit, and for-profit – are eligible to apply to participate in SARA. Institutions pay between \$2,000-\$6,000 annually to NC-SARA, based on enrollment – a starkly more affordable investment when compared to paying fees to states individually that could total upwards of 13 times this amount.



Currently, more than 2,300 U.S. postsecondary institutions that offer distance education programs voluntarily participate in these agreements across 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

How many students benefit from SARA?

The number of students exclusively enrolled in distance education programs is on the rise.



In Fall 2020 (the latest available data as reported by SARA-participating institutions), nearly 6 million students were enrolled exclusively in distance education programs at SARA-participating institutions – a 93% increase over Fall 2019 enrollments.

Would you like more information? Visit nc-sara.org