

What is NC-SARA?

The National Council of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a private, nonprofit organization that helps expand students' access to postsecondary educational opportunities and ensure more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance education programs through the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA). SARA provides state authorization portability for higher education institutions in the United States, and NC-SARA serves as a national leader in enhancing quality and consumer protections in interstate postsecondary distance education.

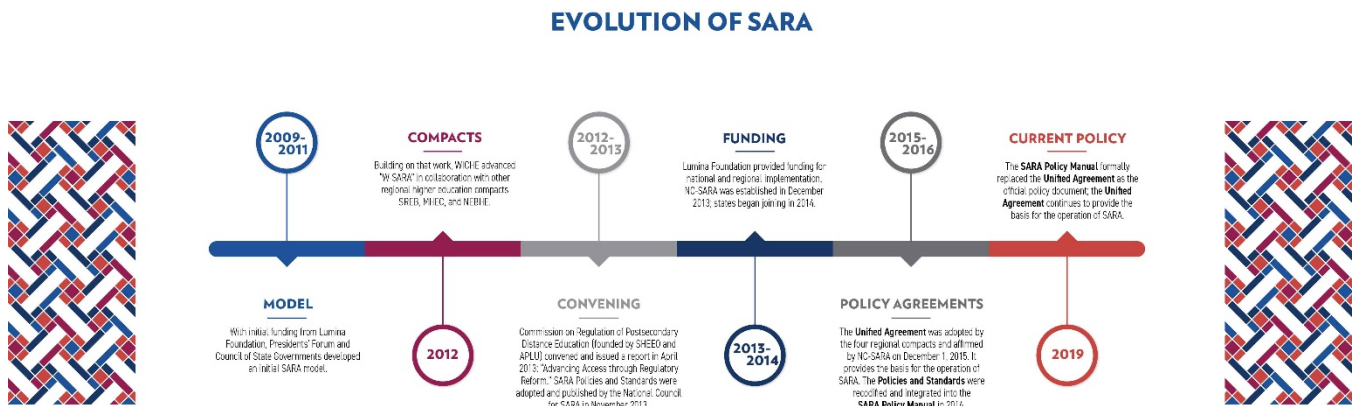
As part of its work, NC-SARA helps states, institutions, policymakers, and students understand the value of participating in SARA. The following brief provides an overview of NC-SARA's history, purpose, and partners.

[Click here to read part I in this series, "Get the Facts: What Is SARA & Why Does It Matter?"](#)

When and why was NC-SARA established?

NC-SARA was founded in 2013 when higher education stakeholders – including state regulators and education leaders, accreditors, the U.S. Department of Education, and institutions – recognized the growing demand for distance learning opportunities and joined together to establish SARA, with the goal of streamlining regulations for distance education programs.

Click on the image for a larger overview of NC-SARA's history:



To read the NC-SARA Board's recent reaffirmation of the Unified Agreement, click [here](#).

Today, in collaboration with the [regional higher education compacts](#), [regional steering committees](#), and [State Portal Entities](#), along with a broad array of stakeholders, NC-SARA ensures alignment on core elements and requirements of SARA, supporting quality assurance and consumer protections for students, and increasing the value of credentials earned through distance education programs.

The [four regional 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) – have helped states, and the public and private institutions within the states, work cooperatively to expand distance education access and excellence within their regions.

[Read a recent commentary on the reasons for creating SARA entitled “SARA: A Monument to Sanity and Rational Policymaking.”](#)

What are the benefits of SARA?

SARA helps support states, institutions, and students by:

- Improving distance education program quality nationwide.
- Making it easier for **students** to access distance education programs across state lines.
- Reducing **costs** and bureaucracy for institutions.
- Improving coordination between **states** on higher education opportunities.
- Supporting valuable **student consumer protection** oversight of distance education programs provided by states.

How does NC-SARA support the work of states?

NC-SARA supports the work of SARA member [states](#) in several ways. A non-SARA member state must review and approve all applications for state authorization from institutions that enroll students in their state. Given the increase in demand for distance education, SARA allows its member states to focus on their home-state institutions, rather than on institutions from many other states. In addition, SARA member states can rely on their regional compact staff and NC-SARA staff to aid in making sure institutions are compliant with SARA policy. Importantly, SARA also expands educational offerings to state residents.

NC-SARA also collects, analyzes, and shares annual distance education enrollment and out-of-state learning experience data like clinical hours and practice teaching from more than 2,300 SARA-participating institutions.

Finally, NC-SARA provides states access to a professional community through which they can find support and mentorship among those with many years of experience in state authorization of distance education, as well as coordination, resources, and tools to support this important work.

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