



# NC-SARA

## ANNUAL DATA REPORT:

Technical Report for Fall 2021 Exclusively  
Distance Education Enrollment & 2021 Out-of-  
State Learning Placements



National Council for  
State Authorization  
Reciprocity Agreements

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## 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 2022, 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](#).

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## Introduction

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) has completed seven years of exclusively distance education enrollment data and four 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 2021, collected in 2022. This report is organized in three sections: the first section includes an introduction and overview of institutional participation in SARA, the second section addresses exclusively distance education enrollment (EDEE) data, and the third section reports on out-of-state learning placement (OOSLP) data.

### ***Why NC-SARA Collects Data***

Collecting, reporting, and analyzing data about the interstate delivery of distance education are important parts of NC-SARA's mission, and SARA policy requires participating institutions to report EDEE and OOSLP annually. Since its inception, NC-SARA has maintained a strong commitment to transparency in data reporting. Prior to becoming members of SARA, many states collected data from out-of-state institutions that provided distance education in their state; therefore, data collection was an important element agreed upon during the creation of SARA. Data collection and reporting help measure the impact of SARA nationally, and track changes in SARA-participating institutions and in SARA member states over time.

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 2021 data to NC-SARA in the spring of 2022.) The SARA reporting window is May 15 through June 15 each year.

The EDEE data are disaggregated by the state, territory, or district where the student is physically located while enrolled exclusively in distance education course(s). The OOSLP data are disaggregated by the state, territory, or district where the learning placement is taking place. Reporting instructions and screenshots of the online data reporting portal are in the *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions*<sup>1</sup> available on the [Institution Directions for Data Reporting](#) webpage.

## Terms Used in Data Reporting

### ***Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment***

SARA uses the term “exclusively distance education enrollment” (EDEE) to describe student enrollment reported exclusively in distance education courses. The data collected has remained consistent since NC-SARA began collecting data 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.” Beginning with the 2018 reporting, NC-SARA requested that institutions include in-state EDEE in their annual reporting. For SARA reporting

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<sup>1</sup> NC-SARA *Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2021 Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment & 2021 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, [https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2022-02/DataReportingHandbookfor2022\\_PUBLISH-01\\_31\\_22.pdf](https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2022-02/DataReportingHandbookfor2022_PUBLISH-01_31_22.pdf) (Retrieved 8/15/22.)

purposes, the EDEE is disaggregated by state. See Appendix A: Technical Notes for more information on the IPEDS distance education definitions.

### ***Out-of-State Learning Placements***

SARA uses the term “out-of-state learning placements” (OOSLP) and has since OOSLP reporting began in 2018. OOSLPs are on-site learning placements that occur in a state other than the home state of the institution. They include activities such as clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, and other similar activities, many of which are related to workforce development needs and requirements.

Unlike for EDEE reporting, there is no other existing national mechanism, such as IPEDS, for gathering and reporting OOSLP. Reporting OOSLP annually is required for institutions participating in SARA. This is the fourth 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.

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.

### ***Definition of “State”***

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.

### ***NC-SARA’s Data Dashboards***

Beginning with the 2021 Annual Data Report, the technical report was 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 this report itself. You may explore the data by region, state, institution, and SARA participating status using the [NC-SARA Data Dashboards](#) including:

- Reporting institutions
- Total EDEE
- Incoming EDEE
- Outgoing EDEE
- Incoming OOSLP
- Outgoing OOSLP

### ***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 EDEE 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.

### ***Using the NC-SARA Data***

Many colleges and universities have staff that focus on data as a source of information for their future planning and development. The rich data collected by NC-SARA over the past several years may help institutional staff and other stakeholders better understand the distance education landscape in your state or region. These data also hold historical trends and may provide insights that could inform key decisions about distance education offerings.

The [NC-SARA Data Dashboards](#) can be used to consider EDEE and OOSLP trends in your state overall, trends reported by other institutions in your state and in nearby states, and the movement of students in and out of your state, and those states, over time. The data may be used to project the need for new programs and other decisions impacted by enrollment trends in your own and neighboring states.

The NC-SARA data is publicly available to help institutions consider such questions any time they arise; the data set becomes richer with each year of data collection.

### ***Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic***

The 2021 Annual Data Report, which contained EDEE data from Fall 2020 and OOSLP data from calendar year 2020, was the first report that revealed the potential impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it marked a critical inflection point in NC-SARA's dataset. The 2021 data shared in this report are also impacted by emergency remote learning, though the extent of impact is impossible to measure. As expected, reported EDEE declined compared to the 2020 data; comparisons to data collected in prior years are included on key points of interest to SARA stakeholders. All of the previous Annual Data Reports are available on NC-SARA's website.

### **Methodology**

In May 2022, NC-SARA sent email requests to the SARA institutional contacts at 2,331 institutions, with a link to report Fall 2021 EDEE and calendar year 2021 OOSLP. NC-SARA received complete responses from 2,311 institutions. Exemptions were extended to 17 institutions (10 were non-renewals, 3 joined SARA near the end of 2021, and 4 provided state-approved exemptions). There were three 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.

Beginning with 2021 data reporting NC-SARA instituted a process to clarify when new SARA-participating institutions would be required to report. Institutions must be participating in SARA on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to the reporting window (May 15 – June 15) to be invited to report their EDEE and OOSLP data. Institutions approved after that time are expected to report in the following year.

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 EDEE data differs from their IPEDS reporting. This year about 8% 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*<sup>2</sup> that asked institutional 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](#).

### **Regional Compacts and 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).

Regional compact staff support the State Portal Entity (SPE) staff in each member state through regular interaction, SARA-related workshops and events, and general support.

### **SARA Member States and State Portal Entities**

There were no new member states accepted by SARA between the reporting window for 2020 and 2021. As of September 2022, 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).

SARA State Portal Entities (SPEs) are the state agency or other state body designated by each SARA member state to carry out SARA responsibilities for the state and to serve as the interstate point of contact for SARA questions, complaints, and other communications.

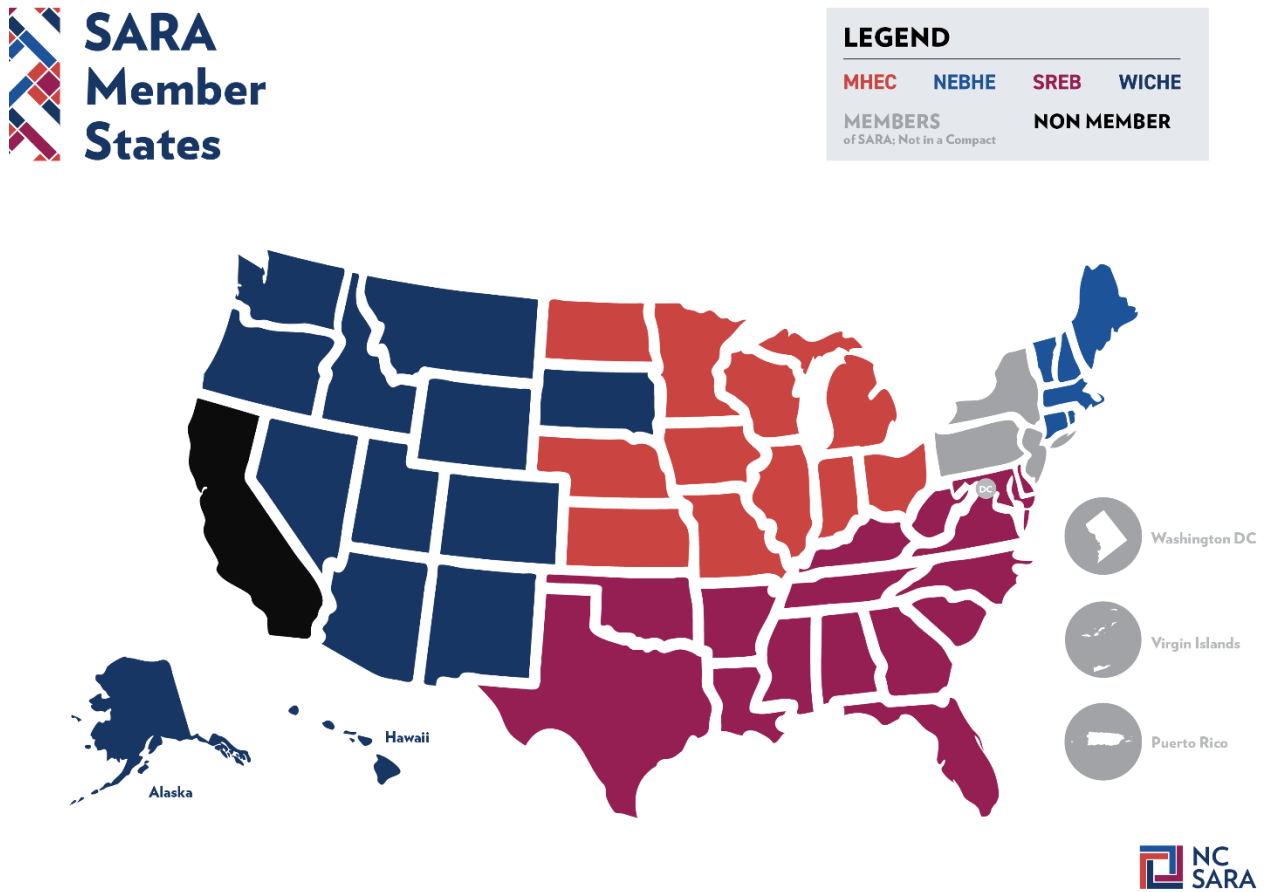
The map in Figure 1 shows the SARA states and territories and the regional compacts with which they are members or affiliated. States shown in gray are not members of a regional compact but have affiliated with one of the compacts for purposes of SARA.

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<sup>2</sup> NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2021 Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment & 2021 Out-of-State Learning Placements, [https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2022-02/DataReportingHandbookfor2022\\_PUBLISH-01\\_31\\_22.pdf](https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2022-02/DataReportingHandbookfor2022_PUBLISH-01_31_22.pdf) (Retrieved 8/15/22.)



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



## Summary of Results

2,311 institutions reported EDEE for Fall 2021 and Out-of-State Learning Placement (OOSLP) data for calendar year 2021 to NC-SARA during the 2022 spring reporting period. Analysis of these data submissions include these key findings:

- There was a 5.0% increase in the number of institutions participating in SARA between 2020 and 2021, from 2,201 reporting institutions in 2020 to 2,311 reporting in 2021.
  - Public institutions made up 49.3% (1,139) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA;
  - Private non-profit institutions represent 43.8% (1,012) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA;
  - Private for-profit institutions account for 6.8% (157) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA.
  - Three tribal institutions reported to NC-SARA for 2020, representing 0.1% of the total.
- Also consistent with prior years' reporting, the majority of out-of-state EDEE occurred in the private non-profit sector with 42.9%, while private for-profits reported 30.7% of out-of-state EDEE in Fall 2021, and public institutions reported 26.4%. The three tribal institutions reported 119 out-of-state enrollments, or 0%.
- Given that COVID-19 significantly affected the reported 2020 data, the 2021 data was expected to show a relative decline in reported EDEE and an increase in reported OOSLP. The 2021 data reveal the expected trends and increases in both EDEE and OOSLP compared to the more stable 2019 data.
  - There was a 26.9% decrease in total Fall 2021 EDEE from Fall 2020: from 5,825,723 to 4,258,806. The reported EDEE for 2021 showed a significant increase compared to 2019, as new institutions continued to apply for participation in SARA throughout the pandemic and students continued to take advantage of expanded online offerings.
  - In Fall 2021, 1.5 million students attended out-of-state institutions exclusively through distance education under SARA. This is down from 1.7 million in Fall 2020 (-12%), but up from 1.27 million in Fall 2019 (19%).
  - Out-of-state EDEE comprised 32.4% (1,888,067) for 2020 compared to 46.3% (1,395,756) in 2019.
  - The majority of EDEE at SARA-participating institutions are still in-state. In-state EDEE comprised 60.9% (2,591,853) of reported enrollment, while out-of-state reporting comprised 39.1% (1,666,953) for 2021. Proportions are not back to 2019 levels, suggesting that distance education is happening with in-state students in 2021. It is also possible that some institutions are continuing to report their emergency remote learning as EDEE.
- Reported OOSLP increased 20.1% from the 261,275 reported in 2020 to 315,503 reported in 2021. The 2021 reported OOSLP represents a 16.1% increase from the 271,784 OOSLP reported in 2019.
- The CIP program area with the largest number of OOSLP was Health Professions and Related Programs (CIP #51), with 182,791 placements, representing 57.9% of all placements reported. Education (CIP #13) had the second highest number of

placements with 30,210 placements, representing 9.6% of the total placements, followed by Business (CIP #52) with 16,399 placements, which accounted for 5.2% of reported placements. All other program area CIP codes combined accounted for 27.3% of reported learning placements.

**Commentary on 2021 Results:**

- There was a net increase of 110 SARA-participating institutions from 2020 to 2021, continuing the trend of approximately 5% annual growth in total participating institutions.
- The pivot to emergency remote learning is likely still a factor in the reported EDEE for 2021, but it's impossible to know to what extent.
- The 2021 data reveal a return to more stable reported EDEE and OOSLP level of 2019, with an expected increase in both due to continued growth of participating institutions of approximately 5% annually and an increase in available distance learning opportunities.
- Comments provided in the data reporting for EDEE suggest that some institutions continued to offer emergency remote learning through the Fall of 2021.
- Some gains in EDEE may be a lasting trend, as institutions found that they could meet students' needs at a distance and have kept some courses online that were only offered on campus before the COVID-19 pandemic. NC-SARA's 2021 report, *NC-SARA Institution Survey: Perspectives on the Pandemic*, highlighted many institutions plan to utilize distance education to provide greater flexibility for students.<sup>3</sup>

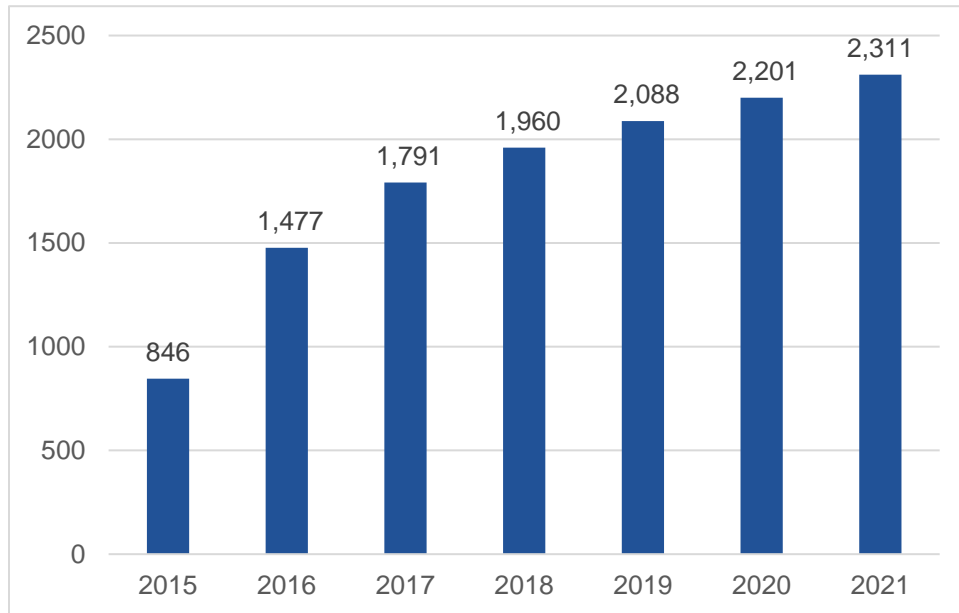
## Reporting Institutions

There was an increase of 110 institutions – 5.0% – participating in SARA during the 2021 reporting period. Of the 2,311 complete responses received, 123 institutions (5.3%) reported no EDEE; 817 institutions (35.4%) reported no OOSLP.

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

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<sup>3</sup> NC-SARA *Institution Survey: Perspectives on the Pandemic*, October 20, 2021, [https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-10/Perspectives\\_PUBLISH\\_18Oct2021.pdf](https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-10/Perspectives_PUBLISH_18Oct2021.pdf) (Retrieved 9/20/22.)

**Figure 2. Number of Reporting Institutions 2015-2021**

### Reporting Institutions by State

The number of institutions participating in SARA varies greatly by state. Texas has the most participating institutions with 138, 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.) The data table in Figure 4 provides the number of participating institutions per state at the time of the 2021 data reporting period.



**Figure 4. Reporting Institutions by State**

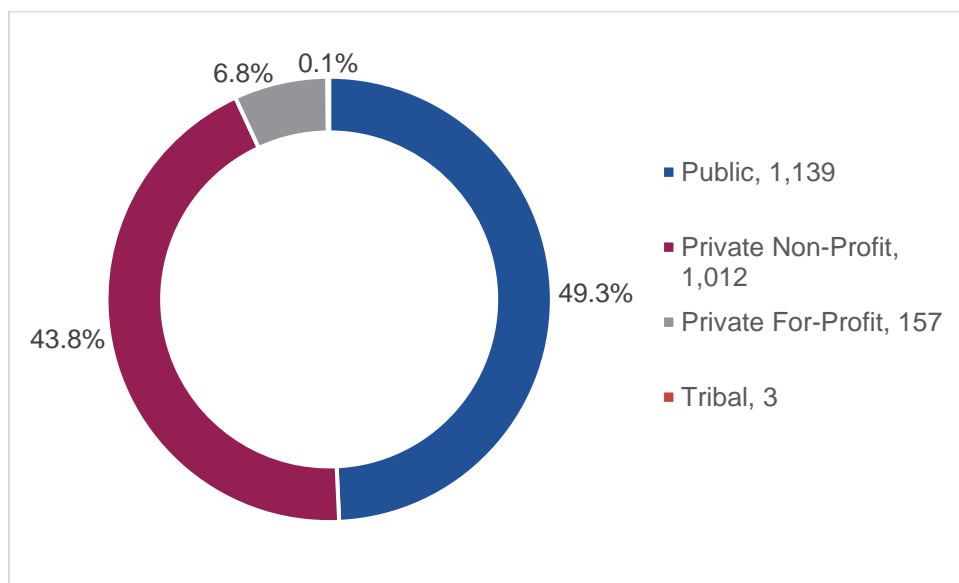
<b>State/Territory (A-M)</b>	<b>Total Reporting Institutions</b>	<b>State/Territory (N-Z)</b>	<b>Total Reporting Institutions</b>
Alabama	41	Nebraska	26
Alaska	4	Nevada	10
Arizona	36	New Hampshire	16
Arkansas	38	New Jersey	49
Colorado	42	New Mexico	23
Connecticut	33	New York	135
Delaware	5	North Carolina	93
District of Columbia	14	North Dakota	14
Florida	95	Ohio	89
Georgia	85	Oklahoma	36
Hawaii	12	Oregon	31
Idaho	13	Pennsylvania	121
Illinois	101	Puerto Rico	20
Indiana	57	Rhode Island	11
Iowa	52	South Carolina	44
Kansas	45	South Dakota	17
Kentucky	48	Tennessee	60
Louisiana	36	Texas	138
Maine	24	US Virgin Islands	1
Maryland	40	Utah	18
Massachusetts	68	Vermont	14
Michigan	67	Virginia	73
Minnesota	65	Washington	45
Mississippi	31	West Virginia	29
Missouri	75	Wisconsin	49
Montana	14	Wyoming	8

### Reporting Institutions by Sector - 2021

- Public institutions made up 49.3% (1,139) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA;
- Private non-profit institutions represent 43.8% (1,012) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA;
- Private for-profit institutions account for 6.8% (157) of all institutions reporting EDEE to NC-SARA.

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 2,311 reporting institutions.

**Figure 5. Reporting Institutions by Sector for 2021**



## Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment (EDEE) reporting has been a mandatory requirement for institutions participating in SARA since 2015. This section of the *NC-SARA Annual Data Technical Report* focuses on reported EDEE.

### Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment is Based on IPEDS

SARA EDEE 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 EDEE 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 EDEE at most institutions. As reported in a recent blog post by Phil Hill of *Phil on EdTech*, "This approach does not capture the increasingly important nature of multiple starts per year, shorter terms, and habits of part-time working-adults. Students who take online courses in the winter, spring, summer, but for whatever reason not in the fall just don't get counted, as the data approach originated with the assumption of traditional *start in the fall with a semester or quarter system programs*."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the reported EDEE is not representative of annual distance education activity, though it is the industry standard.

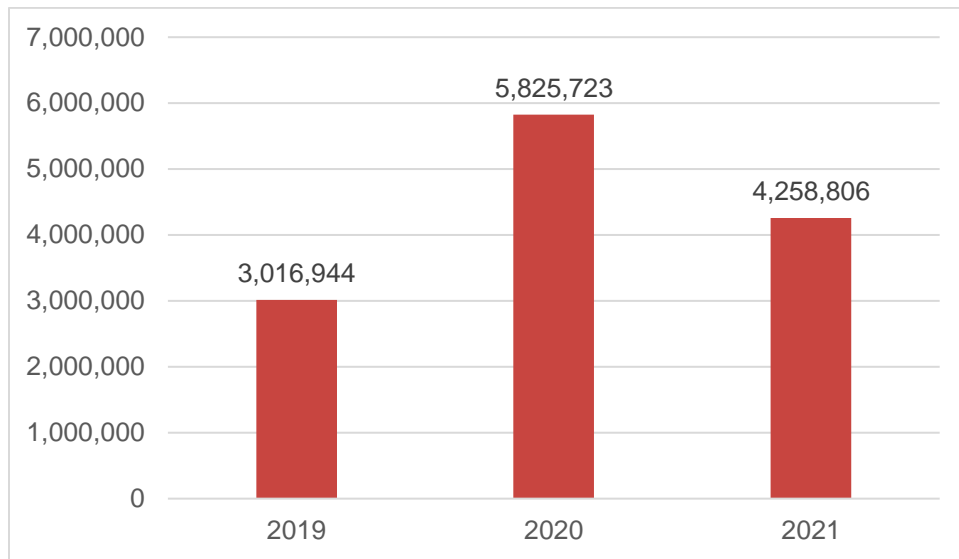
### Total Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reported

There was a 26.9% decrease in Fall 2021 reported EDEE from Fall 2020: from 5,825,723 to 4,258,806. The decline in reported EDEE was expected since 2020 reported EDEE included emergency remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The reported EDEE for 2021 showed a significant increase compared to 2019, as new institutions continued to apply for participation in SARA throughout the pandemic, and students continued to take advantage of increased online offerings. These data are displayed in Figure 6.

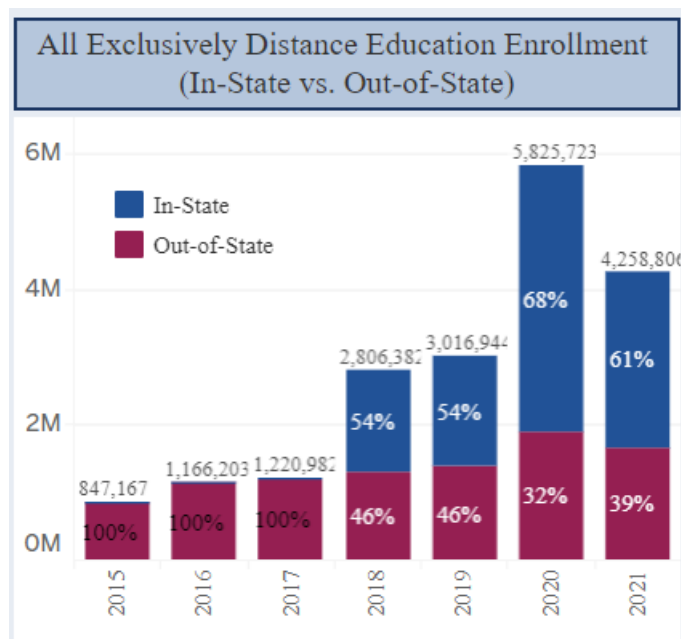
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<sup>4</sup> Hill, Phil. "2020-21 IPEDS Data: Profile of Mid-Pandemic 12-Month Enrollments." *Phil on EdTech*, August 29, 2022. [https://philonedtech.com/2020-21-ipeds-data-profile-of-mid-pandemic-12-month-enrollments/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=2020-21-ipeds-data-profile-of-mid-pandemic-12-month-enrollments](https://philonedtech.com/2020-21-ipeds-data-profile-of-mid-pandemic-12-month-enrollments/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=2020-21-ipeds-data-profile-of-mid-pandemic-12-month-enrollments) (Retrieved 9/6/22.)



**Figure 6. 2019-2021 Reported Total EDEE**

The majority of EDEE at SARA-participating institutions are still in-state. In-state EDEE comprised 60.9% (2,591,853) of reported enrollment, while out-of-state reporting comprised 39.1% (1,666,953) for 2021. Proportions are not back to 2019 levels, suggesting that an increased number of in-state students are continuing to take advantage of distance education in 2021 (or suggesting that some institutions are continuing to report their emergency remote learning as EDEE). Figure 7 displays the reported EDEE for 2015-2021, including the proportion of in-state and out-of-state reported EDEE. It's important to note that NC-SARA began requiring the reporting of in-state EDEE in 2018.

**Figure 7. Reported In-State & Out-of-State EDEE 2015-2021**

### ***Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Reported Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment***

The pivot to emergency remote learning is likely still a factor in the reported EDEE for 2021, but it's impossible to know to what extent. NC-SARA provided instruction to institutions to follow the guidance provided on the Distance Education IPEDS [website](#)<sup>5</sup>. Staff at SARA-participating institutions interpreted this guidance in different ways; some reported emergency remote learning enrollment to NC-SARA, and some did not. Through the comments field, many reported that their institution's offerings continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

### **Total Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reported by Sector**

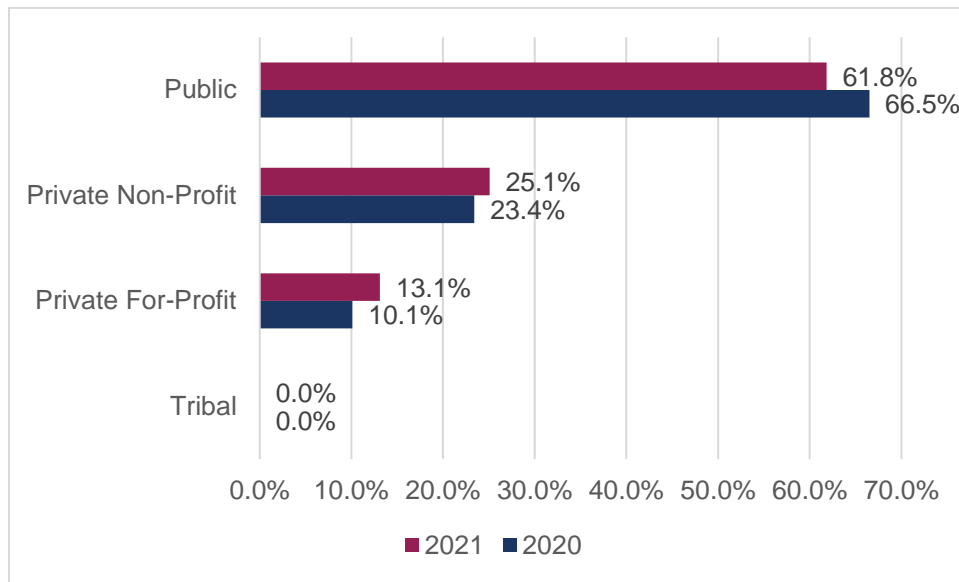
Analysis of EDEE reported for 2021 by institutional sector reveals an expected decline in the proportion of public institutions compared to 2020. This is likely because reported 2020 public EDEE was inflated due to the reporting of emergency remote learning.

- Public institutions represented 61.8% (2,632,779) in 2021 compared to 66.5% (3,873,286) of total reported EDEE in 2020.
- Private non-profit institutions represented 25.1% (1,067,601) of total reported EDEE in 2021 compared to 23.4% (1,362,700) in 2020.
- Private for-profit institutions represented 13.1% (557,948) of total reported EDEE in 2021, compared to 10.1% in 2020.
- The three tribal institutions represented 478 (0.0%) of total reported EDEE in 2021 compared to 1,034 (0.0%) of total EDEE in 2020.

These data are presented in Figure 8.

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<sup>5</sup> 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 8/23/2022.)

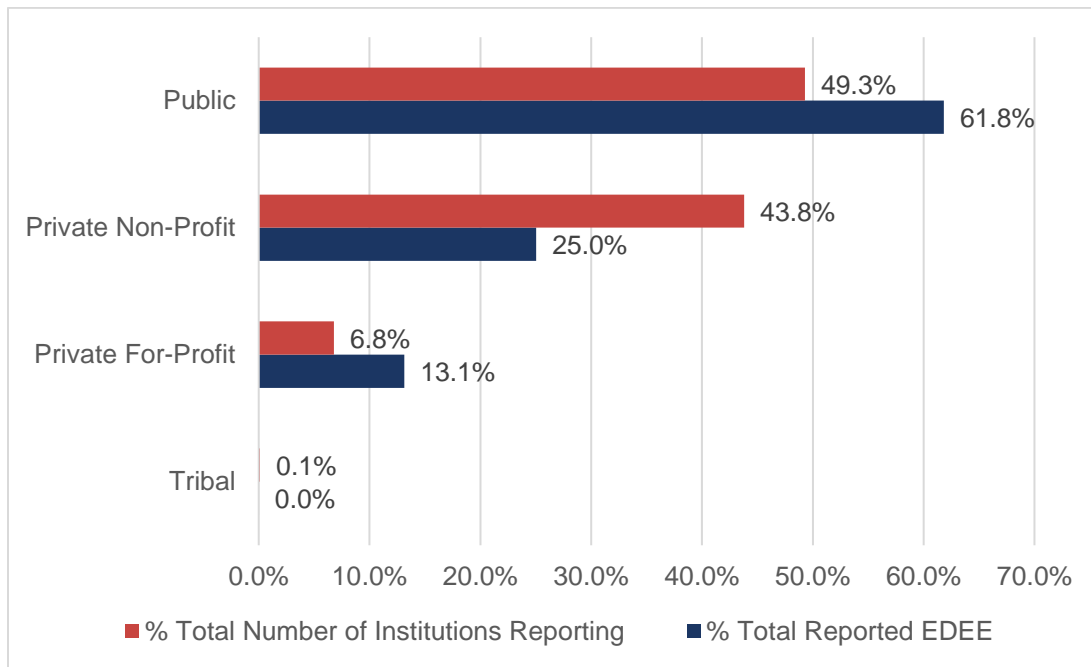
**Figure 8. 2020-2021 Reported Total EDEE by Sector (with in-state enrollment)*****Reported Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment and Number of Institutions by Sector***

The shift in the proportion of reported EDEE by sector is important to understand in the context of the associated proportion of participating SARA institutions by sector. [Historic analysis](#)<sup>6</sup> of reported EDEE by sector has revealed that public institutions represent the majority of institutions as well as reported EDEE.

- Public institutions represent nearly half (49.3%) of institutions and 61.8% of reported EDEE in 2021.
- Private non-profits represent 43.8% of reporting institutions and a quarter (25.0%) of EDEE reported in 2021.
- Private for-profit institutions represent 6.8% of institutions and 13.1% of reported EDEE in 2021.
- Tribal institutions represent 0.1% of institutions and 0.0% of reported EDEE in 2021.

Figure 9 provides details of EDEE and the number of institutions by sector.

<sup>6</sup> 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](https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf). (Retrieved 8/16/22.)

**Figure 9. Reporting Institutions and Total EDEE by Sector (with in-state enrollment)**

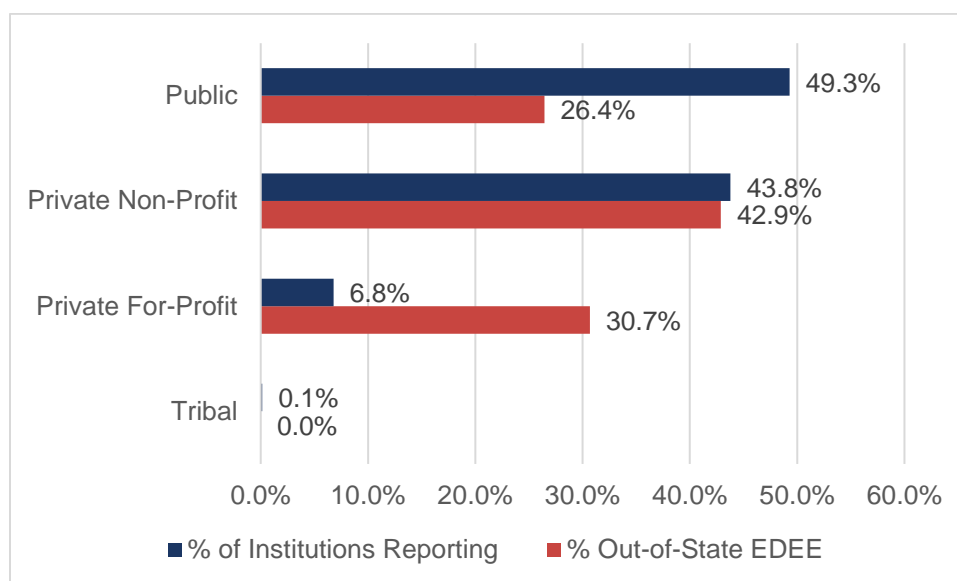
### ***Out-of-State Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment by Sector***

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** EDEE. There were 1,666,953 out-of-state EDEE at SARA-participating institutions.

For Fall 2021:

- Private non-profit institutions continued to report the largest out-of-state EDEE with 42.9% of the total (714,803);
- Private for-profit institutions reported 30.7% out-of-state EDEE (511,247);
- Public institutions reported 26.4% out-of-state EDEE (440,784);
- Tribal institutions reported 119 out-of-state EDEE, 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 percentages and proportion of reported enrollment by sector for 2021 are presented in Figure 10.

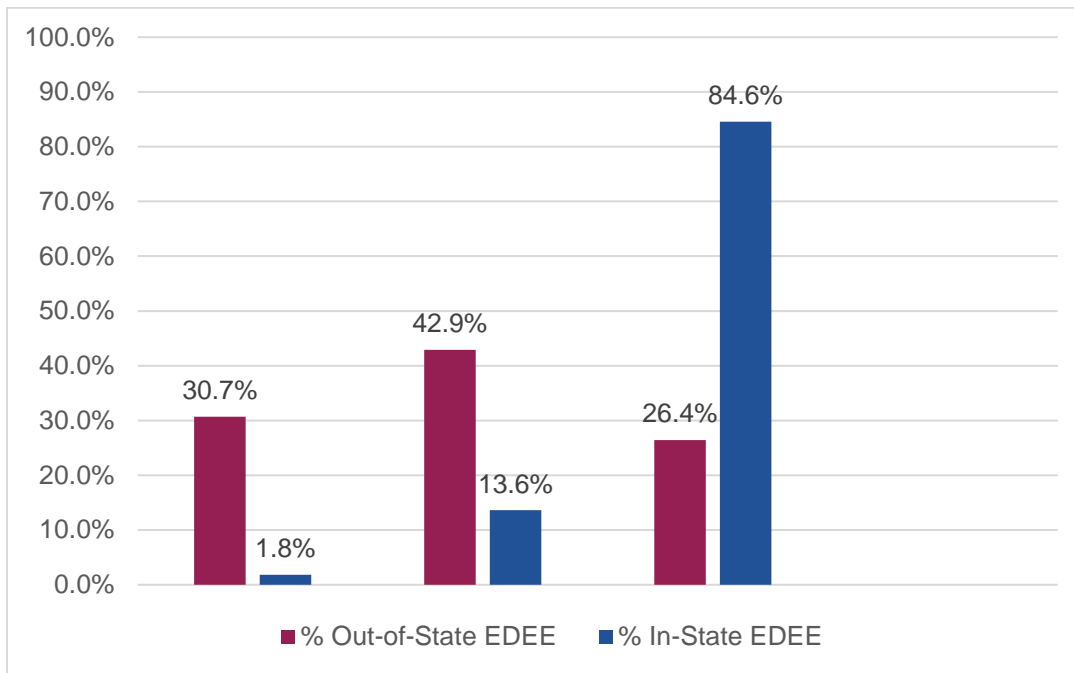
**Figure 10. 2021 Reporting Institutions and Out-of-State EDEE by Sector**

Analysis of EDEE 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 EDEE is examined.

- **In-State:** Public institutions represent 84.6% of reported in-state EDEE in 2021. Public institutions have historically dwarfed the other sectors in reported in-state exclusively distance education enrollment, representing 78.7% in 2019.<sup>7</sup>
- **Out-of-State:** Also consistent with prior years' reporting, out-of-state EDEE is led by the private non-profit sector with 42.9%, while private for-profits reported 30.7% of out-of-state EDEE in 2021 (33.1% in 2019).

Figure 11 displays the reported EDEE sector data for 2021.

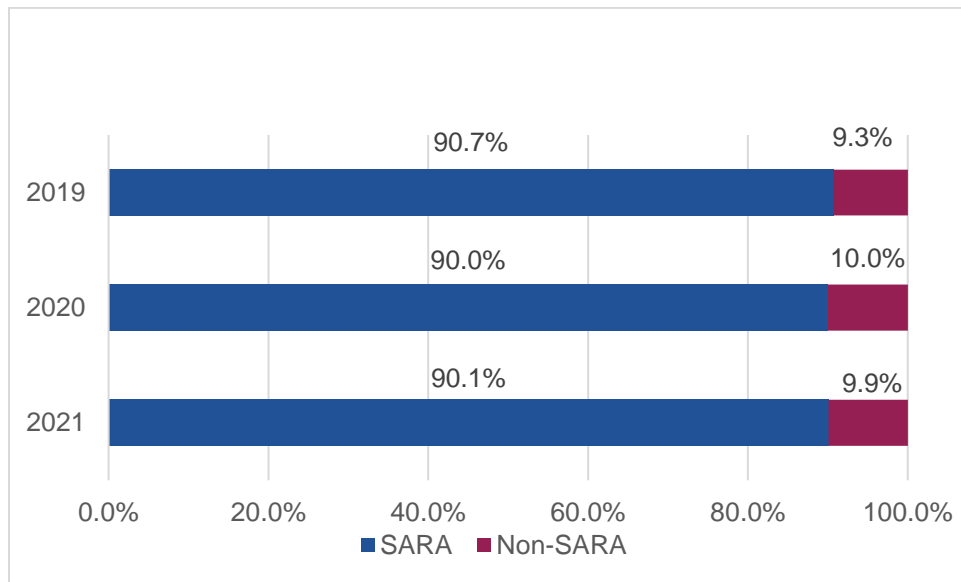
<sup>7</sup> NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollments & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements, p.37. [https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020\\_01.06.21.pdf](https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf). (Retrieved 8/23/22.)

**Figure 11. 2021 Reported EDEE by Sector**

### **SARA and Non-SARA States' Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment**

Institutions participating in SARA reported 1,666,953 out-of-state EDEEs, 90.1% in SARA states and 9.9% in non-SARA states (California and the territories not participating in SARA). This compares to 90.0% in SARA states and 10.0% in non-SARA states in 2020 and 90.7% in SARA states and 9.3% in 2019.

SARA-participating institutions reported 1,502,171 students enrolled exclusively in distance education through SARA. Figure 12 presents the EDEE data for 2019 through 2021 for SARA and non-SARA out-of-state EDEE. The proportion of SARA and non-SARA enrollments remained relatively consistent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 12. 2019-2021 Reported SARA and Non-SARA State's EDEE (out-of-state only)**

### State Summary of Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Data

Institutions participating in SARA report their EDEE by state. The state level EDEE data reported by SARA-participating institutions are available in the NC-SARA Data Dashboards on the [NC-SARA website](#).

The state level data does not include in-state EDEE. Although total EDEE 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 EDEE, as well as total reported EDEE in the state by other SARA participating institutions. Total state level data are available in the NC-SARA Data Dashboards on the [NC-SARA website](#).

**Figure 13. Reported State Level EDEE (out-of-state only)**

<b>State/District/ Territory</b>	<b>Total Reported EDEE in SARA States/Territory</b>	<b>Total Reported EDEE in Non- SARA States/Territory</b>	<b>Total Reported EDEE</b>	<b>EDEE in State Reported by Other SARA Institutions</b>
Alabama	30,404	2,119	32,523	25,258
Alaska	745	97	842	7,910
Arizona	248,572	44,329	292,901	28,259
Arkansas	6,529	244	6,773	16,205
Colorado	69,133	7,897	77,030	31,667
Connecticut	16,642	1,070	17,712	20,905
Delaware	7,086	456	7,542	6,391
District of Columbia	51,086	2,308	53,394	6,194
Florida	54,428	5,335	59,763	102,685
Georgia	48,685	4,880	53,565	78,229
Hawaii	2,119	1,738	3,857	11,649
Idaho	16,082	2,681	18,763	10,727
Illinois	41,931	4,695	46,626	60,130
Indiana	62,866	4,526	67,392	27,012
Iowa	12,602	757	13,359	12,644
Kansas	16,820	1,209	18,029	13,757
Kentucky	21,176	896	22,072	20,344
Louisiana	11,240	741	11,981	23,644
Maine	5,677	330	6,007	6,449
Maryland	32,446	3,707	36,153	43,227
Massachusetts	23,586	2,959	26,545	29,797
Michigan	8,056	652	8,708	37,053
Minnesota	48,017	3,643	51,660	21,104
Mississippi	6,491	264	6,755	16,540
Missouri	27,678	2,137	29,815	29,786
Montana	1,087	234	1,321	6,490
Nebraska	13,066	1,268	14,334	7,703
Nevada	960	616	1,576	22,045
New Hampshire	122,454	9,304	131,758	6,581
New Jersey	9,238	945	10,183	48,359
New Mexico	5,308	650	5,958	12,121
New York	34,110	3,000	37,110	71,478
North Carolina	6,950	471	7,421	67,410
North Dakota	5,131	288	5,419	4,945
Ohio	54,855	11,240	66,095	51,973
Oklahoma	6,755	543	7,298	18,658
Oregon	9,861	2,889	12,750	18,700
Pennsylvania	31,434	2,779	34,213	63,046
Puerto Rico	5,551	94	5,645	5,578



State/District/ Territory	Total Reported EDEE in SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDEE in Non- SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDEE	EDEE in State Reported by Other SARA Institutions
Rhode Island	3,126	116	3,242	6,456
South Carolina	5,272	213	5,485	34,999
South Dakota	3,434	188	3,622	6,611
Tennessee	11,347	324	11,671	39,800
Texas	20,845	3,797	24,642	144,645
U.S. Virgin Islands	29	11	40	699
Utah	131,448	15,091	146,539	16,798
Vermont	4,263	379	4,642	3,408
Virginia	81,292	4,436	85,728	63,607
Washington	5,212	1,309	6,521	55,592
West Virginia	48,046	4,283	52,329	9,481
Wisconsin	10,217	586	18,803	22,262
Wyoming	783	58	841	5,160
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,502,171</b>	<b>164,782</b>	<b>1,666,953</b>	<b>1,502,171</b>

### Top Ten Institutions by Size of Reported Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

For 2021, the institutions that reported the largest EDEE are Western Governors University, Southern New Hampshire University, and University of Phoenix. These were the top three institutions based on reported EDEE in 2020 and 2019 as well. The complete list of SARA-participating institutions, including the ability to filter by sector, is available in the NC-SARA Data Dashboards. The ten institutions reporting the largest EDEE to NC-SARA in 2021 are reported in Figure 14.

**Figure 14. Top Ten Institutions by Size of 2021 Total Reported EDEE**

Institution Name	State	Sector	Reported SARA State EDEE	Reported Non-SARA State EDEE	Total Reported EDEE
Western Governors University	UT	Private Non-Profit	135,249	13,708	148,957
Southern New Hampshire University	NH	Private Non-Profit	127,948	9,214	137,162
University of Phoenix	AZ	Private For-Profit	73,466	12,248	85,714
Grand Canyon University	AZ	Private Non-Profit	67,496	11,979	79,475
Penn Foster College	AZ	Private For-Profit	73,841	4,978	78,819
Liberty University	VA	Private Non-Profit	75,079	3,326	78,405
Arizona State University	AZ	Public	48,098	11,696	59,794
University of Maryland Global Campus	MD	Public	44,703	1,834	46,537
American Public University System	WV	Private For-Profit	41,932	3,910	45,842
Eastern Gateway Community College	OH	Public	35,534	7,395	42,929

## 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 OOSLP 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. This section of the *NC-SARA Annual Data Technical Report* focuses on reported 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.

### Out-of-State Learning Placements Defined

Out-of-state learning placements are on-ground out-of-state experiential learning activities. They include clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, and other similar activities, many of which are related to workforce development needs. They are also often required as part of obtaining a degree and/or license to practice in a particular profession. SARA allows reciprocity for certain OOSLP.

***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<sup>8</sup> 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, 2021, and December 31, 2021.
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.

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<sup>8</sup> 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 08/17/22.)

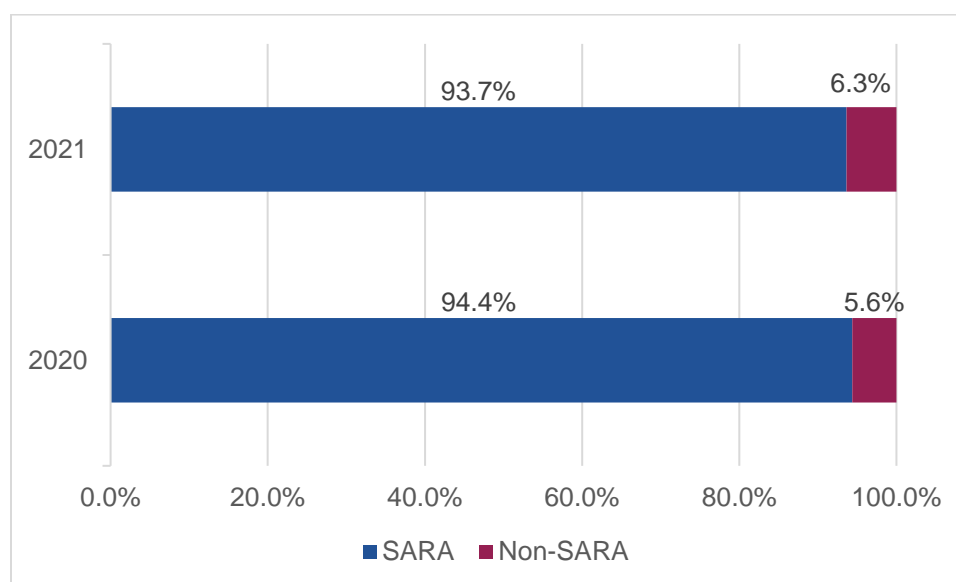
### Total Out-of-State Learning Placements Reported

There were 315,504 OOSLP reported by participating institutions for the calendar year 2021. Reported OOSLP increased 20.1% from the 261,275 reported in 2020. The 2021 reported OOSLP represents a 16.1% increase from the 271,784 OOSLP reported in 2019. There were 817 institutions (35.4%) that reported no OOSLP in 2021.

### SARA and Non-SARA States' Out-of-State Learning Placement Data

For 2021, 295,486 (93.7%) of reported learning placements took place in SARA states and 20,018 (6.3%) took place in non-SARA states. These data are consistent with the reported SARA and non-SARA states' OOSLP reported in 2020 and prior years. Please see Figure 15 for additional details; SARA and non-SARA states' OOSLP are also available to explore in the interactive NC-SARA Data Dashboards on the [NC-SARA website](#).

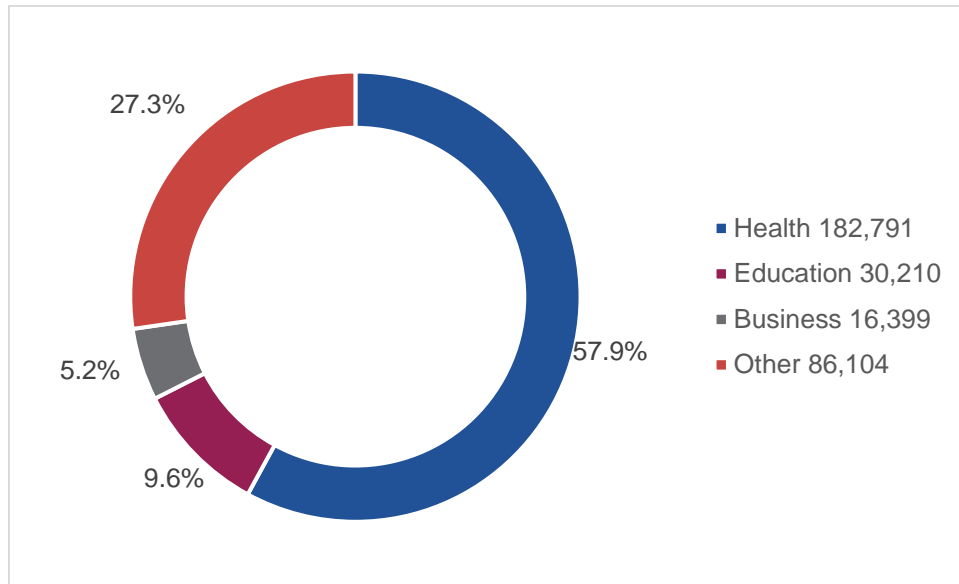
**Figure 15. 2020-2021 Reported SARA and Non-SARA States' OOSLP**



### Reported CIP Code Program Areas

The CIP program area with the largest number of OOSLP was Health Professions and Related Programs (CIP #51), with 182,791 placements, representing 57.9% of all placements reported. Education (CIP #13) had the second highest number of placements with 30,210 placements, representing 9.6% of the total placements, followed by Business (CIP #52) with 16,399 placements, which accounted for 5.2% of reported placements. All other program area CIP codes combined accounted for 27.3% of reported learning placements. Figure 16 provides a graphic representation of the 2021 OOSLP data reported. The proportion of reported OOSLP in CIP program areas has remained consistent since mandatory reporting began in 2018.

**Figure 16. 2021 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**

<b>State/Territory</b>	<b>Outgoing OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent FROM Institutions in State)</b>	<b>Incoming OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent TO State from Institutions in Other SARA States)</b>
Alabama	8,264	2,764
Alaska	82	1,677
Arizona	21,986	8,787
Arkansas	3,510	3,117
Colorado	7,232	5,973
Connecticut	4,324	4,635
Delaware	1,640	3,335
District of Columbia	4,509	4,046
Florida	7,920	20,283
Georgia	4,514	13,924
Hawaii	516	1,149
Idaho	4,757	3,443
Illinois	19,159	14,300
Indiana	19,667	6,090
Iowa	5,613	3,616
Kansas	3,549	3,992
Kentucky	8,798	6,767
Louisiana	1,724	3,635
Maine	3,378	1,842
Maryland	2,277	8,881
Massachusetts	13,160	7,045
Michigan	3,296	7,078
Minnesota	15,136	7,091
Mississippi	2,390	3,391
Missouri	9,958	7,650
Montana	340	2,070
Nebraska	4,015	2,010
Nevada	852	3,013
New Hampshire	5,650	2,247
New Jersey	2,126	12,505
New Mexico	1,952	1,836
New York	13,524	13,527
North Carolina	3,885	10,931
North Dakota	2,376	2,652

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	17,100	9,847
Oklahoma	1,341	2,930
Oregon	2,157	3,256
Pennsylvania	20,482	9,565
Puerto Rico	729	171
Rhode Island	2,860	1,977
South Carolina	4,169	6,059
South Dakota	1,722	1,495
Tennessee	10,094	7,452
Texas	5,793	15,432
U.S. Virgin Islands	0	47
Utah	8,737	4,482
Vermont	704	1,379
Virginia	12,818	8,926
Washington	4,375	7,655
West Virginia	3,291	2,381
Wisconsin	6,872	5,729
Wyoming	181	1,401
<b>Total SARA States</b>	<b>315,504</b>	<b>295,486</b>
<b>Total Non-SARA States</b>		<b>20,018</b>
<b>Total OOSLP Reported</b>	<b>315,504</b>	<b>315,504</b>

### Top Ten Institutions by Size of Reported Outgoing Out-of-State Learning Placements

For 2021, the institutions that reported the most outgoing OOSLP are Grand Canyon University, Purdue University, and University of Cincinnati – Main Campus. This is the first year that OOSLP are reported at the institution level by NC-SARA. The reported OOSLP data for the complete list of SARA-participating institutions is available in the [NC-SARA Data Dashboards](#). The ten institutions reporting the largest OOSLP to NC-SARA in 2021 are reported in Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Top 10 Institutions by Size of Reported Outgoing OOSLP**

Institution Name	State	Sector	Reported
Grand Canyon University	AZ	Private Non-Profit	14,003
Purdue University	IN	Public	8,220
University of Cincinnati - Main Campus	OH	Public	7,998
Rasmussen University	MN	Private For-Profit	6,284
Western Governors University	UT	Private Non-Profit	5,860
Midwestern University	IL	Private Non-Profit	5,727
Liberty University	VA	Private Non-Profit	5,639
Chamberlain University	IL	Private For-Profit	5,532
Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine	PA	Private Non-Profit	4,535
Capella University	MN	Private For-Profit	4,280

## Conclusion

NC-SARA staff acknowledge and thank the staff at reporting institutions for their efforts to report EDEE data and OOSLP for 2021 despite the significant challenges presented by the enduring COVID-19 pandemic and staff shortages on campus operations. We also thank our State Portal Entity (SPE) and regional compact partners who assist in the data collection effort annually by providing additional communications and follow-up with institutions who have questions about data reporting.

Both reported EDEE and OOSLP returned to levels aligned with 2019 data, with expected increases given the continued growth in SARA-participating institutions in 2020 and 2021. In addition, many institutions have continued to offer courses online to provide flexibility to their students and faculty.

NC-SARA continues to improve the transparency of and access to the data collected annually. In 2020 the NC-SARA Data Dashboards debuted and in 2021 institution-level OOSLP data were included in the dashboards for the first time. It is our sincere hope that institutional staff and other stakeholders find ways to use the NC-SARA data to inform their own distance education strategies to better meet the needs of the students they serve.

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 SPE 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)<sup>9</sup>.

**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, which 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.

#### 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

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2022-2023 Data Collection System* <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Downloads/Forms/IPEDSGlossary.pdf>, (Retrieved 8/24/2022.)

classified as distance education.”<sup>10</sup> 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
- Students enrolled in some but not all distance education courses
- Student not enrolled in any distance education courses

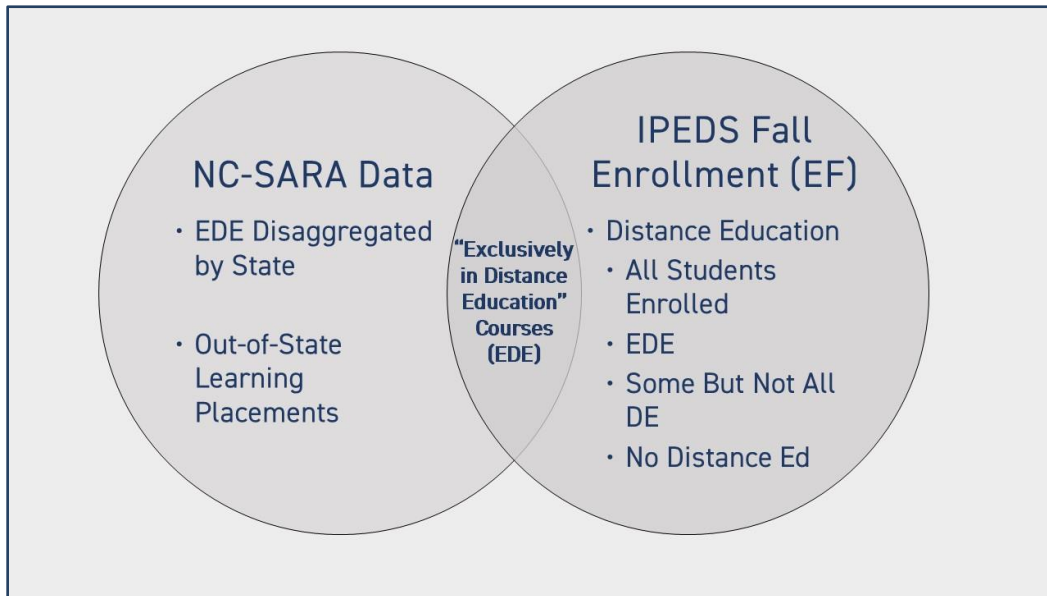
In addition to these fields, the data provided for students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses is disaggregated by where the students are located. These five IPEDS categories include:

- 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 EDEE 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. Figure 19 shows the distance education enrollment data reported to IPEDS and to NC-SARA.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2022-23 Data Collection System* <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary>. (Retrieved 8/24/22.)

**Figure 19. 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.

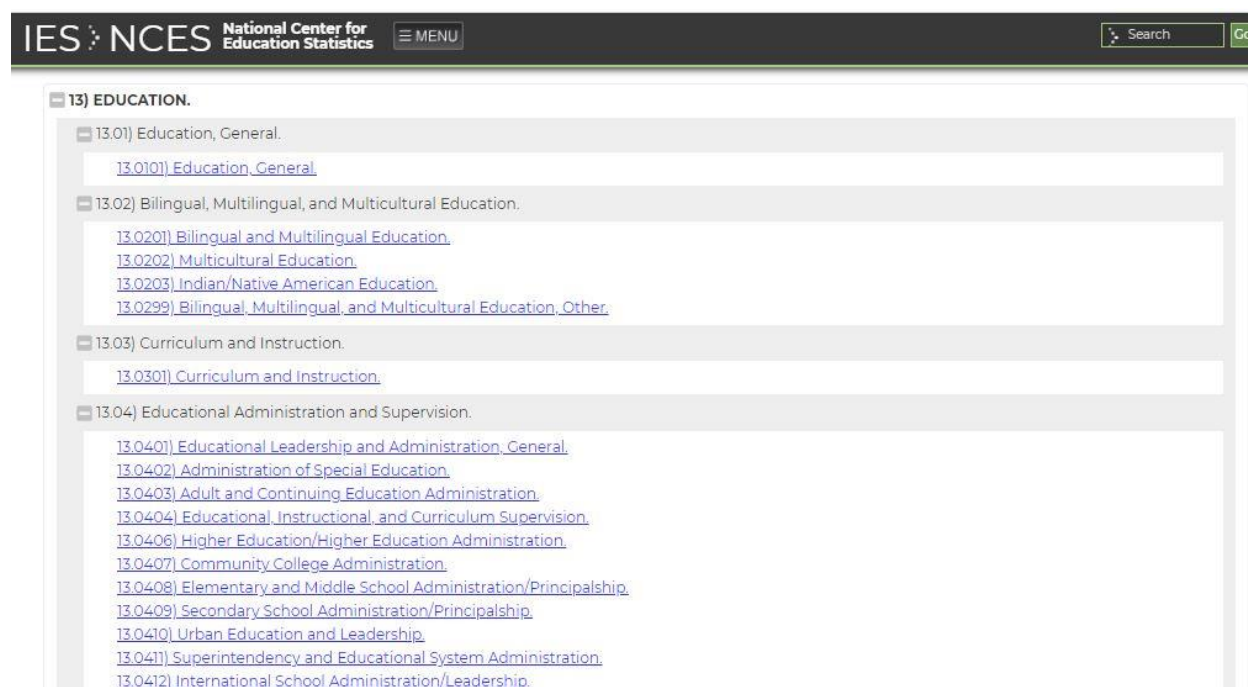
## Appendix B. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)

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<sup>11</sup>. 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 20 below is a screenshot that illustrates the initial portion of the CIP code for program area Education<sup>12</sup>.

**Figure 20. CIP Code Example for Education (CIP #13.0)**



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.

<sup>11</sup> Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES website. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=56>, (Retrieved 8/19/2022.)

<sup>12</sup> 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 8/19/2022.)

Rather, SARA institutions are to report learning placements categorized by the codes already assigned to the related programs.

## Appendix C. References

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