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Greetings, Friends of SARA,

On behalf of the board and staff at the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), I am pleased to share our 2024 Annual Report.

2024 marks the 10-year anniversary of SARA. We have celebrated with many of you during the first half of the year through meetings, dinners, and webinars; we will conclude with a celebration dinner at the upcoming State Portal Entity Annual Conference. As we reflect on the last 10 years, we are filled with gratitude for everyone who has been part of this remarkable journey.

While there was much accomplished this past year, here are just a few specific examples:

• Under leadership from the regional education compacts and regional steering committees, we completed the first cycle of the annual SARA Policy Modification Process and began the second cycle. Five proposals were approved in 2023 and we look forward to the upcoming voting on the 2024 proposals. This new process brings increased transparency and engagement to SARA policy work.

• We awarded an initial round of grants totaling $192,691 to 28 states and territories, providing important funding that has helped support SARA work at the state level.

• We achieved full staffing at NC-SARA, giving us more capacity to lead advisory committees and working groups to better meet the needs of the SARA community. Many of you serve on those committees and we are grateful to be collaborating with you and proud of the strides we have made together!

As we look ahead, we are excited about the coming year and about the next 10 years. NC-SARA will continue to stay focused on and committed to our primary role of serving SARA member states, the regional education compacts, the regional steering committees, and participating institutions.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our SARA community, whose hard work and dedication have shaped SARA into what it is today. I also want to specifically thank our regional education compact partners and our member states for their trust and collaboration, which have been instrumental in the success of SARA.

Sincerely,

Marianne Boeke, Ph.D.
President
NC-SARA
ABOUT SARA AND NC-SARA

SARA
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) is an agreement amongst member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards and streamlines regulations, fees, and approvals for institutions offering interstate distance education programs. More than 2,400 institutions in 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands all voluntarily participate in SARA.

NC-SARA
The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a private non-profit organization [501(c)(3)] that, in partnership with the four regional education compacts, coordinates the implementation of SARA nationally. NC-SARA supports, facilitates, and serves the regional education compacts, the regional steering committees, the SARA State Portal Entities, and SARA-participating institutions.

TOGETHER, NC-SARA AND ITS PARTNERS WORK TO:

Provide broad access to postsecondary education opportunities to students across the country;

Increase the quality and value of higher learning credentials earned via distance education; and

Assure students are well served in a rapidly changing education landscape.
# BY THE NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STATES</strong></th>
<th><strong>INSTITUTIONS</strong></th>
<th><strong>STUDENTS</strong></th>
<th><strong>REGIONAL COMPACTS &amp; REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEES</strong></th>
<th><strong>SARA POLICY MODIFICATION PROPOSALS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>52 states, territories, and districts are voluntary members of SARA</td>
<td><strong>2,400+</strong> institutions participate in SARA</td>
<td><strong>431,635</strong> students from SARA-participating institutions participated in out-of-state learning placements in 2023</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> regional education compacts partner with NC-SARA to advance the mission of expanding students’ access to educational opportunities and ensuring more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance education programs</td>
<td><strong>5</strong> SARA policy modification proposals were approved in October 2023</td>
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<td><strong>100+</strong> SARA State Portal Entity staff administer SARA across the states</td>
<td><strong>48%</strong> of SARA-participating institutions are public; 44% are private non-profit; 7% are private for-profit; &lt;1% are tribal</td>
<td><strong>1,612,617</strong> students attended out-of-state SARA-participating institutions exclusively via distance education through SARA in Fall 2023. This excludes students from CA and other non-SARA members, as well as students attending an institution in-state</td>
<td><strong>65+</strong> people participate in SARA regional steering committees nationally</td>
<td><strong>50</strong> SARA policy modification proposals were submitted by February 2, 2024</td>
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**SUPPORT & RESOURCES**

| **28** states and territories were awarded grants to support their SARA-related work | **4,800+** attendees took advantage of educational events hosted by NC-SARA, including the SPE Annual Conference and eight educational webinars | **28** states and territories were awarded grants to support their SARA-related work | **4,800+** attendees took advantage of educational events hosted by NC-SARA, including the SPE Annual Conference and eight educational webinars |

**BOARD MEMBERS**

| **18** national leaders with expertise in higher education and state policy serve on NC-SARA’s Board | **18** national leaders with expertise in higher education and state policy serve on NC-SARA’s Board | **18** national leaders with expertise in higher education and state policy serve on NC-SARA’s Board | **18** national leaders with expertise in higher education and state policy serve on NC-SARA’s Board |
LEADERSHIP:
NC-SARA’S BOARD & STAFF

NC-SARA’s Board of Directors and staff work collaboratively with leadership from each of the four regional education compacts in support of our shared goal to expand quality distance education opportunities to students across state lines.

NC-SARA’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 18 members of the NC-SARA Board of Directors include the presidents of the four regional education compacts, as well as leaders from states, institutions, accreditors, and other higher education organizations and associations. Together these individuals ensure the varying perspectives of SARA stakeholder groups are represented as the board works to advance the mission and strategic direction of the organization.

The board has formed several engaged committees to respond to the changing landscape of higher education while supporting effective decision-making and leadership within NC-SARA. Learn more about NC-SARA’s board directors and board committees on our website.

NC-SARA’S STAFF

NC-SARA achieved full staffing in 2024 and now has a complete team in place to support the objectives and initiatives of the organization and of the SARA community more broadly. We have selected talented individuals who bring a diverse range of skills, experiences, and perspectives to our organization. With the right people in the right roles, we are able to advance our mission and core work in support of students, institutions, states, and our compact partners. Learn more about the individuals who make up NC-SARAs staff on our website.
The four regional education compacts provide on-the-ground assistance to and oversight of the states in their respective regions. Each compact’s president serves on the NC-SARA Board and each compact has staff devoted to supporting SARA and leading the shared work of SARA implementation. Learn more about the regional education compacts on our website.

Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC)
Susan Heegaard, President
Jenny Parks, Vice President, Policy & Research
Sara Appel, Director, M-SARA

New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE)
Michael Thomas, President and CEO
Charlotte Ochs, Director, SARA

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
Stephen Pruitt, President
Elisa Jaden, Regional SARA Director, Postsecondary Student Access and Success
Jimikea Chatman Wilson, Program Coordinator

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
Demarée Michelau, President
Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research
Molly Hall-Martin, Director, W-SARA, Policy Analysis and Research
Shelley Plutto, Project Manager, W-SARA

Learn about the impactful partners that help make SARA work
NC-SARA’S ADVISORY COMMITTEES

NC-SARA staff facilitate several non-board committees composed of members of the SARA community—including many of you—who represent various stakeholder groups in the SARA community. You can learn more about each committee’s purpose and membership on the NC-SARA website.

We proudly note just a few accomplishments here to give you a sense of the types of work the committees have been focused on:

- The Data Advisory Committee provided input and feedback on the development and pilot of a new data upload process for institutions’ annual data reporting. Full implementation of this process, targeted for 2025, will save institutions time, reduce errors, and streamline the compilation and dissemination of the Annual Data Report that provides valuable information for the SARA community and broader higher education community.

- The Institution Advisory Committee (IAC) provided feedback on proposed revisions to the Institution Application for Participation in SARA and updates to the SARA Portal designed to make administrative and reporting processes more straightforward and efficient for institution staff and SARA State Portal Entities (SPEs). The IAC also provided input on how institution staff could be engaged in the celebration of 10 years of SARA in 2024.

- The SPE Advisory Committee provided input that informed the structure and sessions for the upcoming SPE Annual Conference. They provided feedback on topics to cover in the annual SPE Survey and on several administrative forms that are being updated, and they also provided input that has been critical to the development of SPE onboarding and offboarding processes.

- SARA Portal Advisory Committee members work closely with NC-SARA staff to identify desired enhancements to SARA Portal functionality. With their input a new SPE dashboard was implemented, and a process was created to pause unnecessary renewal notifications to institutions, thereby streamlining communication and workflow for SPEs and institutions.
NC-SARA’S STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

STUDENTS
SARA is focused on serving 21st-century learners by providing easier access to quality distance education. Whether through interstate distance education opportunities or out-of-state learning placements, the consistent set of student consumer protections provided through SARA reassures learners that their SARA-participating institution has met important requirements to help ensure a quality learning experience.

INSTITUTIONS
NC-SARA supports more than 2,400 institutions that participate in SARA through targeted communications, helpful resources, and regular engagement with SARA member states and regional compacts.

HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS
NC-SARA has an active partnership with many higher education agencies and organizations that work on behalf of students, institutions, and states, including several that are focused specifically on distance education.

REGIONAL EDUCATION COMPACTS
Our work with the regional education compacts is essential. MHEC, SREB, NEBHE, and WICHE are important partners in administering SARA in their regions and expanding distance education opportunities across state lines.

STATES
NC-SARA regularly works with state regulators and policymakers responsible for overseeing distance education in postsecondary institutions. Continuing to engage with the states remains a top priority.

ACCREDITORS
NC-SARA recognizes and supports the value that accreditors provide to the public regarding distance education quality assurance. The SARA community relies on institutional and specialized/programmatic accreditors to support quality, and we regularly identify opportunities to seek their partnership and guidance on a variety of initiatives.

STUDENT CONSUMER PROTECTION GROUPS
NC-SARA shares a commitment to student consumer protections that will continue to provide a strong foundation for future collaboration.
Our work is made possible by annual fees paid by institutions that voluntarily participate in SARA. For the first time since NC-SARA was established, there was a modest increase to institution fees beginning July 1, 2024. We have never charged fees to states to be members.

In the fiscal year July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, NC-SARA’s total income was approximately $7.6 million. A high-level overview of how these funds have been used to support the work of SARA and our dedicated partners is provided below.

**REGIONAL EDUCATION COMPACTS**
- Supports the on-the-ground efforts of the four regional education compacts as they administer SARA in their regions and engage with member states and participating institutions. Funding also provides compacts with resources to support SARA-dedicated staff.

**PROGRAM SERVICES, GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE**
- Funds NC-SARA’s engagement with higher education and distance learning stakeholders through conferences and webinars.
- Supports educational programming and training for SARA State Portal Entities and SARA-participating institutions.
- Supports research, data collection, and reporting efforts.
- Funds resource development, such as the State Authorization Guide and Professional Licensure Directory.
- Funds communications activities and general administration of NC-SARA.
- Funds State and Territory Grants.
We look forward to advancing the work of SARA in the coming year on behalf of students. Here are just three of the many projects NC-SARA and our partners will be focusing on:

**INSTITUTIONAL CLOSURES WORKING GROUP**
This group, with members from the NC-SARA Board, the regional education compacts, and SARA State Portal Entities (SPEs), will develop proposals for a structured and comprehensive approach to managing closures of SARA-participating institutions that is strategic, transparent, and focused on protecting the interests of students and their continued education. Three committee subgroups will focus on teach-out plans/agreements, academic records/records retention, and financial arrangements that protect students' investments.

**IT DEVELOPMENTS**
As part of our ongoing efforts to utilize technology to support organizational effectiveness and enhanced service to our partners, NC-SARA’s IT team will be working with stakeholder representatives, including members of the SARA Portal UX Working Group, to transition our application and approval forms as well as other administrative forms from pdfs to fillable electronic forms. These e-forms will integrate with the SARA Portal and automate and simplify processes for all who have a role to play with the forms.

**COST SAVINGS STUDY**
In partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), NC-SARA will update and republish research first shared in 2021 showing the tremendous value and cost savings that accrue for states and institutions by participating in SARA. The result is time and money that can then be redirected to provide additional direct support and opportunities for students.

Please stay connected and watch for opportunities to engage with these and other high-impact initiatives throughout the next year and beyond!