NC-SARA Quarterly August 2026; Announcements, Updates, News and More for SARA-Participating Institutions

Issue 7 **August 2026**

Announcements, Updates, News and More for SARA-Participating Institutions

Final stages of the 2026 SARA Policy Modification Process

The 2026 cycle of the SARA Policy Modification Process (PMP) is winding down. The outcomes of voting on the remaining **32** PMP proposals for this cycle by the regional education compacts via their Regional Steering Committees (RSCs) will be shared via eBlast and posted on the NC-SARA website in early September.

Please also look out for information on registering to watch the NC-SARA Board's fall meeting when the Board of Directors will vote as the final step of the 2026 SARA PMP cycle. By the end of this year NC-SARA will also host a webinar in which all approved PMP proposals for this cycle will be presented, including considerations for impact and the implementation date(s).

All SARA-participating institutions are encouraged to monitor the SARA PMP Portal for proposal developments throughout the cycle. You can find the full cycle

calendar on the Participate - SARA Policy Modification Process webpage. We look forward to your engagement in this important process!

Webinar: NC-SARA Annual Data Report Release

Tuesday, October 6, 2026 – 12 PM MT

This webinar will share the findings of the 2026 NC-SARA Annual Data Report, which represents data collected from more than 2,400 SARA-participating institutions: Fall 2025 exclusively distance education enrollment and calendar year 2025 out-of-state learning placements. Presenters will demonstrate NC-SARA's Data Dashboards and share other learning tools to help SARA-participating institutions glean insights from the data and also comply with this annual SARA requirement.

Click here to Register

External Webinar: What do we need to know about today's online learners?

Friday, August 14, 2026 – 11 AM MT.

United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) is holding a webinar on "What do we need to know about today's online learners?".

Join Dr. Rachel Christeson of NC-SARA on the topic of data surrounding online learners – what research currently exists and what do we still need to know?

Click here to Register

New Feature: NC-SARA Website Sitemap

We are excited to share that thanks to feedback from the SARA SPE Advisory Committee and the Institution Advisory Committee, a comprehensive sitemap is now available on the NC-SARA website! The sitemap provides a clear, bird's-eye view of our entire website structure to help you navigate our resources with ease. You can access the link from any NC-SARA webpage by scrolling to the bottom right-hand corner (screenshot below). This addition is part of our broader effort to optimize the experience of navigating our website. We will share more updates with you soon as we continue to incorporate stakeholder feedback.

SARA and Workforce Pell Statement - *Updated June 2026*

Does SARA cover Workforce Pell Eligible Programs?

The final rules for Workforce Pell programs published in the Federal Register on May 19, 2026 prohibit broad, nationwide, or multilateral reciprocity agreements for distance education. Instead, the U.S. Department of Education is allowing

bilateral agreements made exclusively between the Governors of two specific states; this would be an option for states providing distance education.

The Bottom Line: SARA remains an option for institutional authorization of distance education, but approval for Workforce Pell participation requires a separate, state-to-state process.

Rationale
Because Workforce Pell requires programs to prepare students for high-wage, high-skill, or in demand jobs, a program that meets the specific labor market needs of an institution's home state may not meet the economic needs of the state where a distance education student lives or works. Under the final rules, for a student to use Workforce Pell for a distance education program located in another state, the governors of both states must establish a publicly published bilateral agreement that meets the following conditions:

> **Validation of Local Demand**: The governor in the state in which the student is located (in consultation with their state workforce development board) includes the program's occupation or sector on their state's list of high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand jobs.
>
> **Home State Approval**: The governor of the state where the institution is located confirms that the program meets all standard statutory conditions and quality requirements to be an eligible workforce program.
>
> **Data-Sharing Protocols**: The bilateral agreement includes provisions for data-sharing among the states for purposes of completion and placement rate calculations.

The requirement for a bilateral agreement applies to students enrolling across state lines via distance education. It does not apply to an individual who resides in one state but travels across state lines to attend an eligible workforce program in person.

Furthermore, while SARA provides broad institutional authorization, it does not extend to specific programmatic requirements. In contrast, Workforce Pell agreements are strictly program specific. Consequently, these programs require an independent approval process.

Click here to view the NC-SARA webpage posting on this topic.

Strategic Plan Website

NC-SARA is currently developing our 2027-2030 strategic plan. Updates on the process, including feedback from stakeholder surveys conducted in summer 2025, can be viewed on the new NC-SARA Strategic Plan webpage.

State & Federal Developments

NC-SARA is continuing to monitor policies impacting state authorization at the state and federal level, and sharing updates with states and institutions via emails and webinars. If you have any questions, please contact your SARA State Portal Entity staff.

2026 Calendar of Important SARA Dates

Visit the new Important Dates for the SARA Community webpage to easily find

key important dates, many of which are pertinent to an institution's SARA participation. Look for updates moving forward.

Missed a previous newsletter?

NC-SARA will be posting previous versions of this quarterly newsletter on the SARA Learning Station webpage (scroll to the bottom of the page for past issues).

SARA Learning Station

The SARA Learning Station is your one-stop shop to access NC-SARA's resources for learning about SARA, including Quick-Start Guides, the SARA 101 online course, and other online courses for those who are new to or experienced with SARA. Learning resources for institutions have been developed in collaboration with our regional education compact partners and SARA SPEs. Institutions should always check with their SARA SPE for any state-specific requirements.

NC-SARA Webinars

While we would love for you to join our webinars live, if your schedule doesn't allow it, or if you want to revisit any portion of these programs, please look for the recording and slides for the majority of these programs to be posted on our Webinars webpage soon after each program date.

SARA State Portal Entity (SPE)

You can find the current contact information for your state's SARA SPE(s) on our SPE Contacts webpage.

SARA-Participating Institutions

You can find all actively participating SARA institutions in each SARA member state and territory at any given time in the SARA-Participating Institution Directory.

We welcome your thoughts, ideas, and questions.
Thank you for reading!

NC SARA

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