



SPE Annual Conference 2023 Presenter Bios

Jared Abdirkin

Jared is the Director of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) at the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), beginning in August 2021, primarily focused on SARA as well as serving on the team of Senior Directors. Jared has also focused on awareness and research of institution registration and transcript holds practices, partnering with the other regional compacts and leading presentations and further study on this topic. Prior to joining NEBHE Jared spent a decade in primarily public postsecondary institutions focused on academic affairs, program and college leadership, and admission and retention efforts. Highlights of his work include: maintaining and expanding transfer programs to ensure student readiness and seamless credit acceptance; organizing the movement of undergraduate programs from fully in person to combinations of in-person, hybrid, and remote; and the stabilization, re-organization, and growth of a student services and an academic affairs department. Jared's professional passions are in team development and mentorship, process improvement, and intraorganizational communication. Jared earned a BS degree in Human Development and an MS degree in College Student Personnel from the University of Rhode Island.

Sara Appel

Sara Appel is the director of the Midwestern Regional State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA). Sara develops, implements, manages, and supervises M-SARA, which enables states in the MHEC region to enter into a voluntary reciprocity agreement for the purpose of authorizing colleges and universities to provide online and other distance-based courses and programs to students living in other states. Sara began working for the Compact in January 2016 as the coordinator for the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit. She has been advocating for military-connected students and adult learners in higher education for over 20 years and has experience in grant writing, program management, and policy analysis. Prior to her working for the Compact, Sara was the academic programs manager at the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. She has an undergraduate degree in Secondary Education and a master's degree in History with an emphasis on Research. Both degrees are from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau.

Jennifer Armour

Jennifer has been with the Kansas Board of Regents since 2014 and is an Associate Director for Academic Affairs. In this role, she assists with regulating private and out-of-state entities operating in the state and serves as the SARA State Portal Entity. In addition to these duties, Jennifer provides direction for their regulatory document workflow system and coordinates the annual data collection. She also supports the state's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Program Review Committee and responds to student complaints received by the Board. In 2019 she was appointed to serve as the state representative to the M-SARA Regional Steering Committee and was named chair in February 2023. Jennifer has worked for over twenty years in higher education and came to the Board after working in both public and private institutions in admissions, financial aid, and student leadership development. She received her BA in Business Administration from Kansas Wesleyan University and her MBA from Southwestern College.

Tamara Baysinger

Tamara Baysinger has managed state authorization for the Idaho State Board of Education since 2020. Prior to her work with SARA, Baysinger spent many years as Director for the Idaho Public Charter School Commission. She has also worked in media and private industry, but is most fulfilled by bringing an unexpected level of service to “public service.” Baysinger holds a BS in Elementary Education from George Fox University and an MA in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University. Away from the office, she competes in equestrian endurance racing and spends as much time as possible exploring the wilderness through trail running, whitewater rafting, and alpine skiing.

Marianne Boeke

Dr. Marianne Boeke joined NC-SARA in 2018. As the Vice President, Research and State Partnerships, she oversees all aspects of SARA data collection and reporting, supervises other related research projects, and curates the State Authorization Surveys (The Guide). She provides state and regional compact support and with senior leadership, works on policy-related issues. Prior to joining NC-SARA, Marianne served as a Senior Associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) for 14 years. She worked on a variety of long and short-term projects collaborating with the Aspen Institute, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, National Science Foundation (NSF), Strada Education Network, WICHE, and WCET State Authorization Network (SAN). She has worked at WICHE/WCET and at the Western Governors University (WGU) during the inaugural years; she has also held several institutional administration positions in both Washington, D.C. and Colorado. Marianne has written about and presented at numerous national, regional, and state conferences on a variety of topics including evaluation, qualitative research, accreditation, post-secondary attainment, technology and costing issues in higher education, competence-based education, state authorization (compliance issues), and federal/state regulations. Marianne’s work in state authorization began in 2011 when she co-created the SHEEO survey on state authorization. Marianne holds a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Denver, a master’s degree from The American University, and a bachelor’s degree from San Jose State University.

Heather Bouchey

Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey was appointed to the position in September 2015. She oversees all programmatic Divisions within the Agency of Education including Education Quality, Federal Education Support Programs, Student Pathways, and Student Support Services. As Deputy, Dr. Bouchey is currently responsible for over \$312M in state and federal funding. She earned her Bachelor of Science at Cornell University and Ph.D. at the University of Denver, with postdoctoral training at the University of Michigan. Dr. Bouchey has published extensively in the fields of education and psychology. Before joining state government, she was a psychology professor at the University of Vermont and Associate Provost at Lyndon State College. She values team development and collaborative problem-solving, as well as bringing data to bear on policy solutions. She has also engaged in mentoring roles throughout her career. Dr. Bouchey is currently a Commissioner for the Education Commission of the States and Delegate to the New England Board of Higher Education. She sits on both the Vermont Justice for Children Task Force and the Vermont Advisory Council on Child Poverty. She is also a member of the President’s Council for Cornell Women. Having come from humble economic roots, Dr. Bouchey is deeply committed to ensuring that all students have access to meaningful educational opportunities that improve their chances for life success. Her postsecondary experiences as a first-generation college student profoundly shaped her identity and professional interests. She resides in Montpelier, VT with her family and a recalcitrant, but well-loved, English setter mix.

Rachel Christeson

Dr. Rachel Christeson serves as Director for Research and Data Analysis at NC-SARA, where she provides strategic work on policy research and general data efforts, assisting NC-SARA’s annual data reporting and analysis work. Rachel also supports the collection, analysis, and reporting of qualitative and quantitative data efforts on a wide-range of projects in support of NC-SARA activities. She has extensive experience with data systems development and a strong understanding of database design, implementation, and utilization.

Heather DeLange

Heather DeLange serves as the Director of the Office of Private Postsecondary Education for the Colorado Department of Higher Education. In her role she oversees the private, degree-granting colleges and universities and the religious training institutions that operate in the state. In the vein of state authorization, she also serves as the State Portal Entity for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, of which all Colorado public institutions participate as well as several private colleges/universities and private occupational schools. Ms. DeLange has served in several roles for the Department of Higher Education since 2003. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Colorado State University and was part of the first cohort in the Masters of Arts in Higher Education Administration and Leadership at Adams State University.

Cheryl Dowd

Cheryl Dowd is the Senior Director, State Authorization Network and WCET Policy Innovations. Her primary role is to direct the activities of the State Authorization Network (SAN), including coordination of staff addressing interstate policy and compliance as well as other ancillary compliance issues. Additionally, she serves the overall WCET membership in addressing emerging and special regulatory issues related to digital learning in postsecondary education. Cheryl is a contributing author for a guidebook for understanding the legal basis for State and Federal compliance for activities of postsecondary institutions, State Authorization of Colleges and Universities. Cheryl earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of Richmond, master's degree in Criminal Justice from Bowling Green State University, and bachelor's degree in Political Science from James Madison University.

Lanna Dueck

Lanna Dueck is the Executive Director of the Arizona SARA Council where she leads a 9 member, cross-sector council in the administration of SARA oversight in the state of Arizona. She is also currently serving as an NC-SARA Board member and a member of the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee. Prior to SARA, Lanna served for over 10 years in a multi-campus, online and on-ground higher education institution with oversight over regulatory compliance, accreditation, and curriculum development. Lanna's forte is leveraging regulation and policy into innovative, student-centered solutions. Lanna received her M.Ed. from Northern Arizona University and bases herself and her family in beautiful (and not overly hot) Northern Arizona. When she is not reading regulatory code, she enjoys yoga, travel and being in nature.

Molly E. Hall-Martin

Molly E. Hall-Martin, Ph.D. (Kul Wicasa Oyate/Ihanktonwan Dakota Oyate) serves as Director for the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA) where she manages the implementation, administration, and oversight of W-SARA. Prior to joining WICHE, Molly served as the Director of Student Preparation & Success for the South Dakota Board of Regents, as a staff member at Lower Brule Community College, and as an intern at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). Molly holds a B.A. in American Indian Studies from the University of North Carolina, an M.Ed. in Adult and Higher Education from the University of Oklahoma, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs from the University of Iowa.

Emily M. Jacobson

Emily Jacobson joined NC-SARA as the Director for Student and Institution Support in October 2022. In this role she provides strategic input and direction into policy considerations and stakeholder engagement through serving as the primary NC-SARA liaison to SARA-participating institutions and students. Additionally, she builds and maintains infrastructure of relevant online SARA programs and up to-date resources for students and institutions. Prior to joining NC-SARA, Emily served at a partnering organization as the Director for the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA) at the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Emily was with the compact for more than 8 years and worked with the development, implementation, administration, and oversight of M-SARA. Prior to her work with SARA, Emily held roles in higher education and healthcare geared towards promotion and outreach. She supported student- and faculty-based programs at the institutional level and engaged with clients and clinical systems in the space of business

development and public affairs. Emily holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from Winona State University, a Business Writing Certificate and an Equity and Diversity Certificate from University of Minnesota, along with several additional training certifications. Emily thrives on building relationships, enjoys training and education, and is passionate about making the world a more diverse and equitable place.

Elisa Jaden

Elisa Jaden leads SREB's regional tuition reciprocity programs: the Academic Common Market and the Regional Contract Program. She also serves as director for the SREB region to the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). In this role she follows state and federal higher education regulations and policy related to state authorization and program approval. Elisa works with the S-SARA Regional Steering Committee to inform and clarify policy changes made at the national level. Elisa joined SREB in 2017, bringing more than 15 years experience in recruiting and admissions for postsecondary education, including at Lincoln College of Technology and the Technical College System of Georgia. Elisa holds a bachelor of arts in communications from University of Alabama and a master of science in management and leadership from Western Governors University. She lives in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Aaron Lacey

The Chair of Thompson Coburn LLP's Higher Education Practice, Aaron has over two decades of experience assisting institutions to navigate complex legal and policy matters. He and his colleagues are valued for their deep understanding of the postsecondary regulatory framework, including requirements relating to the federal financial aid programs, accreditation, and state authorization. The host of Thompson Coburn's popular Higher Education Webinar Series, and editorial director of REGucation, the firm's higher education law and policy blog, Aaron is a frequent writer and speaker on topics relating to higher education policy and regulation. He currently resides in Saint Louis, Missouri, with his wife and three kids, the world's greatest dog, and six rowdy chickens.

Angela Lee

Angela Lee has served as the Executive Director for the District of Columbia Higher Education Licensure Commission since 2014. The HELC regulates colleges, universities, trade and professional institutions operating in Washington, D.C. and is designated as the state portal entity for distance education reciprocity for the District. By virtue of this role Lee serves as the Director of the DC State Approving Agency for veteran's education benefits. Lee joined the NC SARA Board in 2020 and serves as the inaugural chair of its Policy Committee. She served two consecutive terms as the elected chair of the SREB SARA Regional Steering Committee, and is currently the immediate past chair. Lee is also a member of the National Association for State Approving Agencies (NASAA), the National Association of Administrator and State Supervisors of Private Schools (NASASPS) and Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR). Angela is a lifetime member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a public service and social action organization, where she has served in local, regional and national roles. She earned her Bachelor of Social Work from Temple University, Philadelphia, PA and a Master of Social Work from Howard University, Washington, DC.

Sam Loftin

Sam Loftin is the Director of Consumer Protection for the Washington Student Achievement Council, where he leads a team responsible for administering the state authorization statute for degree-granting institutions operating in Washington State. Sam is also the SARA State Portal Entity (SPE) for Washington State and a former chair of the W-SARA Regional Steering Committee. Sam previously served as an administrative leader and instructor at two Washington State community colleges. Prior to working in higher ed, Sam was a Legal Aid attorney and advocated for low-income clients seeking assistance with elemental needs such as housing, healthcare, public benefits, and protective orders. Sam has a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Louisiana State University, a Master of Arts in English and a Master of Education in College Student Services from Oregon State University, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Tennessee.

Ross Miller

Ross Miller is Director of State Authorization and Reciprocity at the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. He has been with the Commission since 2012, prior to that he was with the Indiana Commission on Proprietary Education. He is responsible for authorization of private, for-profit and private, non-profit institutions with a physical presence in the State of Indiana. He works directly with the Indiana Board for Proprietary Education in approval of initial institutional authorization, initial degree authorization, and institutional and program renewals at the staff level. In addition, he is responsible for institutional SARA authorization, state reciprocity, Indiana participation in the Midwest Student Exchange Program (MSEP), Commission policy development, and student complaints concerning public, private, for-profit, and private, non-profit institutions. Ross Miller received his B.S. and M.A. from Ball State University.

Russ Poulin

Russ Poulin is the executive director for WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, which has member institutions in every U.S. state and a few other countries. He guides a talented team in supporting effective practices and policies for the postsecondary use of digital learning. He is a sought-after expert and leader regarding federal and state policies and emerging policy uses of educational technologies. Russ was honored to have represented the distance education community on federal negotiated rulemaking committees and subcommittees. He has received recognition for his contributions from the Online Learning Consortium, the Presidents' Forum, Excelsior College, and the National University Technology Network.

Terri Taylor-Straut

Terri Taylor-Straut serves as Senior Director, Educational Programs at NC-SARA where she designs and develops educational programs for participating institutions of higher education, State Portal Entity staff, and others interested in SARA. Terri is also a key member of the NC-SARA Data Team, analyzing reported distance education enrollment and out-of-state learning placement data annually. Terri's affiliation with NC-SARA dates back to 2017, the first year that the NC-SARA Data Report was produced; she has remained the primary analyst of NC-SARA data since that time. Prior to joining NC-SARA, Terri served as an independent consultant to multiple organizations, with a focus on strategic planning, leadership development, workforce training, state authorization, and higher education administration. Experienced as an administrator for distance education initiatives starting in 1996, Terri was the founding Director of CU Online for the University of Colorado system as well as a member of the initial leadership team for the Western Governors University (WGU). Her operational experience includes implementing distance education programs and projects in numerous environments including higher education, corporations, and non-profits. Terri holds a Master of Business Administration from Northeastern University and a bachelor's degree from University of Delaware.

Michael Thomas

Michael Thomas is president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE). He directs NEBHE's policy, research, publishing, programmatic, and fundraising activities. He works extensively in state political and higher education environments with governors, state legislators, K-12 commissioners, state higher education executive officers, and business leaders to expand college readiness, access, and success. Thomas joined NEBHE as the director of policy and research and has also served as senior director and senior vice president. He has a B.A. in philosophy from Brigham Young University and an M.A. in higher education from Teachers College, Columbia University and Harvard University. Thomas also earned a doctorate in education and social policy from Harvard University and an M.B.A. from Boston University.

Jeannie Pauline Yockey-Fine

Jeannie Pauline Yockey-Fine is General Counsel and Vice President for Policy, Regulatory Affairs, and Administration at NC-SARA. She provides strategic advice, risk analysis, and counsel to NC-SARA's board, staff, and the organization. Jeannie analyzes federal and state regulations, SARA policies, and professional licensure issues and their impacts on SARA institutions, and related policy conversations. Jeannie was a Senior State Regulatory Services Specialist with Hogan Lovells, US, LLP prior to joining NC-SARA. During 2014-2018 she was State Regulatory Services Advisor with Cooley, LLP and was Senior Manager, State Regulatory

Services at Dow Lohnes from 2011-2013. She assisted her clients with state-related authorizations, NC-SARA applications and related requirements, and state-level professional licensure issues. Previously she was Licensure Manager/Education Policy Analyst at the Florida Department of Education's Commission for Independent Education overseeing the unit responsible for licensing nearly 1,000 institutions. Jeannie also has a background in litigation, and has practiced criminal, family, and corporate law. Jeannie Pauline Yockey-Fine has given numerous presentations and workshops related to state authorization, professional licensure and regulatory/compliance issues. She has also co-authored papers related to the same. Jeannie holds B.S. in Journalism and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Kansas.