Minutes of the W-SARA Steering Committee
Wednesday, April 29, 2015, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Conference Call

Steering Committee Members Present
Marcia Bankirer (CO), president, Denver School of Nursing
Toni Larson (CO), executive director, Independent Higher Education of Colorado
Sona Andrews (OR), provost and vice president for academic affairs, Portland State University
Jessica Brubaker (MT), staff attorney, Montana University System (MUS)
Jane Sherman (WA), vice provost for academic policy and evaluation, Washington State University
Katie Boeke (SD), Academic Affairs Specialist with the South Dakota Board of Regents.
Traci Bent (ID), Chief Planning and Policy Officer, Idaho State Board of Education
Joann Rieselbach (AK), School Relations Manager, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Alison Combs in place of Crystal Abba, (NV) Nevada System of Higher Education
Marcia Bankirer (CO), President, Denver School of Nursing
Don Bennet (WA), Deputy Director, Washington Student Achievement Council
Lanna Dueck (AZ), Associate Dean of Institutional Integrity at Rio Salado College
Laura Palmer Noone (AZ) Board Member, Lumina Foundation

Steering Committee Members Absent
Carol Liu (CA), Senator, California State Senate
Juan Baez-Arevalo* (OR), Director of Private Post-Secondary Education for Oregon’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission

WICHE Staff Present
David Longanecker, President
John Lopez, director WICHE Regional SARA

W-SARA Staff Present
Michelle Perez-Robles, Office Manager
Jennifer Shanika, Administrative Manager

Welcome
John Lopez called the meeting to order and welcomed the committee members. Toni Larson announced she will be retiring June 30th. Michelle Perez-Robles will have her last day on May 11th. Jennifer Shanika will be stepping into her role.

*Votes submitted via email
John Lopez welcomed and introduced the new committee members:
- South Dakota: Katie Boehnke, the Academic Affairs Specialist with the South Dakota Board of Regents.
- Arizona: Lanna Dueck, Associate Dean of Institutional Integrity at Rio Salado College.
- Oregon: Juan Baez-Arevalo, Director of Private Post-Secondary Education for Oregon’s Higher Ed Coordinating Commission.

**Update: California, Hawaii, and Utah**
The majority of states in the WICHE region have passed legislation or are already members. California, Hawaii, and Utah are not SARA states. Utah and Hawaii have passed legislation and are working on creating internal systems and identifying the most appropriate portal agency before they submit applications. California has been challenging. A bill was introduced this session, but has been delayed in order to deal with concerns raised by members of an opposing group related to consumer protection. The bill will be revisited the beginning of next year.

**Committee Business**

**New Mexico**:
Lopez provided background on New Mexico stating they are progressing quickly and the bill was passed and signed by the governor in two months. The New Mexico Department of Higher Education will be the portal agency. Lopez stated the New Mexico application was conditionally approved pending further clarification regarding closure of institutions and the lack of language pertaining to catastrophic events. Lopez received an updated application today with the required language and has recommended New Mexico’s application for full approval.

Jessica Brubaker inquired if there was a draft of the proposed rules, does it still need to go before the state agency in New Mexico. Lopez responded that because New Mexico does not have a board of higher education, Secretary Damron approves the proposed changes.

Laura Palmer Noone motioned for approval for the application of New Mexico. Marcia Bankirer seconded the motion. A vote was called with unanimous approval to submit to the WICHE board for final approval.

Motion to approve the application for New Mexico was passed.

**Wyoming**:
Lopez stated that a lot of work was done to ensure that a complaint system was in place between the Wyoming Department of Education and the community colleges and other institutions within the state. Legislation was introduced in January, signed by the governor in February and work on the application started in February. The Wyoming Community College Commission is the state portal agency their rules are very similar to SARA policies aside from their recommended renewal period. Wyoming wanted one annual renewal date of July 1st which differs from the SARA renewal terms which is a rolling renewal based on the membership date of the institution. Wyoming has amended the language to reflect SARA rules and thus everything went forth and was signed by the executive director of the portal agency. No issues exist with the application.

Toni Larson moved for the acceptance of the State of Wyoming application for SARA participation. Joann Rieselbach seconded the motion. A vote was called with unanimous approval to pass the application to the WICHE board for final approval.

Motion to approve the application for Wyoming was passed.
SARA News

States, institutions and revenue:
Currently, there are 21 states with the most recent being Vermont which was approved on April 17th. Of those 21, there are 19 portal agencies that are functioning. Ohio and Vermont are the only two that have not yet approved an institution. Many of those 19 are relatively new and only recently up and running in terms of accepting applications. Arizona is one of those. We are at approximately 249 institutions. The current fee revenue is $896,000 to date.

Applications pending:
- Arkansas: Application submitted and pending - no estimation of date.
- Maryland: There is progress being made in Maryland
- Texas: A bill was introduced in Texas
- Oklahoma: Progress being made
- Iowa: Discussions with Iowa have been difficult. However Iowa is now moving towards full acceptance and will be on board soon.
- New York: There is a lot of support in New York with the exception of the agency that would be the portal agency.
- Hawaii: The institutions support the initiative but there has been very little oversight. Language was created a year ago allowing for new oversight in the participation in SARA and the creation of an oversight agency.
- Utah: Institutions, both public and private, have been very supportive but no strong interest from the agency that would be the state portal agency overseeing the process.

SARA anticipates 25 -28 states by end of summer, and optimistic for 32-35 states by the end of year.

Major Topics at the Upcoming NC-SARA Board Meeting in Boston, May 7, 2015:
- How best to bring in tribal institutions has been a continuing conversation: SARA recently received communication from legal counsel. An update will be provided on this topic at the next committee meeting.
- Modifications for SARA policies and standards: There has been a lot of discussion and desire to remain strong to the core principles and not change any major parts or pieces of SARA until experience and time has made sense to do so. Discussion regarding how to make changes to policies and standards, best vehicle, and mechanism for change will take place at the May board meeting.
- The findings of the first round of mandatory reporting of appealed complaints to portal agencies will be reported to the board. April 1-22 was the reporting period for institutions to report the number of student complaints that have been appealed and unresolved at the institutional level.
- Department of Education’s list of institutions that have been placed on heightened cash monitoring:
  - Of the 234 SARA institutions at the time of the report, eight are on this list and are being followed up on to make sure we avoid any questions about the quality of SARA institutions.
  - Lana Dueck inquired if we will be adding any questions regarding heightened cash monitoring to the applications. John Lopez responded that as of now we have not but there is nothing to preclude the portal agencies from taking this into account as a consideration. John mentioned he will speak with Marshall and follow up with this.
Joann Rieselbach mentioned that an institution in Alaska is on the heightened cash monitoring list and they anticipated this. During the application process Alaska asked for more recent financial scores and mid-year financials and took those into consideration. The numbers were encouraging and the institution expected to be pulled out of the HTCM status by next year. As “Conditional Approval” was not in existence at that point but had it been that might have applied in this situation.

- Renewal policy: 19 states are up for renewal in September. SARA developed a renewal policy, process, and application and this will be shared with the board on May 7th in Boston. One of the cornerstones of that policy is that institutions are given a 90-day renewal date notice. SARA will begin sending out those renewal notices.
- The WICHE Commission meeting is in Alaska on May 11-12, 2015. It is expected that New Mexico and Wyoming will be approved as the next two SARA states.

Lopez provided a brief summary of the status of the SREB states. Mary Larson, the director of S-SARA is a great contact for more information. Because the SREB region has its own SREB Electronic Regional Reciprocity Agreement (SECCRA) in place, there is hesitancy to move ahead with SARA. Currently, there is a two year window to get eight states to move to SARA before winding down SECCRA. There is activity in Mississippi and Alabama. Larson anticipates eight states by the end of this year.

- North Carolina: There is some progress.
- Florida: Progress will be slow.
- Texas: Some progress. This is a state similar to Arizona; many systems without a strong governing board.
- New Jersey: In progress.
- Massachusetts and Connecticut will be the most difficult in the NEBHE region.
- Wisconsin: It is unlikely they will join SARA anytime soon.
- Maryland: There is progress and legislation has been introduced.

Preview of July 29th Meeting at the Hotel Teatro in Downtown Denver, Colorado

- Appreciation dinner on July 28
- Meeting on July 29th
- More details to follow

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.