Minutes of the W-SARA Steering Committee  
Wednesday, July 30, 2014 ~ 2 - 3:00 p.m.  
Conference Call

Steering Committee members present:
Marcia Bankirer (CO), president, Denver School of Nursing
Don Bennett (WA), deputy director, Washington Student Achievement Council
Traci Bent (ID), chief planning and policy officer, Idaho State Board of Education
Jessica Brubaker (MT), staff attorney, Montana University System
Heather DeLange (CO), academic policy officer, Colorado Department of Higher Education
Toni Larson (CO), executive director, Independent Higher Education of Colorado
Laura Palmer Noone (AZ), board member, Lumina Foundation
Mary Ellen Petrisko (CA), president, WASC Senior College and University Commission
Joann Rieselbach (AK), school relations manager, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Jane Sherman (WA), vice provost for academic policy and evaluation, Washington State University

Steering Committee members absent:
Crystal Abba (NV), vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education
Sona Karentz Andrews (OR), provost and vice president for academic affairs, Portland State University
Chris Bustamante (AZ), president, Rio Salado College
Carol Liu (CA), senator, California State Senate

WICHE staff present:
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services

W-SARA and NC-SARA staff present:
Alan Contreras, SARA coordinator
John Lopez, W-SARA director
Michelle Perez-Robles, office manager

Welcome and introductions:
Jere Mock called the meeting to order and introduced new W-SARA director, John Lopez to committee members.
Lopez introduced new Steering Committee member, Joann Rieselbach (AK) to committee members.
Review of Montana State application packet:

Legal Authority: Montana Code Annotated §§ 20-25-801 and 20-25-107

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education is the designated SARA portal agency. Montana’s authority for the Board of Regents to join SARA is established by its legislative approval, via Montana Code Annotated §§ 20-25-801 and 20-25-107 to join WICHE membership and the board’s authority to regulate institutions awarding degrees.

The Board of Regents voted to enter into the WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (W-SARA) at its May 23, 2014 meeting.

After a brief discussion, the committee voted to approve Montana’s application to participate in SARA. Marcia Bankirer moved to approve Montana. Laura Palmer Noone moved to second the motion. The motion was approved with all members present approving the Montana application into SARA. Jessica Brubaker, J.D. (MT) did not vote.

The Montana application will move forward for approval from the WICHE Commissioners on August 13.

Forthcoming Colorado applications:

Lopez and Alan Contreras provided updates on Arizona, South Dakota, and Oregon’s progress towards becoming SARA states.

Arizona: Arizona is currently working on a guide and process for complaint resolution. Lopez and Contreras are scheduled to participate in a call in August with Arizona to discuss their intergovernmental agreement, as well as answer questions regarding the application process.

Oregon: Lopez and Contreras are scheduled to attend a meeting in Oregon on Sept. 11 to answer questions for the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission regarding SARA. There will not be a vote on SARA membership at that time, but a staff recommendation will be made. Contreras did not foresee any issues with the commission approving Oregon’s participation in SARA. Contreras stated future concerns for Oregon are gathering data regarding service levels, programs and services offered to their students by out-of-state providers, and intended usefulness/relevance of data.

South Dakota: Lopez stated South Dakota is moving along in the process and discussions regarding application date and how tribal institutions will be handled are occurring. Contreras added that participation in SARA by tribal colleges may be resolved with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as early as October.

Action item: Lopez will provide updates to committee members regarding developments on this issue leading up to the October 15 deadline.
Review 2014 timeline:
Montana’s application will be on the agenda for the August 13 WICHE Commission teleconference. The third state application deadline is October 15, with the Steering Committee meeting on October 20.

Fall preparation for legislative sessions:
Lopez will focus on preparing for the upcoming legislative session as well as to encourage institutions in the five states that have been approved to apply to participate in the SARA initiative.

Strategic plan:
Lopez discussed key elements in a proposed strategic plan that include preparing for the upcoming legislative sessions and encouraging institutions in approved W-SARA states to apply to SARA. The goal is to utilize the strategic plan as a formal document serving as a high-level roadmap for future success to include assisting California, Wyoming, and New Mexico as they prepare to introduce bills in the 2015 legislative sessions.

State updates:
Heather DeLange, from the Colorado SARA State Portal Agency (SPA) provided an update stating six institutional applications are pending approval and that the agency is working on FAQs for their website detailing the process for institutions applying to SARA. The Colorado SPA is encountering issues surrounding institutions without OPEID numbers that do not participate in Title IV, but are working to resolve this issue.
Joann Rieselbach from the Alaska SARA State Portal Agency (SPA) updated the board on the progress of Alaska. The agency is reaching out to institutions by scheduling an informational presentation focusing on time frames and deadlines, the application process and other SARA related details. This presentation is scheduled for Aug 7. Alaska anticipates having institutions participating in SARA sometime in September.
Contreras provided regional updates. Virginia will join the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) by the end of 2014. Vermont is expected to join the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) by the end of 2014. Other states that may join SARA by the end of 2014 or early 2015 are Iowa, Ohio, Louisiana, Arkansas, Minnesota, D.C., North Carolina, Nebraska, and Kansas.

NC-SARA Board:
The proposed dates for the fall meeting are tentatively set for the week of Nov. 3-7.

Lumina Grant Update:
Jere Mock provided an update on grants from Lumina and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations. Mock stated the second year funding from Lumina has been received in the amount of $720,600, bringing the total support from Lumina to $3 million. The Gates Foundation will provide support mid-year that will help sustain the initiative. WICHE continues to serve as fiscal agent for the SARA initiative.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:37 p.m. MT