SARA Overview
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What’s the problem?

• States and territories regulate higher education within their borders, with varying requirements for out-of-state institutions that want to do business in the state.

• At present there is no alternative to each institution separately pursuing any needed approvals (state authorization) in each state and territory where it enrolls students.

• Consequently, thousands of institutions are required to contact and work through as many as 54 states and territories, and, sometimes, with multiple regulatory agencies in those states.

• That process is inefficient, costly, and not effective in supporting access to high quality distance education throughout the country.
Goals

SARA establishes a state-level reciprocity process that will support the nation in its efforts to increase the educational attainment of its people by making state authorization:

- more efficient, effective, and uniform in regard to necessary and reasonable standards of practice that could span states;
- less costly for states and institutions and, thereby, the students they serve.
Who has been involved in crafting SARA?

SARA was developed with input from:

• A broad advisory committee.
• Regional higher education compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE).
• State regulators.
• State Higher Education Executive Officers.
• Accrediting organizations.
• U.S. Department of Education.
• Institutional leaders representing all sectors of higher education.
The evolution of SARA

- *Lumina Foundation* provided funding to the *Presidents’ Forum*, working with the *Council of State Governments (CSG)*, to develop a *Model State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)* that states could adopt to acknowledge other states’ work and decisions in regard to institutional authorization.

- Building upon the work of the *Presidents’ Forum* and *CSG*, the *Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)* advanced “W-SARA” in collaboration with the regional higher education compacts (SREB, MHEC, NEBHE).

- Combining all prior efforts and input from all stakeholders, the *Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education*, founded by SHEEO and APLU, and chaired by former Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, issued its report: “Advancing Access through Regulatory Reform: Findings, Principles, and Recommendations for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).”
Essential principles of SARA

- Voluntary for states and institutions.
- Requires states to approve their in-state institutions for SARA participation (based upon institutional accreditation and financial stability) and resolve student complaints.
- Shifts oversight from “imports” to “exports.”
- Open to degree-granting postsecondary institutions from all sectors: public colleges and universities; independent institutions, both non-profit and for-profit.
- Sets forth a reasonable, uniform set of triggers of “physical presence”.
- Preserves state approval and oversight of on-the-ground campuses.
• National Council for SARA (NC-SARA)
  • Purposes – coordination, appeals, financing, data.
  • 22 members – regional compact presidents, accreditors, regulators, state government, SHEEO, various higher education sectors.
  • First meeting held November 1, 2013.
    • Consideration of by-laws.
    • Established fees for institutional participation in SARA.
    • Reviewed and endorsed regional SARA documents.
What’s next?

- WICHE Regional Compact (www.wiche.edu/sara)
  - Adopted SARA
  - Hired staff
  - Invited states to participate – December 10, 2013 Regional Forum
  - Review and approve states that meet SARA criteria.
    - April 15, July 15, October 15, 2014
  - Administer SARA (2014 and following).
What do states need to do?

- Determine if the state wants to participate.
- Make any needed changes to statutes or rules.
- Identify agency(ies) to solicit and approve participation of in-state institutions and resolve complaints.
- Identify lead agency.
- Develop and submit SARA application to the state’s regional compact.