State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement: Ushering in a new era of interstate reciprocity across the U.S.

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State Authorization: There is a Better Way

- Today, each institution must separately seek state authorization, or get assurance that authorization is not required, in each state and territory in which it serves students via distance education.

- Costs of compliance can be high for institutions serving students in multiple states.

- A more rational approach: create a voluntary, nationwide reciprocity framework using commonly and consistently applied processes, standards, and fees.
The Road toward Reciprocity

- The Western Academic Leadership Forum and the WICHE Commission encouraged WICHE staff to pursue regional reciprocity for state authorization.

- WICHE formed a regional steering committee in early 2012 to draft a regional reciprocity agreement.

- WICHE built upon the earlier work on reciprocity by the Presidents’ Forum and the Council of State Governments.

- The other three regional compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB) took part in the WICHE process and are adopting the SARA agreement.
More recently, the National Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Education was formed and after much deliberation, essentially adopted the same approach.

The Commission’s report was released on April 11: “Advancing Access through Regulatory Reform”

It is a consensus document and will guide the reciprocity agreement’s implementation.

www.wiche.edu/sara or www.sheeo.org
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement: Key Elements

- Participation by states, territories, and institutions is entirely voluntary. Institutions that opt not to participate can either chose not to provide education beyond their home state or seek authorization in each of the states in which they wish to offer educational services.

- SARA shifts oversight from the state in which distance learning is being offered to the home state of the institution offering the instruction.
Federal Responsibilities
The U.S. Dept. of Education has responsibility for assessing the financial viability of educational providers.

Accreditors Responsibilities
Accrediting agencies assure the quality of institutions’ distance educational offerings. Institutions must be accredited to participate in SARA.

State Responsibilities
- A participating state (the home state) will have responsibility for authorizing accredited institutions within its borders that claim the state as its principal location for accreditation purposes.
- This includes authorizing all distance learning activities provided to students in other states (defined in SARA as host states).
- The home state has responsibility for consumer protection, complaint resolution, and ongoing oversight of authorized institutions.
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement: Key Elements

- The agreement serves all interested states and territories and will accommodate all sectors of higher education: public, independent nonprofit, and for-profit

- The four regional higher education compacts will:
  - inform states of the requirements for joining SARA
  - Form regional steering committees to accept, or reject, states into the reciprocal agreement
  - develop processes for states to appeal a respective compact’s decision
  - review on at least a biennial basis each state’s participation to ensure they meet all of the criteria for inclusion
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement: Timeline

- April 16 – 17 National Symposium on implementation
- Regional compacts have a grant proposal pending at Lumina Foundation, anticipate a decision in May/June
- If funding is secured, the regional compacts will begin implementation in July and hold regional forums on implementation in Sept./Oct.
- A national coordinating board will be formed by Sept. 30, to ensure inter-regional reciprocity and establish a fee structure to sustain SARA. Fees will likely range from $2,000 - $6,000 annually
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement:

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