Ushering in a New Era of Interstate State Authorization Reciprocity Across the U.S.

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Why is Reciprocity Needed?

• Previously each institution offering distance education was required to separately pursue any needed approvals (state authorization) in each state and territory where it enrolled students.

• Costs of compliance can be high: institutions serving students in several states have had to work through multiple regulatory agencies and pay multiple fees.

• SARA creates a voluntary reciprocity framework using consistently applied processes, standards and fees.
The Road towards 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.
- We built upon the earlier work on reciprocity by the Presidents’ Forum and the Council of State Governments, the National Commission formed by SHEEO and APLU.
- The other three regional compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, and SREB) took part in the WICHE process and are adopting SARA agreements.
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.
- Institutional leaders representing all sectors of higher education.
- U.S. Department of Education.
• Participation by states, territories, and institutions is entirely voluntary. Institutions that opt not to participate can either choose not to provide education beyond their home state or seek authorization in each of the states in which they wish to offer educational services.

• Open to degree-granting postsecondary institutions from all sectors: public colleges and universities; independent institutions, both non-profit and for-profit.

• Preserves state approval and oversight of on-the-ground campuses.
Within the WICHE Region

- WICHE Regional Compact (www.wiche.edu/sara)
  - Adopted SARA; obtained Lumina Foundation funding
  - Hired staff; Rhonda Epper is the W-SARA director
  - Invited states to participate at a 12/10/13 Regional Forum
  - The W-SARA Steering Committee on 4/21/14 reviewed and approved five state applications (AK, CO, ID, WA, and one with a conditional approval: NV). The WICHE WICHE Commission will vote on their recommendations on 5/13/14
What Do States Need to Do?

- Determine if the state wants to participate
- Make any needed changes to statutes or rules
- Identify a lead agency to solicit and approve participation of in-state institutions and resolve complaints
- Develop and submit an application to WICHE SARA
- Future 2014 application deadlines: July 15, Oct. 15
What Do Institutions Need to Do?

• Determine if the institution wants to participate
• Agree to comply with the Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education adopted by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC guidelines)
• Apply to the state SARA portal agency (must be a degree granting institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting association)
• Agree to provide data necessary to monitor SARA activities
• Pay annual fees based on FTE enrollment ranging from $2,000 - $6,000 to NC-SARA
National Council for SARA (NC-SARA)

- Purposes – coordination, appeals, financing, data
- 21 members – regional compact presidents, accreditors, regulators, state government, SHEEO, various higher education sectors
- First meeting held November 1, 2013
  - Established fees for institutional participation in SARA
  - Reviewed and endorsed regional SARA documents
  - Approved a common application for states, institutions
- Next meeting: May 14, 2014. WICHE region members: Chris Bustamante (AZ), Dianne Harrison, (CA), David Longanecker, (WICHE)
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education – State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

A voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of distance education

For more information:  www.wiche.edu/sara

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