



# MEDIA RELEASE

[www.nc-sara.org](http://www.nc-sara.org)

3005 Center Green Drive, Suite 130, Boulder, CO 80301

Contact: Lisa Greco  
NC-SARA Communications Coordinator  
[lgreco@nc-sara.org](mailto:lgreco@nc-sara.org)  
p 303.541.0267

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## NC-SARA Board Meets on Key Decisions

Boulder, Colorado – Board members of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) assembled for their second meeting May 14 in Chicago to decide on a number of key action items essential to the initiative's continued development. These 21 leaders from various sectors of higher education and government help guide the activities of SARA, a nationwide initiative of states designed to make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and make it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. SARA is funded by a \$2.3 million grant from Lumina Foundation.

"The SARA initiative has made significant progress since the first NC-SARA meeting on November 1, 2013," noted Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. Hill reported that seven states (Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Nevada, North Dakota and Washington) have joined SARA. Additionally, he stated SARA-enabling legislation has passed in 16 states, legislation is pending in seven more and five states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation.

The NC-SARA board reviewed and approved a recommendation from staff to establish and operate NC-SARA under the provisions of federal IRC 501(c)(3) and have the organization incorporated and operated under the Colorado Revised Nonprofit Corporation Act, subject to final approval by the Executive Committee after a few technical issues are resolved. EducationCounsel, LLC, a Washington, DC based law firm, provided advice and counsel on the question of appropriate legal status for NC-SARA.

The board also adopted bylaws and elected the following officers and members to serve, along with board chair Paul Lingenfelter, as NC-SARA's Executive Committee:

**Vice Chair:** M. Peter McPherson, President, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

**Treasurer:** Larry Isaak, President, Midwestern Higher Education Compact

**At-large members of the Executive Committee:**

Paul Shiffman, Chief Executive Officer, Presidents' Forum

Michael Thomas, President, New England Board of Higher Education

Leroy Wade, Deputy Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education

Belle Wheelan, President, Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The final action item addressed by the board involved two issues that have been previously discussed but not yet established in policy: 1) the collection of data from institutions that participate in SARA, and 2) the reporting of complaints lodged against SARA institutions for activities carried out under SARA provisions. Based on recommendations from SARA staff members and an advisory committee the board directed the staff to move ahead with plans for implementing these new policies, subject to final approval of the board.

The SARA agreements are overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and are being implemented by the four regional higher education interstate compacts: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). States that wish to join SARA must demonstrate to their regional SARA compact that they have an effective process for authorizing institutions that want to participate in the reciprocity agreement. Once a state joins SARA, accredited degree-granting institutions in the state that offer distance

education courses can seek approval to participate in SARA from their state. When approved, these institutions will be able to operate in other participating SARA states without seeking independent authorization. Participating in SARA is entirely voluntary for institutions, as it is for states.

The NC-SARA board is a nationwide coordinating entity that assures the four regional compacts establish uniform standards and procedures for accepting and monitoring states participating in each of their respective regional reciprocity agreements. The NC-SARA board includes the chief executive officers of the four regional compacts, four leaders from the National Commission and Presidents' Forum/Council of State Governments efforts, and additional members to assure that the perspectives of all stakeholder groups will be represented. A list of members is available at: <http://www.nc-sara.org/about/national-council>

## **About NC-SARA, MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE and Lumina Foundation**

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education. The initiative is administered by the country's four regional higher education compacts (MHEC, NEBHE, SREB and WICHE) and overseen by NC-SARA. States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states and better resolution of student complaints. [www.nc-sara.org](http://www.nc-sara.org)

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact is a nonprofit regional organization assisting Midwestern states in advancing higher education through interstate cooperation and resource sharing. MHEC seeks to fill its interstate mission through programs that expand postsecondary opportunity and success; promote innovative approaches to improving institutional and system productivity; improve affordability to students and states; and enhance connectivity between higher education and the workplace. Member states are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. [www.mhec.org](http://www.mhec.org)

The New England Board of Higher Education promotes greater educational opportunities and services for the residents of New England. It works across the six New England states to engage and assist leaders in the assessment, development, and implementation of sound education practices and policies of regional significance; promote policies, programs, and best practices to assist the states in implementing important regional higher education policies; promote regional cooperation and programs that encourage the efficient use and sharing of educational resources; and provide leadership to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the economic well-being of New England. [www.nebhe.org](http://www.nebhe.org)

The Southern Regional Education Board works with 16 member states to improve public education at every level, from pre-K through Ph.D. SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Atlanta. SREB states currently participate in SREB's Electronic Campus Regional Reciprocity Agreement, and SREB is working closely with SARA to expand reciprocity nationwide. Member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org)

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and its 16 members work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life. WICHE's members include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate). [www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025. For more information logon to [www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org).