



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Hampshire joins SARA

Boulder, Colorado – New Hampshire has been approved by the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) as the first state in the region to join the New England State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (N-SARA). This state joins 17 others (Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia) as members of SARA. SARA is a nationwide initiative of states that will 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. The effort is funded by a \$3 million grant from Lumina Foundation, \$200,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and fees paid by institutions.

“SARA is bringing quality assurance and consumer protection in step with the fast-moving world of online learning,” said NEBHE President and CEO Michael K. Thomas. “New Hampshire will be a critical part of an expanding network of proactive states that are working to benefit students and to strengthen institutions’ online program provision.”

New Hampshire’s Higher Education Commission will serve as the state “portal” agency for SARA. The 22-member group, headed by Division Director Edward R. MacKay, currently serves 26 institutions and provides educational leadership and services which promote equal educational opportunities and quality practices and programs that enable New Hampshire residents to become fully productive members of society.

“There has been overwhelming support for the concept of SARA from New Hampshire’s college and university presidents and from the state’s executive branch,” said MacKay. “We all look forward to making New Hampshire’s high-quality higher education offerings available to more learners, and enabling the efficiencies of the SARA partnership.”

New Hampshire has targeted January 15, 2015, as the effective operational date when the state will begin accepting institutional applications for participation in SARA.

“Kudos to New Hampshire for being the first New England state to adopt this innovation to create greater access for students,” said Ed Klonoski, president of Charter Oak State College in Connecticut and a member of NEBHE’s SARA Regional Steering Committee.

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). Once a state joins SARA, accredited degree-granting institutions in the state that offer distance education courses can seek approval from their state to participate in SARA. When approved, these institutions will be able to operate in other participating SARA states without seeking independent authorization from those states. Participating in SARA is entirely voluntary for institutions, as it is for states.

“It is wonderful to have New Hampshire join SARA as the first member state in the New England region and we look forward to having their institutions participate in the initiative. Having 18 member states illustrates the importance of SARA in providing a streamlined alternative to the current state-by-state approach of authorization. We are excited about this progress and continued advancements in all four higher education compact regions,” explained Marshall A. Hill, executive director of NC-SARA.

As of December 15, 2014, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in an additional seven states and three states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation in SARA.

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

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

The New England Board of Higher Education promotes greater educational opportunities and services for the residents of New England. It works across 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

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

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. 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 log on to www.luminafoundation.org.