

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

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State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Update
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
December 15, 2016

DESCRIPTION

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is the product of a nationwide effort to create a system of reciprocity among state regulatory agencies for the delivery of distance education. This item is intended to update the Coordinating Board concerning this initiative.

Background

The fundamental goal of SARA is to provide a national solution to barriers created by states having different regulations regarding oversight of distance education institutions and programs. These regulations resulted in varying levels of student protection and quality assurance. Representatives from the Council of State Governments, the Presidents' Forum, the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education, and the four regional compact organizations worked together to establish the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. The purpose of NC-SARA is to ensure the SARA initiative offers a national solution rather than separate regional solutions.

SARA Nationally

Nationally, the SARA initiative has seen exceptional success in participation by states and institutions. As of November 2016, 44 states are approved through NC-SARA and well over 1,000 institutions are approved by those states to participate. When looked at by sector, approximately two-thirds of the approved institutions are public, 29 percent are private non-profit, and four percent are for-profit. While many large institutions participate in SARA, approximately 45 percent have an FTE enrollment of less than 2,500. As an additional note, NC-SARA has initiated a data collection process relating to distance education enrollment and student complaints.

SARA in the Midwest Region

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact is the regional compact in which Missouri participates. MHEC staff has provided ongoing assistance to member states and institutions with negotiating the initial and renewal application processes. All of the MHEC member states have been approved to participate in SARA, the only regional compact with participation by all member states. At present, more than 400 institutions of higher education in the Midwest region are approved for SARA.

SARA in Missouri

The MDHE staff began processing institutional applications to participate in SARA in January 2015. Although we continue to receive and process both initial and renewal applications from institutions, as of the printing of this board item, 60 institutions, including both publics and privates, have been approved. In addition, state approval to participate in SARA must be

renewed every two years. Missouri applied for renewal in August of this year and the application was approved by MHEC earlier this fall.

STATUTORY REFERENCE

Section 173.030, RSMo – Coordinating Board additional responsibilities

RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is an information item only.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None