



Indiana approved as first SARA state

Minneapolis, Minnesota and Boulder, Colorado – Indiana has been approved by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) as the first state to join the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). SARA is a nationwide initiative of states that will make distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines, as well as making it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The SARA agreements 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). The effort is funded by a \$2.3 million grant from Lumina Foundation.

“Indiana has enthusiastically supported the establishment of SARA from its earliest discussions and has been actively engaged in implementation of the concept,” says Ken Sauer, Ph.D., senior associate commissioner for research and academic affairs at the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. Recent changes made by the Indiana General Assembly have consolidated and streamlined coordination of Indiana’s system of higher education. Two changes in particular are of significant importance to Indiana joining MHEC-SARA. First, the Commission for Higher Education leads a newly created Indiana Board for Proprietary Education that oversees in-state and out-of-state proprietary institutions. Second, the Commission was granted oversight responsibilities for out-of-state public and not-for-profit institutions offering instruction in Indiana.

“This is really exciting for the Compact and for Indiana as we move this initiative forward for states, institutions, and students that will ultimately benefit from these reciprocity agreements,” said Larry Isaak, MHEC president.

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. That process must include, at a minimum: acceptance of national or regional accreditation as evidence of academic quality; approving institutions to participate in reciprocity; acceptance of an adequate federal financial responsibility score (1.5, or 1.0 with justification, at a minimum) for such participation; and an effective state process for consumer protection (including addressing consumer complaints) and ongoing oversight. States also need

to have the authority to enter into the reciprocity agreement, which in many will require legislative action. Lastly, states and territories that don't belong to a regional compact but want to participate in SARA may either become full members of a compact or join, at reduced dues, solely to be part of SARA.

"SARA seeks to be part of the solution to issues in distance education and will save states and institutions time and money," said Marshall Hill, executive director of NC-SARA. Once a state joins SARA, accredited degree-granting institutions offering distance education courses can seek approval from their home states. When approved, these institutions will be able to operate in other participating SARA states without seeking independent authorization. This process is entirely voluntary (as is the process for states). An institution that chooses not to use SARA can continue to work with individual states to obtain approval to offer distance education to individuals residing in those states.

About MHEC, NEBHE, SREB, WICHE and Lumina Foundation

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 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

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 Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate).

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.

www.luminafoundation.org.

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