



INDIANA COMMISSION *for*
HIGHER EDUCATION

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Indiana Achieves Milestone for Online College Learning

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE) today announced that all campuses of the state's public colleges and universities have signed on to participate in a voluntary agreement that makes it easier for students in Indiana and nationwide to take online courses offered by colleges based outside their home states. A total of 34 Indiana public, private and for-profit colleges participate in the agreement—more than any other state in the nation.

The agreement, called the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement or SARA, was established in 2014 with the help of a grant from Lumina Foundation. The agreement creates a more efficient and effective authorization process for distance and online programs for member states and participating colleges. It also ensures greater consumer protection for students by requiring online education providers to meet standards of quality. Indiana was the first state to join SARA.

"Indiana understands that if we hope to meet our goal for 60 percent of Hoosier adults to have a quality degree or credential by 2025, online learning must be supported as a way to help us achieve it," Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers said. "Our state's early membership in SARA and our public colleges' swiftness to participate reflect Indiana's commitment to improving access to quality online courses and reducing the red tape that makes it difficult for colleges to offer their programs to our students."

Once SARA-participating colleges are authorized to provide these programs in their home states, they are approved to offer distance education for students in all states that are also SARA members. All of Indiana's public institutions, more than half of the state's private colleges and two for-profit institutions currently operate under SARA.

Prior to SARA, all colleges had to coordinate with as many as 54 separate states and territories, some of which had multiple regulatory agencies and processes, to gain authorization for their distance and online programs. This process was inefficient, costly and ineffective when it came to giving students access to quality distance learning programs.

"Indiana has been in the vanguard of the reciprocity movement since before SARA was conceived," Jennifer Parks, Director of the Midwestern State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, said. "From the beginning of my work with the project, ICHE has been an energetic partner and thought leader, piloting processes and policies that would later become part of SARA across the nation. The country owes much to the vision at ICHE that has helped SARA become so rapidly successful."

Since its creation in January 2014, 21 states have joined the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, with 253 total colleges participating nationwide. Nationally, the number of students taking online college courses is growing. Between 2002 and 2012, the number of students enrolled in at least one online course increased by an average of 16 percentage points each year. In Fall 2012, more than 108,000 Indiana college students—24 percent of all students enrolled in public, private and for-profit institutions—took at least one online course. Of these, the vast majority (85 percent) were enrolled in public colleges.

For more information about the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, visit nc-sara.org.