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Press Release
SREB News



Arkansas, Oklahoma and Tennessee Join Distance Ed Agreement

27 states now participate in SARA, the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

Atlanta, June 30, 2015 — Arkansas, Oklahoma and Tennessee were approved by the Southern Regional Education Board this week to join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). These three bring the number of participating states to 27.

SARA is a initiative of states nationwide 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. 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.

“Providing our students with access to high-quality educational offerings has always been a top priority for Oklahoma’s system of higher education,” said Chancellor **Glen D. Johnson** of the **Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education**. “Joining the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement will allow our colleges and universities to deliver innovative distance education opportunities to current and future students residing in SARA member states, regardless of their geographic location.”

SARA makes it easier for states to regulate interstate distance education, and it eliminates approval costs to colleges and universities, which are often passed on to students. Institutions in the three SREB states may now join the clearinghouse through the reciprocity agreements.

“Online learning is a significant and important component of the higher education landscape,” said **Brett Powell**, director of the **Arkansas Department of Higher Education**. “I am pleased that Arkansas will be part of this effort to coordinate the regulation of online programs for the benefit of both Arkansas institutions and Arkansas students. Our institutions will be relieved of a significant administrative burden and our students will have greater assurance of educational quality as a result of our relationship with SARA.”

“We look forward to the variety of opportunities SARA will bring to Tennessee institutions offering distance education programs and Tennessee students enrolling in such programs,” said **Russ Deaton**, interim executive director of the **Tennessee Higher Education Commission**. By expanding the education options available to Tennesseans, the SARA partnership will play an

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“Education remains critical to state goals to increase college completion rates and build a better educated workforce,” says SREB President Dave Spence. “SARA increases access to education, especially for adult students who juggle other responsibilities when they return to complete degrees.

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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 uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused oversight responsibilities for states and better resolution of student complaints.

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 fulfill 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.

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.

The [Southern Regional Education Board](#) works with 16 member states to improve public education at every level, from early childhood through doctoral education. 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.

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 are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, 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).

[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

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Goal 2025.

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The Southern Regional Education Board works with states to improve public education at every level, from pre-K through Ph.D. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.



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