Understanding the Landscape of State Authorization Capacity

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Understanding the Landscape of State Authorization Capacity

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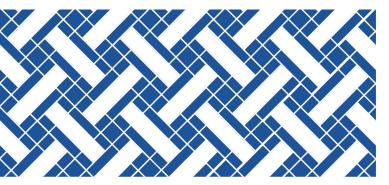
Agenda:

- About State Authorization
- About SHEEO Research
- SHEEO State Authorization Capacity Survey
- The SARA Landscape
- State Portal Entity Annual Survey
- Next Steps for Research

Land Acknowledgement

The establishment of U.S. higher education cannot be separated from the history of displacement of Indigenous people, theft of Native land, and denial of self-determination.

SHEEO and NC-SARA are indebted to the ancestral caretakers of the land we work from: the people from Arapaho, Cheyenne, Ute, Nacotchtank and Piscataway nations. I'd also like to acknowledge that my labor on this project was conducted from the ancestral homeland of my people the Oceti Sakowin in what is now South Dakota. We ask that you reflect on the lands you have joined us from and the ancestors who watch over where you live and work.



State Authorization

State Authorization – The States

Oversight of education is a function of the State.

States have the authority to regulate institutions offering education within the state's boundaries.

The approval process is part of consumer protection for learners in the state.

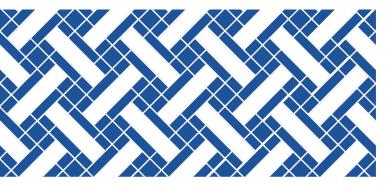
Regardless of modality.



State Authorization – Institutions

Institutions must follow the state laws of the state where an institution's activity takes place.



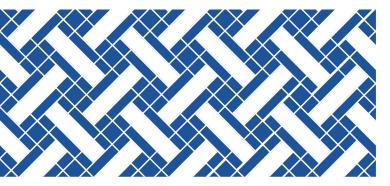


SHEEO Research

SHEEO State Authorization Projects

- State Authorization Learning Community
 - Designed to help nine state teams evaluate and strengthen their authorization processes to better protect students and improve quality.
- State Authorization Research Projects
 - Competitive research funding project for projects meant to provide states with evidence-based recommendations to improve state authorization
- https://sheeo.org/project/state-authorization/





SHEEO State Authorization Capacity Survey

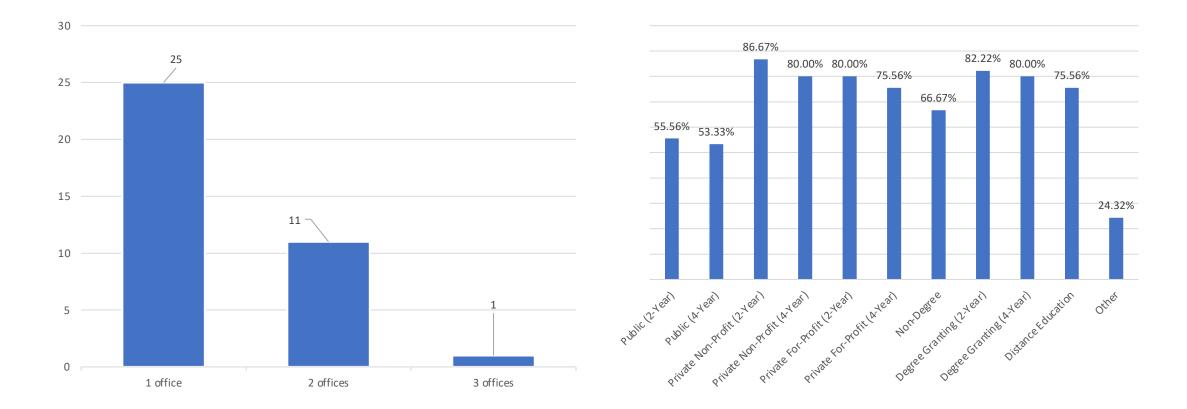
A Survey of State Authorizing Agencies & Offices

- The Survey
 - Initial survey invitation sent in March 2020
 - Follow-up in mid-May
 - Survey open 3 months
- Sample
 - 61 offices representing 41 states invited
 - 44 offices representing 37 states, including DC, responded
- Survey Design
 - Questions regarding funding, staffing, responsibilities, types and number of institutions authorized
 - Design allowed for open-ended, clarifying responses

Results

Authorizing Agencies

Institutions/Providers Authorized



Number of Institutions Authorized

Institutions	Range	Mean	Median
Total	14-967	203.6	137
Brick-and-Mortar	0-967	130	52
Distance Only (non-SARA)	0-684	42.3	17.5

FTE Staff Dedicated to Authorization Tasks

Authorization Task	Range	Mean	Median
Legal Analysis			
Internal FTE	0-3	0.62	0.3
External FTE	0-3	0.58	0.25
Academic Analysis			
Internal FTE	0-21	2.83	1.5
External FTE	0-1	0.03	0
Financial Analysis			
Internal FTE	0-21	2.3	1
External FTE	0-21	0.55	0
Investigative/Field Staff			
Internal FTE	0-38	3	1
External FTE	0-2	0.11	0
Institutions Authorized per FTE	7-834	74	42

Authorization Operating Budget

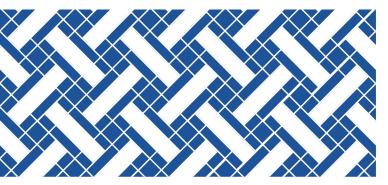
Budget	Range	Mean	Median
Total Authorization Operating Budget	\$7,200 – \$4,309,271	203.6	137
Operating Budget per Institution	\$92 — \$26,721	130	52
Authorization Budget as a Percentage of Total State Support for Higher Education	0.0009% – 1.89%	0.16%	0.04%

Limitations

- COVID-19
- Multiples agencies and/or offices with authorizing authority

Conclusion

- States' role in the Regulatory Triad
- Authorizing offices and agencies
- States need to invest



The SARA Landscape

The current state authorization process was inefficient, costly, and not effective in supporting access to high quality distance education.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)

SARA is a voluntary agreement among 49 member states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

SARA provides a streamlined, reciprocity based process for participating postsecondary institutions to gain approval to offer interstate distance education in SARA member states without individually applying to each state for such approval, subject to certain limitations.

SARA Partners

SARA Member States:

- State Education Agencies known as the "State Portal Entity" (SPE).
- Regulatory body for institutional participation.

Regional Compact Organizations:

- Admit and oversee states who are members of the agreement.
- Constitute and oversee a Regional Steering Committee.
- Operational partner working between the SPE and the national coordinating body of the agreement.

NC-SARA:

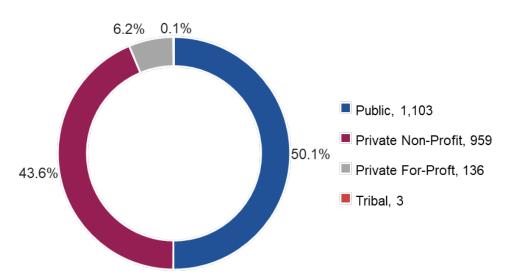
- Operates per its own National Board and bylaws as a 501(C)3.
- Oversee the policy and processes vital to the implementation of the agreement.

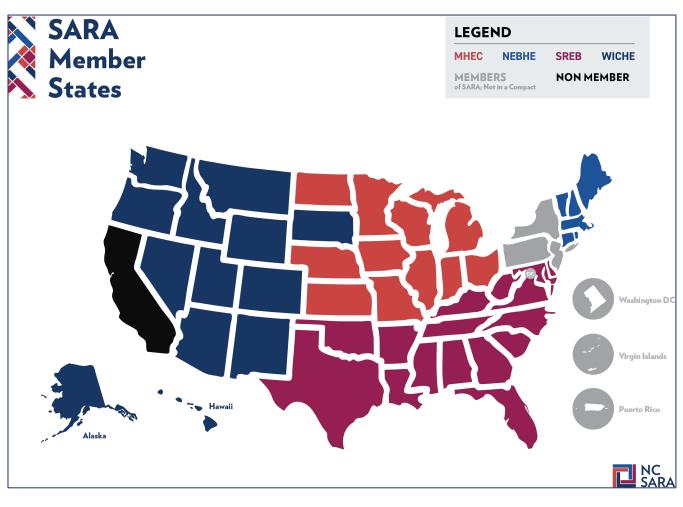
SARA Landscape

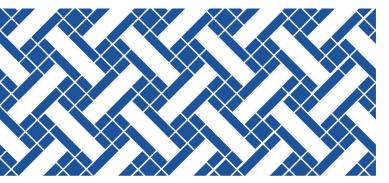
52 MEMBER STATES AND TERRITORIES

As of November 2021: 2,300+ Participating Institutions

SARA Participating Institutions by Sector







NC-SARA State Portal Entity Survey

NC-SARA State Portal Entity Survey

- Distributed mid-August through September 17, 2021
- Sent to 77 State Portal Entity (SPE) contacts representing all 52 SARA members
- Received responses from 46 individuals from 45 states / territories
- Covered topics such as SPE demographics and staffing; engagement; SARA fees; and branch campus policy

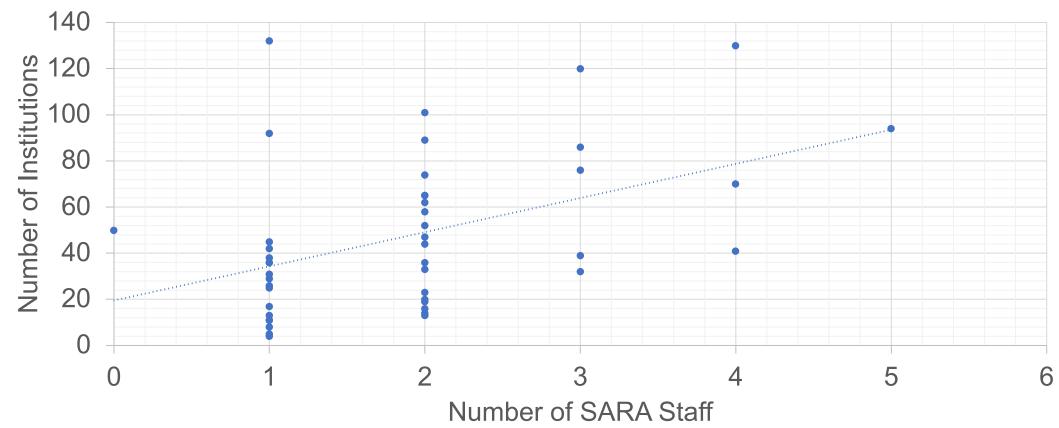
• For the majority of respondents (70%), the employees for the SPE and the state authorization regulatory entity are the same.

The employees for the SPE and regulator are the same	32	70%
The SPE and regulator are within the same agency and have established communications	8	17%
The SPE and regulator are in different agencies and have established communications	5	11%
The SPE and regulator are in different agencies and do not communicate	1	2%
Total	46	

• On average, SPEs have 1.9 staff members devoted to SARA work, but only .7 total FTE. On average, these agencies have 5 staff members devoted to state authorization, and 2.7 FTE.

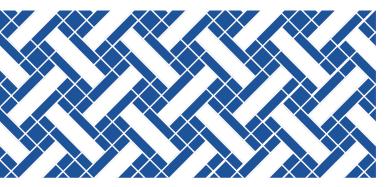
	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Individual SARA Staff Members	0	5	1.9
SARA Staff FTE	0	4.4	0.7
Individual State Authorization Staff Members	0	45	5.0
State Authorization FTE	0	33.6	2.7

Number of SARA Participating Institutions by SARA Staff



- Over two-thirds (70%) believe that their entity does have the staff and resources to effectively and efficiently manage SARA work
 - 23 SPEs responded only "yes." The other 9 responded "yes under certain conditions," such as:
 - Yes... "currently have the staff and resources but if NC-SARA adds more regulatory work we would need more capacity."
 - Yes... but "we were allocated more staff and it did not happen."
 - Yes... but "we need more money for technology enhancements."
 - 5 SPEs responded only "no" with another 6 indicating a reason, such as:
 - No, because there is more work than anticipated, such as: classifying student complaints as SARA complaints; how SPEs are supposed use CRAC guidelines to enforce quality distance education; how to handle complex branch campus issues; how states are supposed to measure all reasonable efforts for professional licensure.
 - No, because the entity needs more staff.
- Less than half (46%) agreed that they had the staff and resources to effectively and efficiently manage non-SARA related state authorization work.

- "We are mandated to other duties in addition to SARA. Sometimes the deadlines, requests, and demands conflict, and things become overwhelming."
- "We do not have the staff or budget to dedicate one person to SARA. We handle SPE duties as we have time."
- "Currently I am a one-person office. While a second position is assigned to this office, funds are insufficient to fill it at this time."
- "Due to the fee loss of out-of-state institutions, the department no longer has sufficient fees to fund 4 positions that are necessary to be full funded. This means that work for SARA has to be balanced with the other statutory obligations of the department. There is not enough time and manpower to meet emerging SARA obligations."



Next Steps

Next Steps

- SHEEO
 - Ongoing study with National Student Clearinghouse data
 - State authorization work
- NC-SARA & SHEEO partnership
 - Focus groups
 - Input from SPEs and regulators
 - Case studies
- Student protection

Potential Future Research Questions

- How do states determine capacity needs to support regulation of academic institutions in their states?
 - How can capacity be measured?
 - How much time is associated with which types of activities?
- What are the characteristics of a high-quality state authorization?
- What are effective practices, particularly related to college closure mitigation?
- What is the impact of state revenue loss due to SARA?
- Other?

Questions and Discussion



Thank You!



NC SARA

SHEEO Website: https://sheeo.org/ NC-SARA Website: <u>www.nc-sara.org</u>