Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement
A voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of distance education

Minutes of the W-SARA Steering Committee
Wednesday, January 29, 2014 ~ 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Conference Call

Steering Committee Members Present
Marcia Bankirer (CO), president, Denver School of Nursing
Mary Ellen Petrisko (CA), president, WASC Senior College and University Commission
Heather DeLange (CO), academic policy officer, Colorado Department of Higher Education
Toni Larson (CO), executive director, Independent Higher Education of Colorado
Sona Andrews (OR), provost and vice president for academic affairs, Portland State University
Jessica Brubaker (MT), staff attorney, Montana University System (MUS)
Jane Sherman (WA), vice provost for academic policy and evaluation, Washington State University

Steering Committee Members Absent
Carol Liu (CA), senator, California State Senate
Christopher Bustamante (AZ), president, Rio Salado College

WICHE Staff Present
David Longanecker, president
Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services

W-SARA Staff Present
Rhonda Epper, director
Alan Contreras, coordinator
Michelle Perez-Robles, office manager

Welcome
Rhonda Epper called the meeting to order and welcomed the committee members.

Re-cap of December Regional Forum

Epper provided an update on the W-SARA Regional Forum, stating that it was well attended with 125 participants. Epper provided a summary of the feedback from the post event survey. She stated that the participation rate for the survey was 45 percent, with the majority of the comments being that the meeting was informative and useful. The survey respondents were complimentary of the documentation provided, the presentations, and the venue. Epper stated the main area of “push back” came from the complaint process. Epper asked the group for their comments and a brief discussion regarding the other regional forums followed.
State by state update

Epper began by explaining that because state status at this point is merely a prediction, she was hesitant about putting that information in writing. Epper asked committee members for advice on releasing this type of document. Epper and Alan Contreras provided the committee with a status update for states in the Western region, as well as future visits they have planned. Below are current estimates for state applications, based on the status of legislation and state level discussions.

- Alaska – April 2014*
- Arizona – July 2014**
- California – likely 2015
- Colorado – April 2014*
- Hawaii – likely 2015*
- Idaho – April 2014+
- Montana – July 2014+
- Nevada – April 2014*
- New Mexico – October 2014**
- Oregon – July 2014**
- South Dakota – July 2014**
- Utah – likely 2015
- Washington – April 2014*
- Wyoming – October 2014

* Passed legislation 2013 or earlier
** legislation introduced in 2014
+ doesn't need legislation

Policy recommendation on state application readiness

Epper presented a policy recommendation to the steering committee regarding “state application readiness.” The issue is that a state may have done everything it needs to do in order to join SARA, but simply be waiting for rules to become effective as of a certain date. Staff recommended that we do accept the application, but membership becomes effective the date of the rule/statutory effective date. This will allow us to publish the formal acceptance, and it informs the states and institutions when that state will be officially a member. Staff is getting many questions from institutions that need to plan for budgeting purposes and need to know when certain states will be joining. This gives them some definitive information, even if the date is in the future. The steering committee unanimously approved the policy recommendation.

State application review process and timeliness

Epper asked for the committee’s input on how they want to handle the review process and timelines. She stated that the steering committee is bound by the WICHE commissioner’s meetings which will be held in May and November. The last date to provide materials for the commissioners’ agenda books is April 30 as the books will be mailed out on May 2. The steering committee meeting will have to be moved back by a week or two to prepare materials for the May meeting. David Longanecker suggested
canceling the February steering committee to review and process applications and instead have a March meeting to allow for the submission of more applications. The committee decided that the application deadline should remain April 15, 2014 for the first round. Longanecker also stated that the commissioners may be able to convene via teleconference to review applications between the May and November meetings. He stated that the dates will be set after the May meeting, a teleconference may possibly be held in early August. Epper asked the committee members if they approved of this process. The process was unanimously approved by all committee members.

**Timeline for 2014 SARA Application Process:**

- **March 26, 2:00 p.m. – W-SARA Steering Committee conference call** (if any applications are received by then).
- April 15 – state application deadline #1
- April 17 – staff analysis and recommendations sent to steering committee
- **April 21, 2:00 p.m. – W-SARA Steering Committee conference call** to review and approve state applications
- May 12-13 – WICHE Commissioners vote to accept new SARA members
- July 15 – state application deadline #2
- **July 30, 2:00 p.m. – W-SARA Steering Committee conference call** to review and approve state applications
- Early August (TBD) – Tentative WICHE Executive Committee Conference Call to accept new SARA members
- October 15 – state application deadline #3
- **October 20, 2:00 p.m. – W-SARA Steering Committee conference call** to review and approve state applications (please note change from previously scheduled Oct 29 meeting)
- November 10-11 - WICHE Commissioners vote to accept new SARA members

**NC-SARA proposed change in complaint process**

Epper stated there was some concern over the original complaint process presented in the policy document. The new process for student complaints is that the state has final resolution authority for student complaints in terms of adjudication and enforcement. However, if a state is dissatisfied with the resolution, the state can appeal to the respective regional compact or the national council. A discussion followed regarding the complaint process, and the steering committee supported this change.

**W-SARA agreement**

The committee agreed with the correction on page 17, line 655 of the W-SARA agreement that addresses the fee structure. The committee unanimously approved the correction to the document.

**Addition of another member to the steering committee**

Longanecker informed the committee that the Lumina Foundation requested that Laura Noon be added to the steering committee. A committee member asked about her connection to the WICHE region for the steering committee. Longanecker said her representation will be for the Lumina Foundation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.