Minutes of the W-SARA Steering Committee  
Monday, October 28, 2013 ~ 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Boulder, Colorado

Steering Committee Members Present  
Marcia Bankirer (CO)  
Mary Ellen Petrisko (CA)  
Heather DeLange (CO)  
Toni Larson (CO)  
Sona Andrews (OR)  
Jessica Brubaker (MT)  
Christopher Bustamante (AZ)  
Jane Sherman (WA)

Steering Committee Members Absent  
Carol Liu (CA)

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

W-SARA and NC-SARA Staff Present  
Rhonda Epper, W-SARA director  
Marshall Hill, NC-SARA executive director  
Alan Contreras, SARA coordinator  
Michelle Perez-Robles, office manager

Guest  
Laxmi Rasmisinging, ACE Fellow, Portland State University

Welcome and Introductions  
Rhonda Epper called the meeting to order and welcomed the committee members.  
She introduced the W-SARA and NC-SARA staff and thanked the committee members for their service acknowledging the importance of their role and guidance. Members of the committee introduced themselves.
Overview and History

Marshall Hill provided the history and an overview of the SARA initiative. He stated there is not an alternative for institutions to seek authorization in each state to enroll online students. Attempts to address the issue have been tried several times and the SARA initiative builds on those earlier efforts.

The goal is to elevate the baseline for quality online and distance education through uniformity of the authorization standards and process. States will have responsibility for resolving complaints that have not been resolved through institutional channels, all participating institutions must abide by the C-RAC standards for distance education programs, and private institutions must have a federal financial responsibility score of 1.5 to participate in SARA (or 1.0 conditionally). The program staff will obtain data on the participating institutions and post it on the NC-SARA website. Staff is working with a data subcommittee to determine what data elements to collect as part of the authorization process.

A question and answer period followed with Hill addressing concerns, clarifying various aspects of the program, processes, and timelines.

Review of the W-SARA Agreement

David Longanecker provided an overview of the W-SARA document and noted the changes that are suggested to make W-SARA conform to the agreements of the other regional higher education compacts. The group agreed that the suggested changes to the W-SARA agreement should be incorporated, and staff will continue to solicit input and discussion from committee members in order to clarify definitions and provide uniformity in the language. The following changes were proposed to the W-SARA agreement, and were discussed and agreed upon by committee members:

1. Page 8, line 273. Every other year was changed to every year.
2. Page 9, lines 323-324. “and there is no multi-year contract between the institution and the field site” was added.
3. Page 14, lines 547-557. The word “standards” was replaced with “guidelines” in reference to C-RAC.

Hill said the program is no longer in the development phase; the goal now is approval of the four regional SARA documents by the NC-SARA board at its Nov. 1, 2013 meeting, implementation within each region, and addressing and resolving issues as they arise. He described the documents that are being drafted for state membership and institutional participation. For the institutional application process, the committee suggested that in addition to having an application for initial approval, a form that could be used for “renewal” on an annual basis may be helpful. The committee expressed concern that the C-RAC standards are viewed as guidelines by accreditors, and institutions may not be able to “check off” each sub-point listed. The committee recommended that the boxes be removed from the bulleted points under each of the nine C-RAC guidelines and to note that the bullets are meant to be examples of best practices for institutions to use in meeting the guidelines.

State Readiness Profiles

Alan Contreras provided an update on projected state readiness based on information he has obtained from conversations with WICHE staff and various people within the WICHE region. Seven states may be
ready by May, four additional may join later in 2014, and five are probably not ready to join until 2015 or later. Contreras reviewed the summary document with the committee members. They provided their perspectives on state readiness and Contreras responded to their questions.

Sona Andrews expressed concern about how the committee is to evaluate a state’s application without having legal counsel confirm that what the state has in statute is sufficient to let them join SARA. Contreras and Epper responded that each application will be presented to the steering committee with a staff analysis and recommendation.

**Action Item:** Rhonda will send out draft “FAQs” and “Steps to Membership.”

**W-SARA Regional Forum**

The group reviewed the draft agenda for the Dec. 10 meeting. Epper asked for feedback and explained the lodging stipend and scholarship options. Feedback from committee members included:
- incorporating a template for states to use in their break-out session (this will be used to guide staff in their follow-up work with states);
- remove the data collection topic;
- provide explanations of why and how to join SARA;
- clearly articulate meeting expectations;
- provide experts and a method for groups to ask questions;
- remove reporting-out at the end of break-out sessions; and
- talk through the readiness profile.

**Action Item:** Revise the W-SARA Regional Forum agenda based on committee feedback.

**Timelines, Roles, Responsibilities of Steering Committee During the Next Year**

Epper stated the group should anticipate monthly teleconferences beginning in January so that the committee can begin reviewing state applications and making recommendations to the WICHE Commission on which states have met the participation standards. Staff will conduct a Doodle poll to determine the best time for the calls, tentatively targeting the third or fourth week of each month. Staff will look at the possibility of holding a face-to-face meeting in conjunction with the WICHE Commission meeting that will be held on May 12 – 13, 2014, in Santa Fe, NM.

**Action Item:** Send out Doodle poll, set meeting dates for 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.