

# **Midwestern-State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA): Regional Steering Committee Restructure**

Sara Appel, MHEC Director of M-SARA  
MHEC Annual Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

# Purpose

Ask the Commission to approve the changes to the M-SARA Regional Steering Committee's (RSC) Policy and Procedure Manual which includes:

- Removing at-large members
- Limiting voting to state representatives
- Transferring responsibility for appointing RSC members from the Commission to each state's appointed State Portal Entity (SPE).
- Allowing MHEC Commissioners of a state the power to remove and have replace their RSC member.

# State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)

## Benefits

- SARA is a voluntary agreement among the four regional compacts.
- States, institutions, and students benefit from SARA as it
  1. improves distance education programs quality nationwide by providing valuable oversight and standards,
  2. provides access to and improves coordination between states on higher education opportunities, and
  3. reduces costs and bureaucracy for states and institutions.

## Savings

- Time
  - Provides efficiency and quality check via a one-stop-shop for institutions wanting to provide online instruction in other states.
- Money
  - M-SARA states/institutions saved over \$37M in FY24

# Proposed Changes to the RSC Policy and Procedure Manual

1. The M-SARA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) will be comprised of one voting member, the State Portal Entity (SPE) of each state participating in the agreement. The state representative is determined by the SPE.
2. Limits voting privileges to representatives of the SPE/the States.
3. Allows the State/SPEs to determine whom shall represent their perspectives on the RSC.

# Reasons for Proposed Changes

1. Brings the composition of MHEC's RSC into alignment with that of the other three regional compact RSCs (i.e., they have full SPE representation)
2. Limits voting to state representatives (i.e. not institutional representatives) also in line with the other regional compact RSCs and in response to a major criticism of SARA by student consumer advocates.
3. Retains the important institutional voice and perspective on the M-SARA RSC by use of non-voting members.
  - Eliminates the idea that states have “double representation” at times

# Action Item 3

- With support from MHEC's RSC, that the Commission adopt the following action:
  - That the commission approve the changes to the M-SARA RSC Policy and Procedure Manual effective on January 1, 2025, transferring the responsibility for appointing RSC members from the Commission to each state's appointed State Portal Entity (SPE). Additionally, MHEC Commissioners of a state will have the power to remove and replace their RSC member via a majority vote, which can be held in-person, electronically, or virtually.