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June 2021 State Authorization Updates & Information [1]

June 2, 2021 by erika.swain@cu.edu [2]

Hello everyone! Happy June!

I hope you're all having a wonderful summer so far! Just a couple of things as we (hopefully) move into a quieter and more relaxed summer than the last:

- Just a reminder that your NC-SARA data (distance education enrollment and OOSLP enrollments) is due by the 15th.
- NC-SARA has released an updated Policy Manual (version 21.1, effective May 6, 2021). Most of the updates or changes won't affect us much (they're directed at new/applying institutions and institutions that are non-compliant with accreditation or other regulations). However, one change, though not directly impacting us, is worth noting:
    - In Section 5.10 *Physical Presence*, the word "academic" was removed from the phrase "academic credit" in 5.10(a)(8). While this is a small change (as a "credit" is inherently an academic unit of measurement according to the Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission), you may want to review any website or literature describing your institution's participation in SARA, particularly regarding which out-of-state placements are counted in your SARA reporting.
- The University of Colorado's membership with WCET-SAN has been renewed for another year. If you haven't had a chance to explore their websites or used them for information related to state authorization or distance education, I recommend considering them as a valuable resource. Everyone employed by a member institution (in this case, the System—so all of us) can access and participate in numerous activities and opportunities, including open forums, podcasts, listservs, blogs, training, and advice on SARA participation, among other topics. For example, in December, I'll be giving a follow-up to a recent policy session on regular and substantive interactions in distance education.

Finally, NC-SARA has slightly pulled back on their proposal for the new 21st-century distance education guidelines [3]. They'll still be officially proposing them to the membership, but it sounds like there will be some rebranding and clarification. As a reminder, these proposed guidelines would replace the (very, very, very) old C-RAC Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education. Compliance with the C-RAC Guidelines is required for institutions participating in SARA. I know there's been some conversation about their application—how and when—but there's also been some pushback on how the 21set century guidelines are being positioned. Specifically:

- These guidelines are not from **C-RAC** (Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions), which has publicly stated that it's up to the accreditors to decide how and if they'll be used in their regions (if at all).

- There’s also been a need for clarity on some of the proposed guidelines.

NC-SARA is hosting a webinar on June 29th if you’d like to learn more.

I encourage you to review the proposed guidelines from NC-SARA and participate in the June 29th webinar. I know I’ll be attending, mostly because I’m curious to see how NC-SARA will apply these. Fun fact: I ran peer evaluator training at HLC in 2010 and 2011 and conducted training for institutions and reviewers at MSCHE from 2013 to 2018. I used the C-RAC Guidelines only once as a training resource and cannot remember ever providing them to a team as a resource for reviewing distance education. HLC and MSCHE haven’t utilized the C-RAC Guidelines for years, primarily due to how outdated they are. NC-SARA’s continued reliance on them surprised me when I joined CU.

I hope you’re all enjoying the summer so far, and now that the weather is nicer, I hope you get to spend more time outside!

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