



DLAB

Distance Learning Authorization Board

Report of 2019 Activities

The Wisconsin Distance Learning Authorization Board (DLAB) was established by 2015 Wisconsin Act 208, on March 1, 2016. The Board is attached to the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) for administrative purposes, and HEAB hosts a DLAB-related webpage on its website. The DLAB website is available at <http://www.heab.state.wi.us/dlab/index.html>. The DLAB serves as Wisconsin's portal entity, allowing Wisconsin institutions of higher education, who serve out-of-state students through distance education, to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, or SARA. The DLAB has membership from each higher education sector including the University of Wisconsin System (UWS), the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) for private, nonprofit institutions, Wisconsin's Tribal Colleges, and the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services for proprietary institutions.

As required by s. 39.87(3), *Wis. Stats*, annually by January 30, the DLAB shall submit a report "that summarizes the board's actions taken during the immediately preceding calendar year." This report was approved by the DLAB at its December 13, 2019, meeting for submission under s. 39.87.

2019 Meetings

The Board met three times in 2019, with meetings in May, September and December. The primary business of the May meeting was to prepare for the regional meeting of the Midwest State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (MSARA) coordinated by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Wisconsin is a statutory member of the Midwestern Compact. The September DLAB meeting was to prepare for a National Council of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) meeting convening of state portal entities from across the nation. Approval of new institutional applications for participation in SARA or renewal of institutional applications were also taken up at all three meetings of the DLAB in 2019. Officers for 2020 elected at the December 13, 2019 meeting are as follows:

- Chair: Dr. Rolf Wegenke, President, Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Vice Chair: Dr. Ray Cross, President, University of Wisconsin System
- Secretary: Dr. Morna Foy, President, Wisconsin Technical College System

Additional members of the Board include Dawn Crim, Secretary of the Department of Safety and Professional Services and Dr. Russell Swager, President, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College.

Dr. Swagger was appointed by Governor Tony Evers to serve as the tribal representative of the DLAB on August 2, 2019. Dr. Swagger succeeds Ms. Barbara Lundberg in this position.

National Council of State Reciprocity Agreements - Policy

The National Council of State Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is just over five years old. With the development of the organization has come changes in policy as well as scope of the organization's mission and activity. DLAB has been working hard to ensure NC-SARA mission and purpose remains within the scope of what it was organized to do and to follow its initial purpose which was to protect student consumers engaging in online education as well as to reduce state authorization approval costs for institutions and students. The NC-SARA Board has selected new leadership for the organization and DLAB has shared the following feedback with the new leadership.

- DLAB leadership has requested that the NC-SARA Board ensure adequate representation on its Board and input from the four regional compacts throughout the United States such as the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. Wisconsin leadership also requested that the organization create inclusive processes for state and regional input to be received by the NC-SARA Board as it contemplates changes in policy.
- DLAB leadership has requested that the NC-SARA organization remain focused on consumer protection and not engage in duplicative functions performed by other entities such as accreditation which ensures quality of academic programs.
- DLAB has encouraged the NC-SARA Board to be mindful of costs when determining new initiatives and setting new policies. Unlike many other states, Wisconsin does not charge a state fee for institutions to participate in SARA at the state level, they pay just one participation fee to NC-SARA. Wisconsin higher education sectors are all undertaking initiatives to control and reduce costs and have expressed that NC-SARA focus on efforts to support existing needs rather than create new and costly initiatives outside the scope of the organization's mission.

Institutional Application Approvals, Renewals and Enrollment

As of December 2019, 48 Wisconsin-based higher education institutions have been approved by the DLAB to participate in SARA. This includes 13 UWS campuses, 15 WTCS institutions, 19 private, nonprofit institutions, and one proprietary institution. In response to the UWS's restructuring of the UW-Colleges into the authority of 7 receiving UWS institutions, the UW-Colleges ceased being an accredited institution for purposes of SARA participation as of July 1, 2018. As a result, UW-Colleges rescinded its request to continue to participate in SARA and such request was approved by the DLAB and the NC-SARA.

All Wisconsin-based institutions approved by the DLAB to participate in SARA are required to comply with SARA enrollment and complaint reporting. To date, all institutions are in compliance with these provisions. No complaints were filed against any Wisconsin-based SARA-participating institutions in 2019.

As required by s. 39.86(3)(a)2., *Wis. Stats*, the following chart lists all the DLAB-approved SARA institutions. The list of approved institutions is also available on the NC-SARA website, and a link to this site is included on the DLAB website.

Wisconsin-Based Participating SARA Institutions

UWS:

University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire	University of Wisconsin – Platteville
University of Wisconsin – Green Bay	University of Wisconsin – River Falls
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse	University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
University of Wisconsin – Madison	University of Wisconsin – Stout
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee	University of Wisconsin – Superior
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh	University of Wisconsin – Whitewater
University of Wisconsin – Parkside	

WAICU – Private, Non-Profit:

Alverno College	Marian University
Bellin College	Marquette University
Cardinal Stritch University	Medical College of Wisconsin
Carroll University	Milwaukee School of Engineering
Carthage College	Mount Mary University
Concordia University Wisconsin	Nashotah House
Edgewood College	Silver Lake College of the Holy Family
Herzing University	Viterbo University
Lakeland University	Wisconsin Lutheran College
Maranatha Baptist University (not WAICU member)	

WTCS:

Blackhawk Technical College	Nicolet Area Technical College
Chippewa Valley Technical College	Northcentral Technical College
Fox Valley Technical College	Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
Gateway Technical College	Southwest Wisconsin Technical College
Lakeshore Technical College	Waukesha County Technical College
Madison Area Technical College	Western Technical College
Mid-State Technical College	Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College
Moraine Park Technical College	

Proprietary Institutions:

Wright Graduate University for the Realization of Human Potential	
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Enrollment

NC-SARA requires SARA-participating institutions to annually report distance education program enrollments of out-of-state students. According to the data collected and reported by NC - SARA for 2017-18 enrollment reporting, 6,570 out-of-state students representing all 48 SARA states (other than Wisconsin) enrolled in distance education programs at Wisconsin-based SARA-participating institutions. Only California has yet to join SARA.

At the same time, other states reported 17,131 Wisconsin residents were enrolled in a distance education program at an out-of-state SARA-participating institution. Wisconsin students attended SARA-participating institutions in all 48 of the other SARA-participating states. The table below shows the top five home states of students attending Wisconsin-based SARA-participating institutions and the top five states where Wisconsin students attended SARA-participating institutions in 2017-18.

Home State	Out-of-State Students Attending Wisconsin Institutions Under SARA		State of Attendance	Wisconsin Students Attending Out-of-State Institutions Under SARA
Minnesota	1,097		Minnesota	2,554
Illinois	958		Arizona	2,919
Michigan	538		Utah	1,221
Texas	363		New Hampshire	979
Georgia	272		Colorado	882

Among Wisconsin-based SARA-participating institutions, the largest number of out-of-state distance education students are enrolled in online programs at Herzing University (1,408 students), Concordia University Wisconsin (493 students), University of Wisconsin-Stout (482 students), University of Wisconsin-Platteville (458 students), and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (446 students).

In 2017, Wisconsin-based institutions participating in SARA were asked for feedback about their experiences in SARA, including whether SARA participation has increased their distance education enrollment. Those responding to the survey believed SARA participation had simplified their ability to use distance education to serve students. Institutional support for SARA is evidenced by the high renewal rate in 2019 among participating institutions.

Exempt Institutions

Another statutory responsibility assigned to the DLAB is that the Board “create and maintain” a list of higher education institutions that are legally authorized to operate in Wisconsin. Institutions that are legally authorized in a state are exempt from additional state authorization requirements as stated in the “program integrity rules” issued as final regulations of the US Department of Education in 75 Fed. Reg. 66832 to 66975 (October 29, 2010).

The Board is required to make this list available to the public and at least annually provide the list to the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the *Wisconsin Administrative Register*. The list of exempt institutions was provided by HEAB (as the administrative agency to which the DLAB is attached) to the Reference Bureau and is to be published in the *Wisconsin Administrative Register*. The listing of exempt institutions is available on the DLAB website.

Additionally, Wisconsin has for many years issued a Governor's Executive Order to document compliance for institutions that are legally authorized in the state as required by Federal law. An updated Executive Order #37 was issued by Governor Evers in July of 2019.

2020 Anticipated Activities

For 2020, the DLAB priorities include:

- Reviewing institutional renewal applications and any new applications.
- Continuing to provide input on NC-SARA policies, procedures and data requirements.
- Continuing strong cross-sector collaboration that makes the DLAB unique in how states are complying with SARA requirements.
- Continuing as a technical resource for Wisconsin-based higher education institutions participating in SARA or seeking to participate.

In conclusion, the DLAB continues to serve an important role in facilitating the ability of Wisconsin-based higher education institutions to expand their distance education offerings across state borders and to reduce the associated regulatory burden on the institutions.