

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Update Summary

SARA allows accredited degree-granting institutions to offer distance education in other member states without having to seek individual authorization from those states. This report provides an update on the status of SARA in Kansas and nationwide.

April 16, 2025

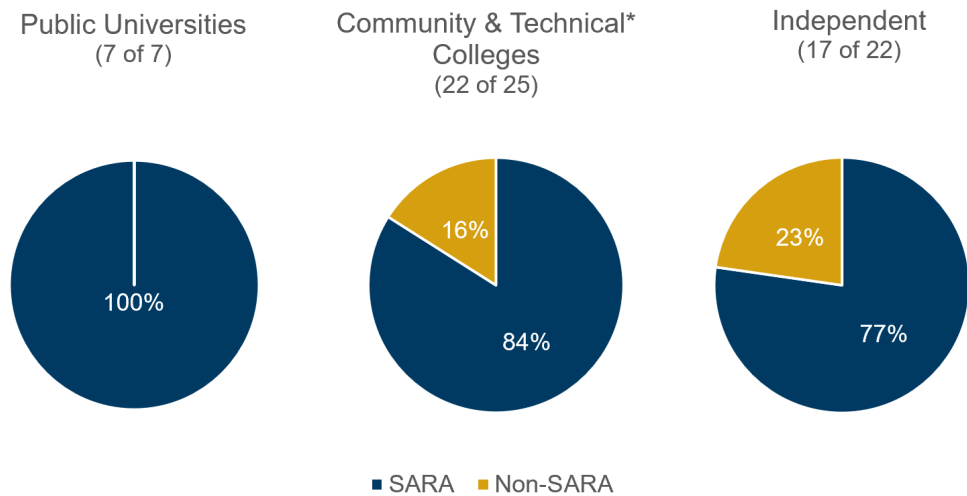
Background

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is a voluntary agreement among its member states and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for the interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. Since 2014, Kansas has been approved as a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) through the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC), one of the four regional education compacts in the United States that partner with NC-SARA. The Kansas Board of Regents serves as the State Portal Entity (SPE) for all institutions domiciled in Kansas. As the portal entity, KBOR serves as the interstate point of contact for SARA questions, complaints, and other communications for institutions domiciled in Kansas and students taking online courses from those institutions.

Membership and Participation

There are over 2,400 participating institutions in SARA, representing 52 member states and territories. In the Fall of 2023, over 4.2 million students were enrolled exclusively in distance education, with 1.6 million administered through SARA. These enrollments reflect a seven percent increase from the previous year.

As of March 1, 2025, 47 Kansas institutions participate in SARA. Over the past year, two independent institutions have been removed from participation due to non-compliance with SARA policy requiring institutions to maintain a minimum financial responsibility composite score of 1.0. The charts below illustrate participation by sector.¹



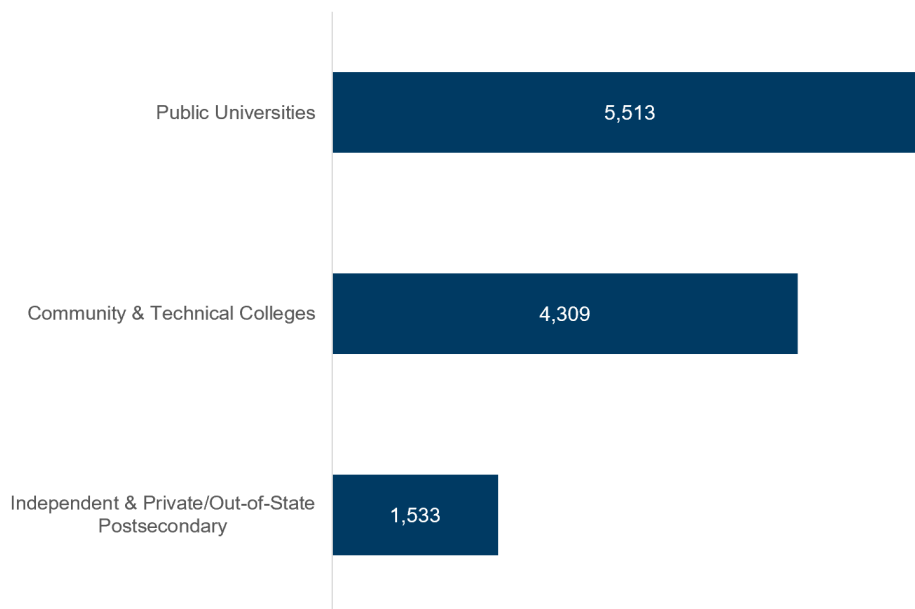
*Washburn University Institute of Technology participates under the approval of Washburn University and is not included in this count

¹ One participating institution is private/out-of-state postsecondary and not reflected in the charts by sector.

Enrollments and Out-of-State Learning Placements

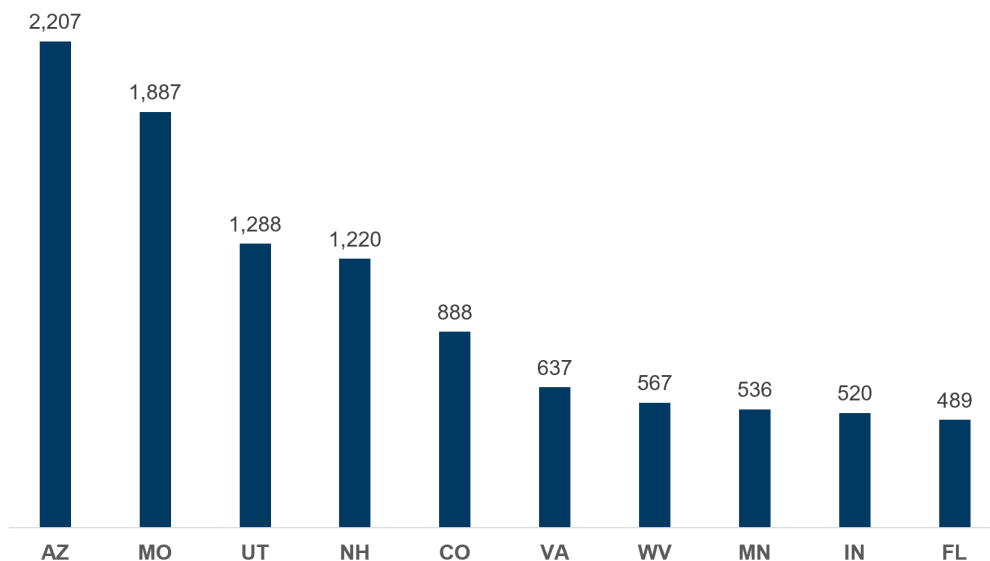
The Fall 2023 exclusively distance education enrollments and 2023 calendar year out-of-state learning placements for participating Kansas institutions are provided below.

In Fall 2023, over 11,000 out-of-state students were enrolled in participating Kansas SARA institutions.



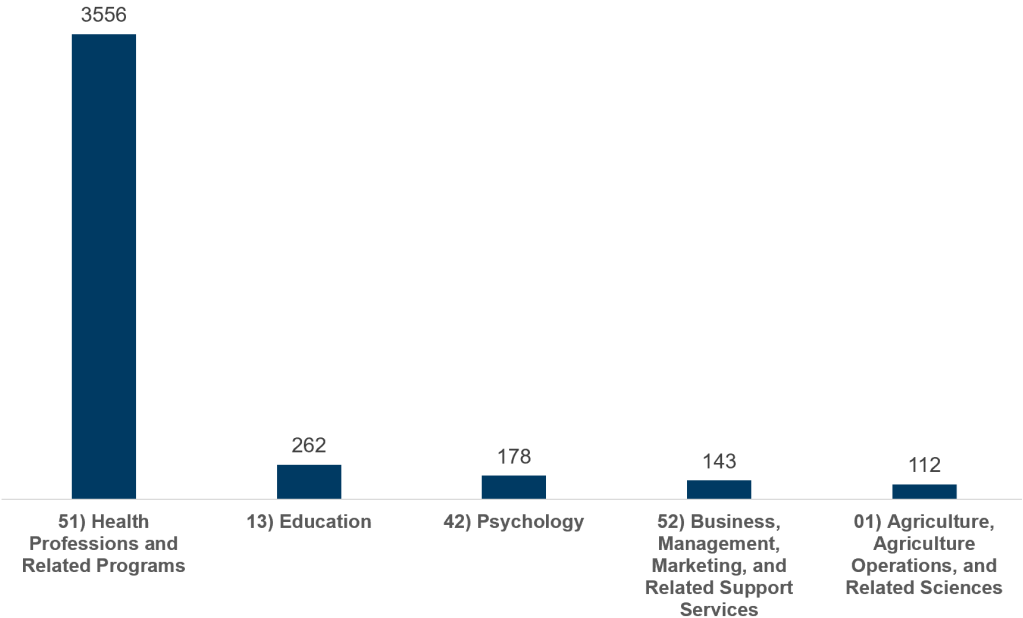
The top three locations from which Kansas institutions enroll students are Missouri, Texas, and Oklahoma.

In Fall 2023, over 14,000 Kansans were enrolled in distance education offered in another SARA member state. The top ten enrollments by state are listed below.

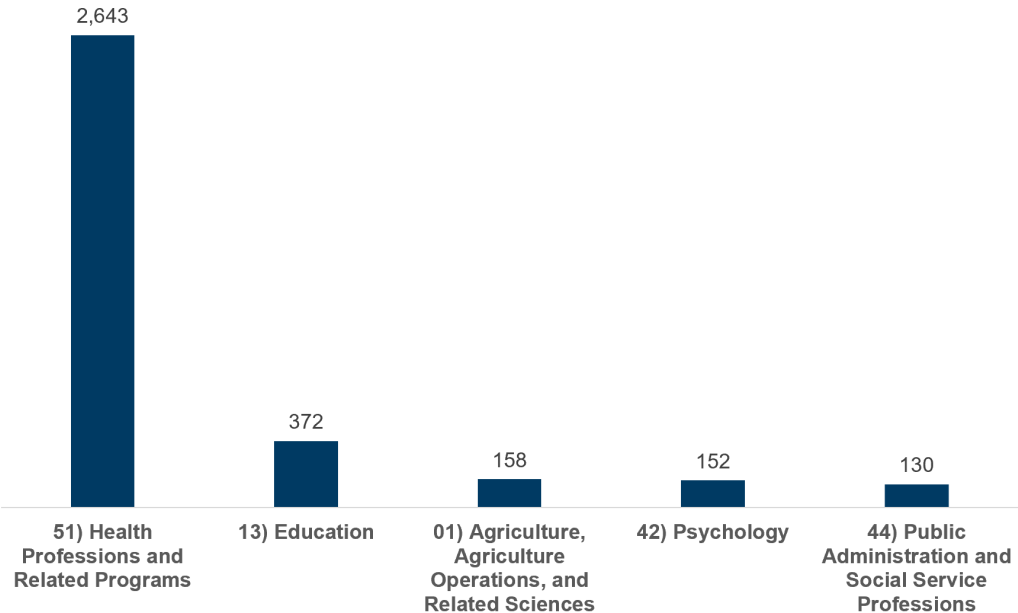


Western Governors University (Utah), Southern New Hampshire University (New Hampshire), and the University of Phoenix (Arizona) are the top three institutions enrolling Kansans.

In the 2023 calendar year, over 5,000 out-of-state students were placed (clinical rotations, student teaching, and internships, for example) in Kansas. The following represents placements in the top five CIP codes.

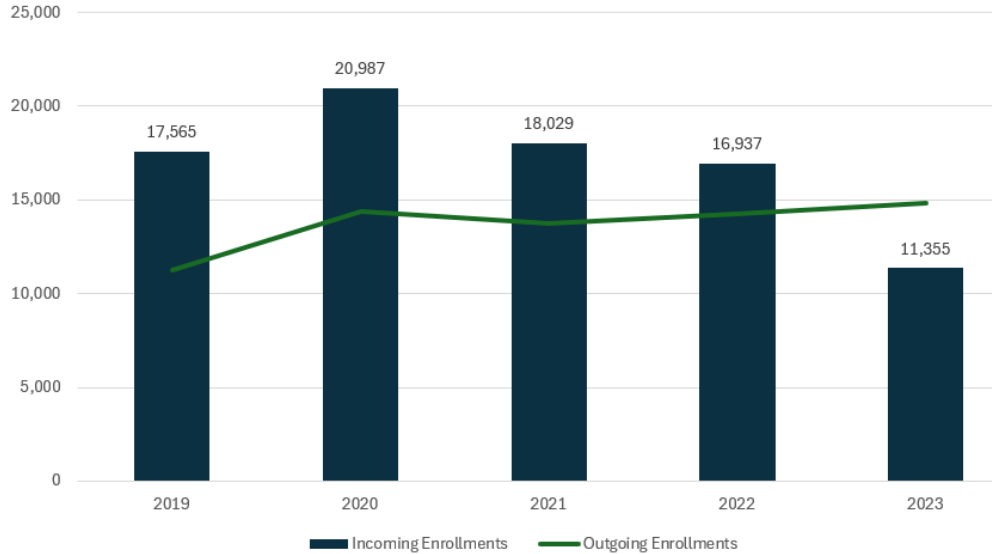


In the 2023 calendar year, Kansas institutions placed over 4,200 students out-of-state. The chart below illustrates placements in the top five CIP codes.



Enrollment Trend Data

The chart below shows the exclusively distance education enrollments in participating Kansas SARA institutions (incoming) as well as the enrollments of Kansans in other SARA states (outgoing) over the last five years.



In 2023, there was a decrease of over 30% in incoming enrollments, largely driven by a significant decline in enrollments from the Independent and Private/Out-of-State Postsecondary sector. This decline was anticipated due to the change in ownership and home state of one of the institutions within this sector.

Policy Modifications

In January 2024, NC-SARA began its second annual cycle of the SARA Policy Modification Process. More than 50 proposals were submitted by various constituencies, including the steering committees of the regional compacts, the State Authorization Network (SAN), consumer advocacy groups, and institutions. During the Fall 2024 NC-SARA Board Meeting, the Board reviewed and approved the ten proposals that all four regional compacts had approved through their respective steering committees. These modifications aim to enhance student consumer protections, increase state oversight, and improve student complaint information.

The 2025 policy modification process is currently underway, with over 30 proposals submitted for consideration. MHEC’s Regional Steering Committee (RSC) is currently reviewing these proposals, offering feedback to the submitters, and collaborating with other RSCs to work toward alignment before the amendment period concludes in June. RSC voting will take place over the summer months, with the deadline for submitting votes set for September.

Information concerning this process and the proposals being considered is available at <https://nc-sara.org/sara-policy-modification-process>.

Negotiated Rulemaking Update

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) considered amending the regulations governing out-of-state online colleges following the efforts of the negotiated rulemaking committee for state authorization. Since the negotiators failed to reach a consensus, the Department had the authority to amend the regulations as it deemed appropriate. There were concerns within the SARA community regarding the potential negative impacts these proposed changes could have on the reciprocity agreement. Ultimately, on December 26, 2024, the Department announced the termination of the negotiated rulemaking process for state authorization, and none of the proposed changes were implemented.